

ALIGNMENT

Introduction

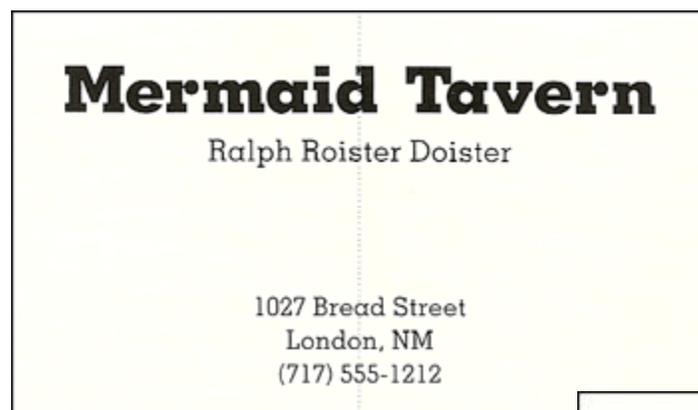
New designers tend to put text and graphics on the page wherever there happens to be space, often without regard to any other items on the page. What this creates is the slightly-messy-kitchen effect with a cup here, a plate there, a napkin on the counter, a pot in the sink, a spill on the floor. It doesn't take much to clean up the slightly messy kitchen, just as it doesn't take much to clean up a slightly messy design that has weak alignments.

Robin's Principle of Alignment states,

"Nothing should be placed on the page arbitrarily. Every item should have a visual connection with something else on the page."

The principle of alignment forces you to be conscious. No longer can you just throw things on the page and see where they stick.

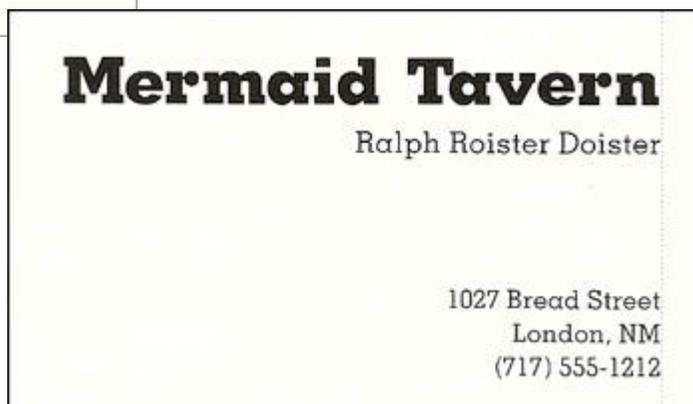
When items are aligned on the page, the result is a stronger cohesive unit. Even when aligned elements are physically separated from each other, there is an invisible line that connects them, both in your eye and in your mind. Although you might have separated certain elements to indicate their relationships (using the principle of proximity), the principle of alignment is what tells the reader that even though these items are not close, they belong to the same piece. The following pages illustrate this idea.



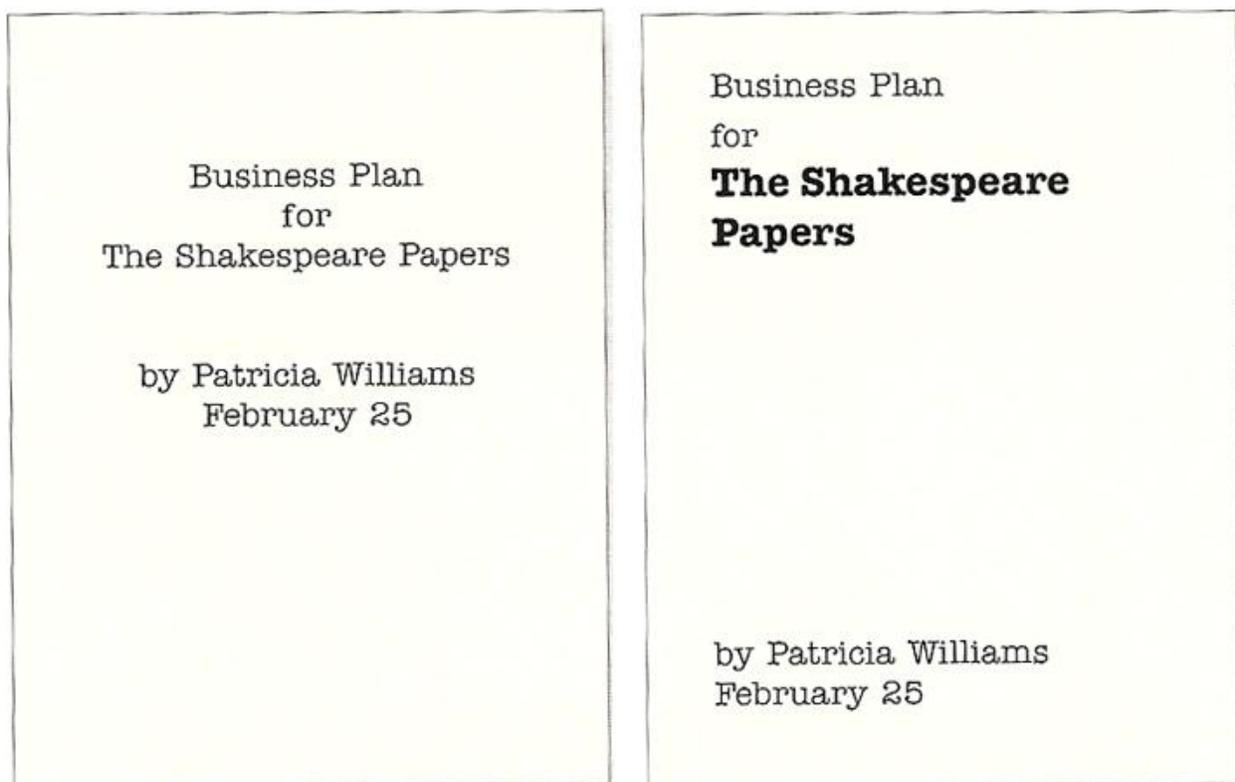
Here's the example from the last unit.

This has the same logical arrangement as above, but it is now right-aligned. Can you see the "hard" edge on the right?

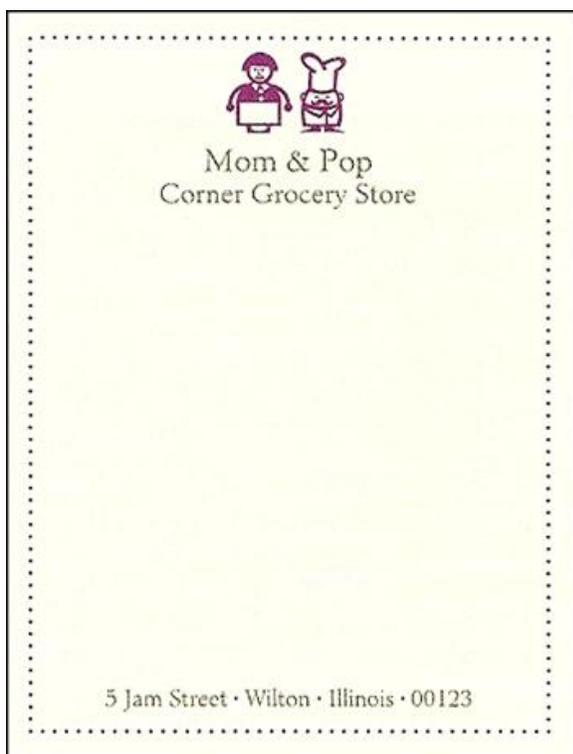
There is a strong invisible line connecting the edges of these two groups of text. You can actually see the edge. **The strength of this edge is what gives strength to the layout.**



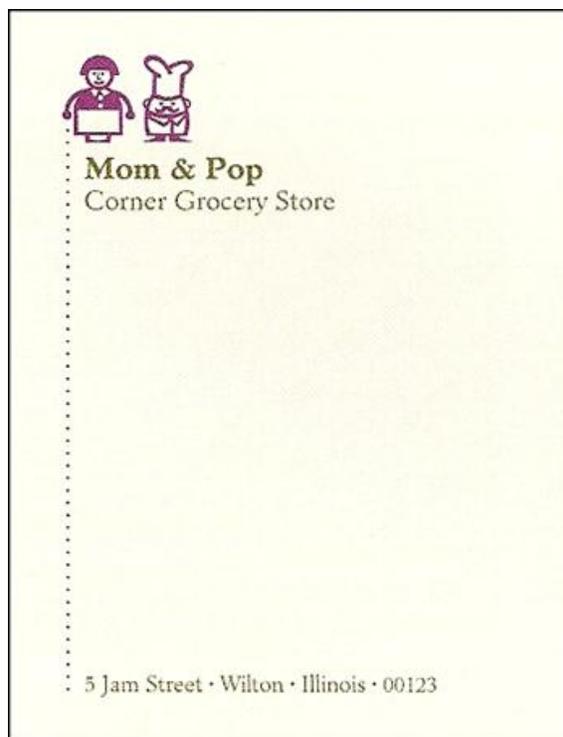
Take notice of the designs you like. Without realizing it, I suspect that most designs you like are not centered. But combine a strong flush (right or left alignment) with good use of proximity and you will be amazed at the change in your work.



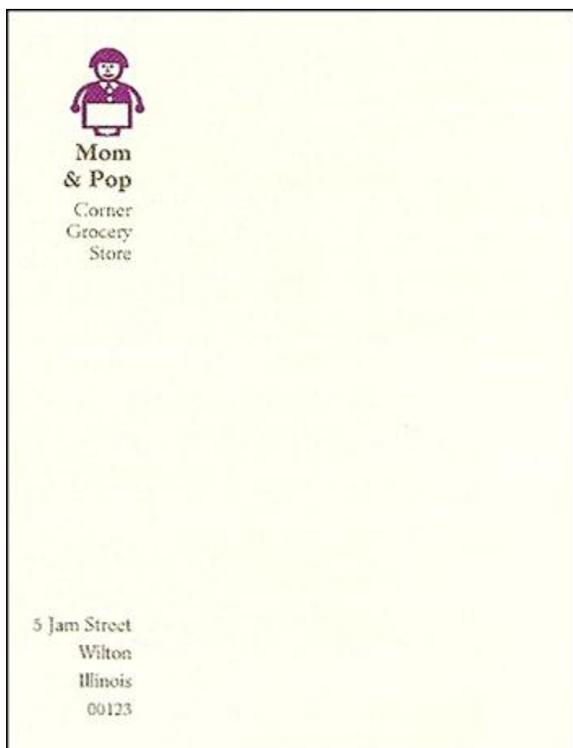
The strong flush-left alignment gives the report cover a more sophisticated impression. Even though the author's name is far from the title, that invisible line of the strong alignment connects the two text blocks.



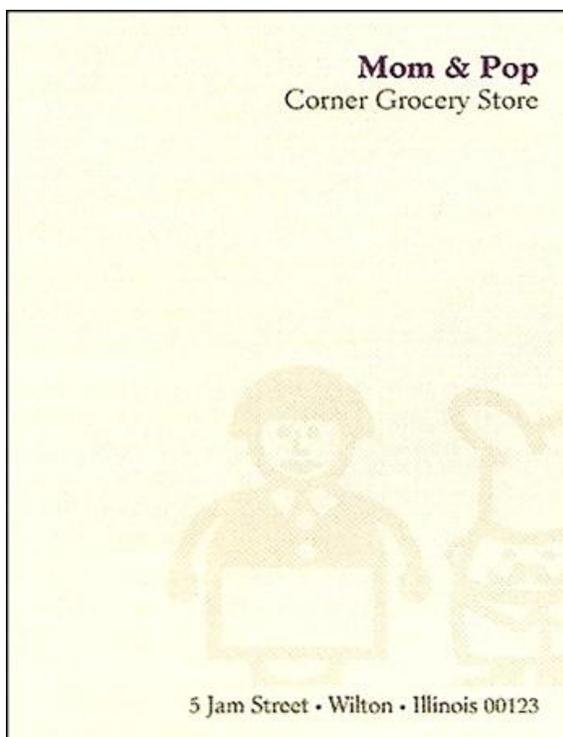
This isn't bad, but the centered layout is a little dull, and the border closes the space, making it feel confined.



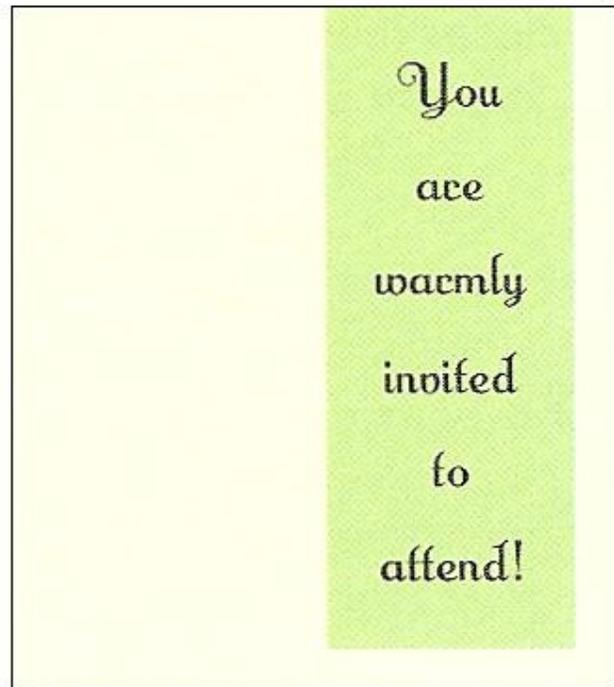
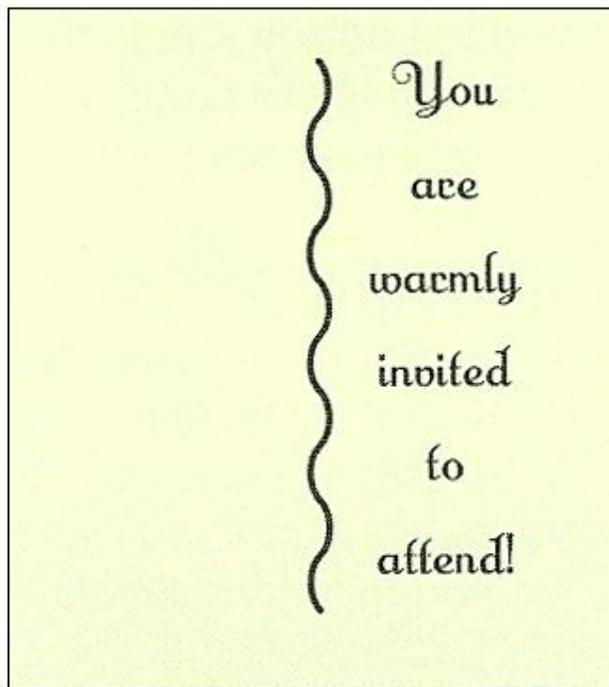
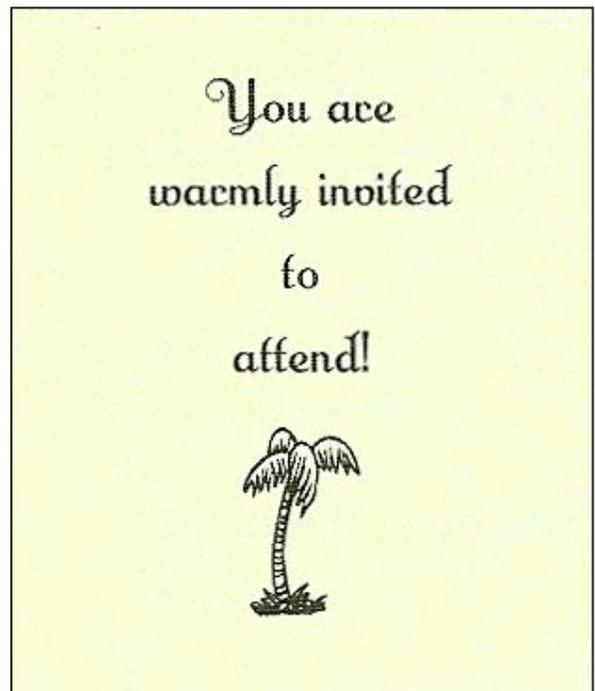
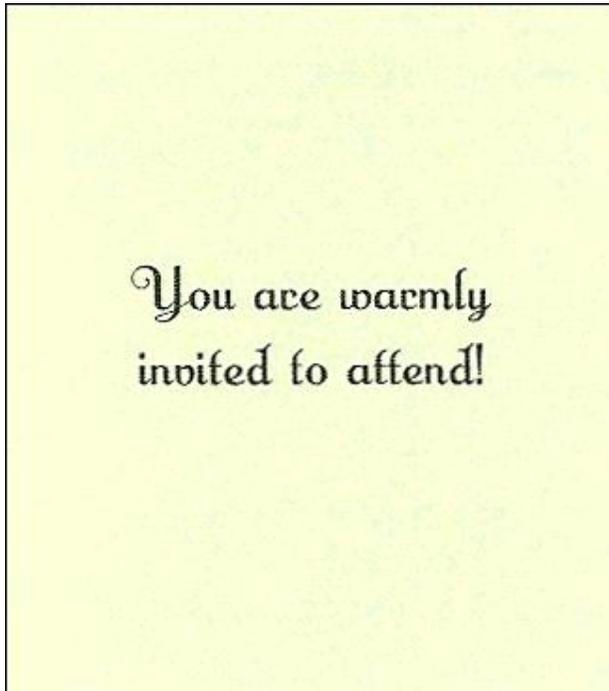
A flush-left alignment makes the page a little more sophisticated. Limiting the dotted line to the left side opens the page and emphasizes the alignment.



The text is flush right, but placed on the left side. The letter you type will have a strong flush left to align with the flush right of this layout.

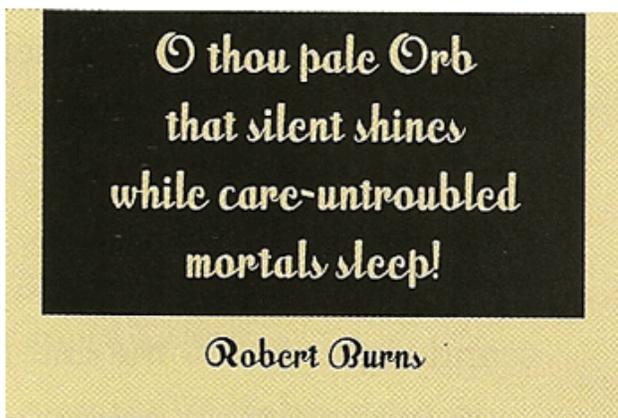
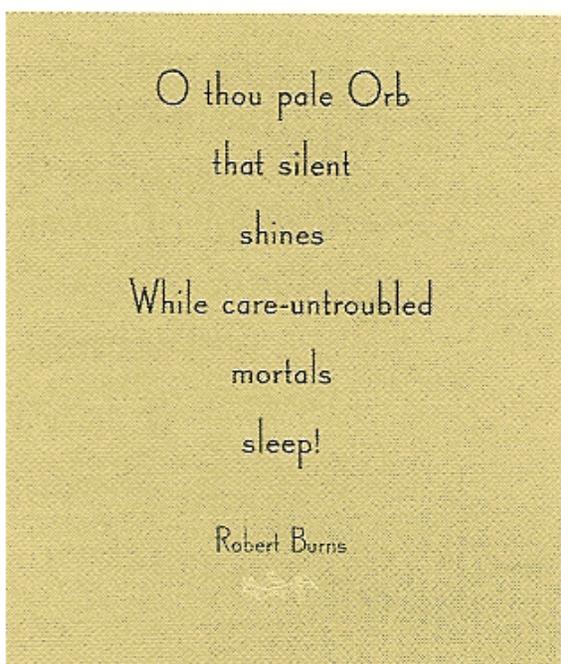
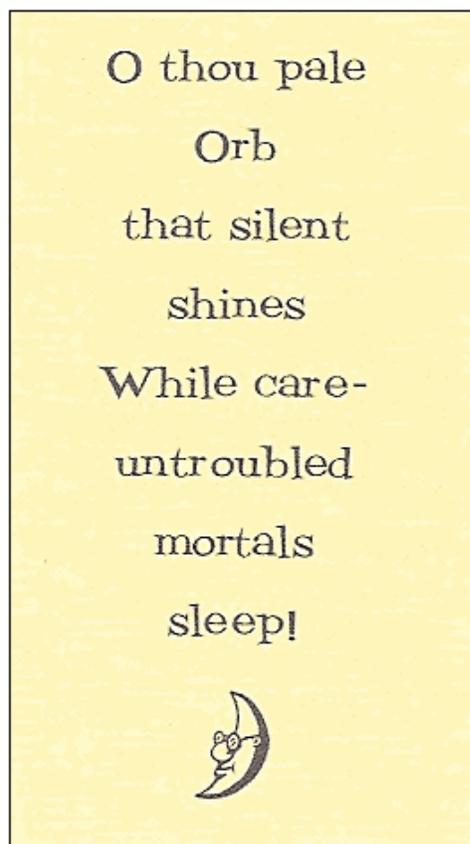
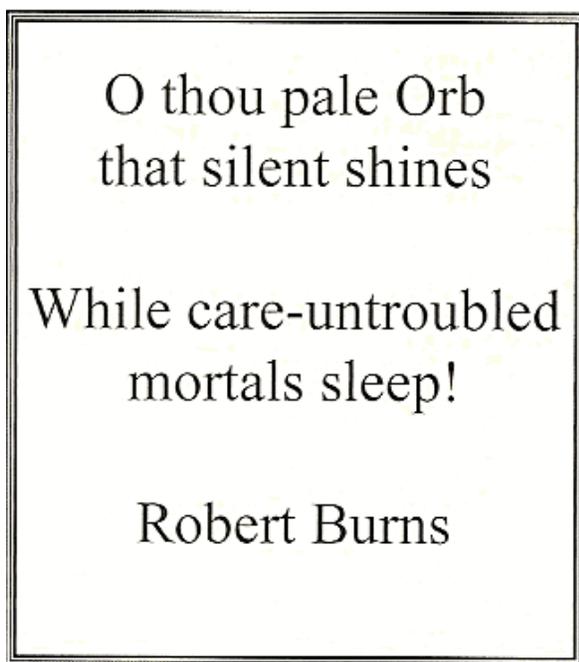


Be brave! Be bold!



If you really must center some text, then make it purposeful.

Or, center what is inside the block, but move the block off to one side.



Again, notice that centering is not bad, but it should be done with care!

In the lower left, notice the look is plain but with the author separated by space and font.

Also, on the right, notice the tall and slender layout on tall and thin paper and the wider and thicker layout on wide paper.

Aside from alignment, be sure to notice the other variations.

Text Alignments

You're probably accustomed to working with text alignments. Until you have more training, stick to the guideline of using one text alignment on the page: either all text is flush left, flush right, or centered.

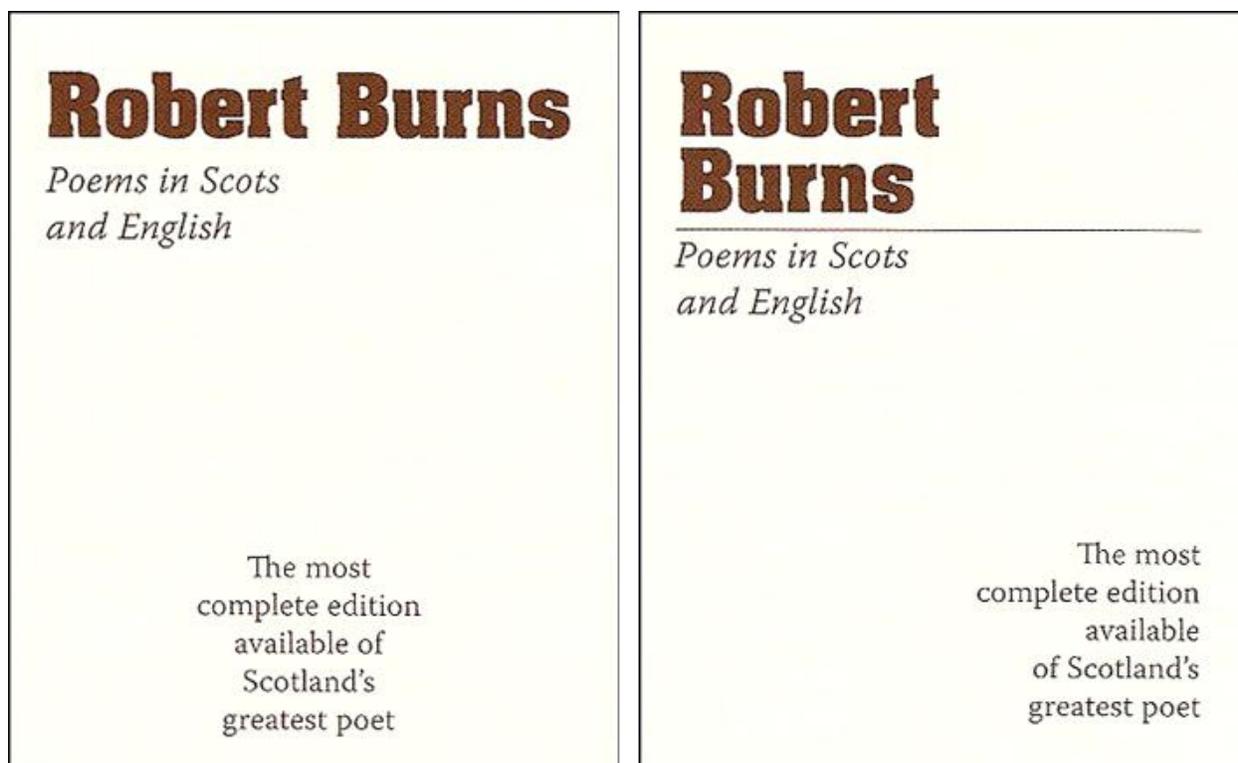
This text is *flush left*.
Some people call it quad left, or you can say it is left aligned.

This text is *flush right*. Some people call it quad right, or you can say it is right aligned.

This text is centered.
If you are going to center text, make it obvious.

In this paragraph it is difficult to tell if this text was centered purposely or perhaps accidentally. The line lengths are not the same, but they are not really different. If you can't instantly tell that the type is centered, why bother?

This text is justified. Some people call it quad left and right, and some call it blocked - the text lines up on both sides. Whatever you call it, don't do it unless your line length is long enough to avoid awkward gaps between the words because the gaps are really annoying, don't you think?



Occasionally you can get away with using both flush right and flush left text on the same page, but make sure you align them in some way!

In the first example, the title and the subtitle are flush left, but the description is centered. There is no common alignment between the two elements of text so they don't have any connection to each other.

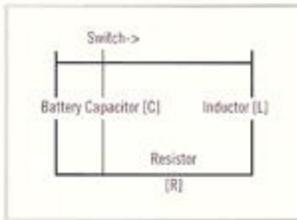
In the second example, although these two elements still have two different alignments (the top is flush left and the bottom is flush right), the edge of the descriptive text below aligns with the right edge of the thin rule above, connecting the elements with an invisible line.

There are two problems here, right? A Lack of **proximity** and a lack of **alignment**.

Even though it may be a boring ol' chart, there is no reason not to make the page look as nice as possible and to present the information as clearly as possible. When information is difficult to understand, that's when it is the **most** critical to present it as clean and organized.

Example 6: Value of a resistor in an electrical circuit.

Find the value of a resistor in an electrical circuit which will dissipate the charge to 1 percent of its original value within one twentieth of a second after the switch is closed.



$q_0 = 9$ volts
 $q(t) = 0.09$ volts
 $t = 0.05$ seconds
 $L = 8$ henrys
 $C = 0.0001$ farads
 $R = 300$ ohms
 $q(t) = 0.253889$

$1/(L * C)$ 1250
 $(R / (2 * L)) ^ 2$ 351.5625
 $SQRT(B15 - B16)$ 29.973947
 $COS(T * B17)$ 0.07203653
 $-R * (1 / (2 * L))$ -0.9375
 $Q0 + EXP(B 19)$ 3.52445064

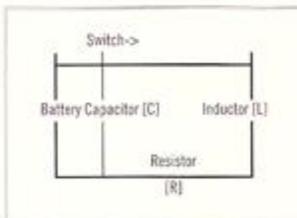
There are two problems here:

- a lack of **proximity** and
- a lack of **alignment**.

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If you have information that is difficult to understand, that's when it is essential to present it as clean and organized.

Violate Huskings Darn Honor Form

Heresy rheumatic starry offer former's dodder, Violate Huskings, an wart hoppings darn honor form.

Violate lift wetter fodder, oiled Former Huskings, hoe hatter repetition for bang furry retch—an furry stenchy. Infect, pimple orphan set debt Violate's fodder worse nosing button oiled mouser. Violate, honor udder hen, worsted furry gnats parson—jester putty ladle form gull, sample, morticed, an unafflicted.

Tarred gull

Wan moaning Former Huskings nudist haze dodder setting honor cheer, during nosing.

VIOLATE! sorted dole former, Watcher setting darn fur? Denture nor yore canned gat retch setting darn during nosing? Germ pup otter debt cheer!

Arm tarred, Fodder, resplendent Violate warily.

Watcher tarred fur? aster stenchy former, hoe dint half mush symphony further gull.

Fetter pegs

Are badger dint doe mush woke disk moaning! Ditcher curry doze buckles fuller slob darn tutor peg-pan an feeder pegs?

Yap, Fodder. Are fetter pegs.



Ditcher mail-car caws an swoop otter caw staple? Off curse, Fodder. Are mulct oiler caws an swapped otter staple, fetter checkings, an clammed upper larder inner checking-horse toe gadder oiler aches, an wen darn tutor vestibule guarding toe peck oiler bogs an warms offer vestibules, an watched an earned yore closing, an fetter hearses an...

Ditcher warder oiler hearses, toe? enter-ruptured oiled Huskings. Nor, Fodder, are dint? Dint warder mar hearses? Wire nut? Arm surrey, Fodder, butcher hearses jest worsen Thursday. Yore kin leader hearse

Violate Huskings Darn Honor Form

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Which of the two above appears easier to read?

Which one is cleaner and has a sharper image?

As you can see in the first, there are centered headings with text that is flush left and the first line of each paragraph is indented. If you were to visualize all the lines, (centered, indented and left flush) you'd have a mess!

So, find a strong alignment and stick to it. If the text is flush left, set the headings and subheadings flush left as well.

Here are some other points:

- First paragraphs are traditionally not indented. The purpose of indenting a paragraph is to tell you there is a new paragraph, but you always know the first one is a new paragraph.
- In the old days on a typewriter, an indent was five spaces. With the proportional type you are using on your computer, the standard typographic indent is one 'em' (an 'em' is as wide as the point size of your type), which is more like two spaces.
- Be conscious of the ragged edge of your type. Adjust the lines so your right edge is as smooth as possible.
- If there are photographs or illustrations, align them with an edge and/or a baseline.



Ladle Rat Rotten Hut

The story of a wicket wool and a ladle gull by H. Chace

Wante pawn term dare worsted ladle gull hoe lift wetter munder inner ladle conlage honor itch offer lodge, dock, florist. Disk ladle gull orphan worry Puffy ladle rat cluck wetter ladle rat hut, an fur disk raise pimple colder Ladle Rat Rotten Hut.

Wan moaning Ladle Rat Rotten Hut's munder colder inest.

"Ladle Rat Rotten Hut, horny ladle basking winsome burden barter an shinker cookies. Tick disk ladle basking tutor conlage offer groin-munder hoe lifts honor udder site offer fornic. Shaker lake Dun stopper laundry wrotel Dun stopper peck fooral Dun daily-daily inner fornic, an yonder nor sorglum-stenches, dun stopper sorage wet strainers!"

"Hoe-cake, munder," respicient Ladle Rat Rotten Hut, an tickle ladle basking an stutters oft. Honor wrote tutor conlage offer groin-munder, Ladle Rat Rotten Hut mitten anomalous wool.

"Wail, wail, wail!" set disk wicket wool, "Evanescent Ladle Rat Rotten Hut! Wares are putty ladle gull going wizard ladle basking!"

"Armor going tumor groin-munder's, reprisal ladle gull, "Grammar's seeking bet. Armor ticking arson burden barter an shinker cookies."

"O hoel Heifer grate woke," setter wicket wool butter taught tomb sheik, "O! tickle shirt court tutor conlage offer groin-munder. O! ketchup wetter letter, an dee—O bore!"

Soda wicket wool tucker shirt court, an whiny retched a conlage offer groin-munder, pickled inner window, an sore debtor pore oil worming worse lion inner bet. Inner flesh, disk abdominal wool lipped honor bet, paunched honor pore oil worming, an garbled erupt. Den disk ratches ammon pot honor groin-munder's

nut cup an grut-gun, any curried ope inner bet.

Inner ladle wile, Ladle Rat Rotten Hut a raft atter conlage, an ranker dough ball. "Comb ink, sweat hand," setter wicket wool, dispracing lo verse. Ladle Rat Rotten Hut entily bet rum, an stud byer groin-munder's bet.

"O Grammar!" orater ladle gull historically, "Water bag icer gurl! A nervous sausage bag ice!"

"Battered lucky chew whiff, sweat hand," setter hoat-Thursday wool, wetter wicket small honors phias.

"O, Grammar, water bag noisel! A nervous sore suture anomalous prognosis!"

"Battered small your whiff, doling," whiskered sole wool, ante mouse worse waulding.

"O Grammar, water bag mouser gurl! A nervous sore suture bag mouset!"

Daze worry on-finger-nut ladle gull's leet warts. O! offer sooken, caking offer caners an sprinking otter bet, disk hoand-hoanded wool lipped own pore Ladle Rat Rotten Hut an garbled erupt.

—H. Chace
Anguish Languish



Ural! Yonder nor sorglum stenches shut ladle gulls stopper torque wet strainers.



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Sometimes there is good design from the start, but it still needs some small adjustments. Strong alignment is often the missing key to a more professional look.

If you study the first example above, you can find over 10 different lines of alignment.

After you've tried to align your work, here are some more suggestions to check for:

- illustrations that hang out over the edge just a bit
- captions that are centered under photos
- headlines that are not aligned with the text
- rules (lines) that don't align with anything, or a combination of centered text and flush left text.



Find a strong line and use it!

If you have a photo or a graphic with a strong flush side, align the side of the text along the straight edge of the photo, as shown above

In the top example, there is a nice strong line along the left edge of the type, and there is a nice strong line along the left edge of the image - you can see the pink dotted line I drew along those edges. Between the text and the image, though, there is "trapped" white space, and the white space is on an awkward shape, which you can also see with the pink dotted line. When white space is trapped, it pushes the two elements apart.

So find a strong line and use it.

Now the strong line on the right side of the text and the strong line on the left side of the image are next to each other, making each other stronger, as you can see by the pink lines I drew. The white space now is floating free off the left edge. The caption has also been set against the same strong line of the edge of the image.

Guilty Looks Enter Tree Beers

Wants pawn term dare worsted
ladle gull hoe hat search putty
yowler coils debt pimple colder
Guilty Looks. Guilty Looks lift
inner ladle cordage saturated
adder shirt dissidence firmer

*Debt florists mush toe
dentures furry ladle gull!*

bag florist, any
ladle gull orphan
aster murder toe
letter gore entity
florist oil buyer shelf.

"Guilty Looks!" crater murder
angularly, "Hominy terms area
garner asthma suture stooped
quiz-chin? Goiter door florist?
Sordidly NUT!"

"Wire nut, murder?" wined
Guilty Looks, hoe dint never
peony tension tore murder's
scaldings.

"Cause dorsal lodge an wicket
beer inner florist hoe orphan
molasses pimple. Ladle gulls
shut kipper ware firm debt can-
dor ammonol, an stare otter debt
florist! Debt florist's mush toe
dentures furry ladle gull!"

Hormone nurture

Wail, pimple oil-wares wander
doe wart udder pimple dun
wampum toe doe. Debt's jest
hormone nurture. Wan moaning,
Guilty Looks dissipater murder,
an win entity florist. Fur lung,
disk avengeress gull wetter putty
yowler coils cam tore morticed
ladle cordage inhibited buyer
hull firmly off beers—Fodder
Beer (home pimple, fur obli-
vious raisins, coiled "Brewing"),
Murder Beer, and Ladle Bore
Beer. Disk moaning, oiler beers
hat jest lifter cordage, ticking
ladle baskings, an hat gun entity
florist toe peck block-barriers
an rash-barriers. Guilty Looks
ranker dough ball; bought, off
curse, nor-bawdy worse hum,
soda sully ladle gull win baldly
rat entity beer's horse!

Sop's toe hart

Honor tipple inner darning
rum, stud tree boils fuller sop—

If your alignments are strong, you can break through them consciously and it will look intentional. The trick is you cannot be timid about breaking the alignment - either do it all the way or don't do it. Don't be a wimp.

Even though that inset piece is breaking into the text block, can you see where it is aligned on the left? It is possible to sometimes break completely free of any alignment, **if you do it consciously**.

There are a number of rules here, and it is true that rules are made to be broken. But remember the **Big Rule about Breaking Rules**:

You must know what the rule is before you can break it.

Summary

Nothing should be placed on the page arbitrarily. Every element should have some visual connection with another element on the page.

Unity is an important concept in design. To make all the elements on the page appear to be unified, connected, and interrelated, there needs to be some visual tie between the separate elements. Even if the separate elements are not physically close on the page, they can appear connected, related and unified with the other information simply by their placement. Take a look at designs you like. No matter how wild and chaotic a well-designed piece may initially appear, you can always find the alignments within.

THE BASIC PURPOSE

The basic purpose of alignment is to unify and organize the page. The result is similar to what happens when you (or your dog) pick up all the dog toys that were strewn around the living room floor and put them all into one toy box.

It is often a strong alignment (combined, of course, with the appropriate typeface) that creates a sophisticated look, a formal look, a fun look, or a serious look.

HOW TO GET IT

Be conscious of where you place elements. Always find something else on the page to align with, even if the two objects are physically far away from each other.

WHAT TO AVOID

Avoid using more than one text alignment on the page (that is, don't center some text and right-align other text).

And please try very hard to break away from a centered alignment unless you are consciously trying to create a more formal, sedate presentation. Choose a centered alignment consciously, not by default.