

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN:**

1. **Read as much copy as you can**  
– get a feel for it and establish the length that it is worth.
2. **Think of the headlines first**  
– particularly for the lead.
3. **Look at the pictures and make your selections**  
– consider leading on the picture if it is the best selling point on the page. Think about the best crop, vertical, horizontal? Think about headlining the picture.
4. **Ask to see the adverts**  
– do they have colour, a large picture, a headline? If so how will you tackle them?
5. **Be aware that your page is just one in a much wider picture**  
– are you seeking to slow down the paper, give light relief, provide a busy page after two or three very slabby ones, ensure that headlines don't crash into each other from other pages? Find out. Know your deadlines and stick to them.
6. **Is everything there?**  
– is there enough copy (or too much)? Is the picture definitely coming? Is there a factfile required? Make these decisions at the beginning.
7. **Try to see the page as a whole**  
– like the reader will. Think about the relationship of stories, particularly between headlines and pictures.

**WHERE TO BEGIN:**

8. **What is going to attract the reader's attention most?**  
– whatever it is, that is what you begin with. Remember people see pictures first, but a strong headline is also an attention grabber.
9. **Look after the top**  
– readers start at the top of pages, usually on the left. That is where they will look. Don't put your main picture/headline in the bottom half of the page.
10. **Go for dynamic shapes**  
– whether a picture or a headline, the square is the most boring shape. Start a page off with a strong horizontal picture or a deep vertical. After that the page will largely make itself.
11. **Watch out for awkward holes**  
– think one step ahead. If, by planning a strong horizontal picture you are leaving a 3cm deep space above the advert ... what are you going to do with it?

**WHERE NEXT?**

**12. Follow a 1, 2, 3, 4 approach to layout**

– this means establishing in your own mind what you want the reader to see first, then second, third and fourth. You should then scale them down the page accordingly. The worst pages are those when everything is of equal weight and the reader does not know where to begin or to go next.

**13. Hold the reader's hand**

– you are the guide around the page, telling him where to go next. Don't make his eyes jump around. If you want him to start reading at a certain point, make it clear with either a dropped cap or a larger type.

**14. Don't lead the reader straight to the bottom**

– lead items that begin at the top and finish at the bottom should be avoided. Once you have taken your reader to the bottom of the page he is likely to turn over.

**15. Are there obstacles?**

– if you put a picture in the middle of a leg of text will the reader know to jump over it, or will he stop and go elsewhere?

**16. Remember grey is boring?**

– too much text without relief, too many legs of text from unrelated stories which are unbroken by headings or pictures, will look intimidating.

**17. Too much jumble is intimidating**

– clashing headlines, headings of the same weight (all bold or all plain), pictures all the same size will just look a mess.

**18. Think about the shape**

– most modern newspapers, even tabloids are modular. The words mean stand-alone units, but in newspapers has come to mean that items have four sides. That means no odd shapes which serve only to confuse.

**19. Pictures compete**

– if you have one that you want people to look at, scale down any others.

**20. Colours compete**

– if you use a touch of yellow or red down the bottom of the page, readers will go there first. Use colour to draw the reader's attention to what you want him to see.

**21. Headlines compete**

– look at the headings on your page and ask if there is an obvious 1, 2, 3, 4. Don't use multi-column headlines together. Use single columns or pictures to break up multi-column headings.

**22. Get a feel for headline weights**

– you can usually see at a glance if there is too much or too little headline on a story. The lead should cover the same surface area if it is x2 or x6.

## LAYOUT GUIDELINES

### 23. Watch the wobs

– too many wobs (white text on black background) will make you look old-fashioned. Remember that a wob may have more impact, so will it detract from the lead?

### 24. Use text to separate images

– don't put pictures next to adverts which have strong images. Use text to drive them apart. Similarly, don't put a heading next to an advert that is all headline.

### 25. Keep it simple

– picture stories should go underneath pictures; all pictures should have captions; the page should have a structure; a beginning and an end.

### 26. People read white space

– use it wisely and don't make it look like a mistake. The key is to use it symmetrically.

### 27. Remember the typographical rules

– people will not read too wide a measure, or too narrow a measure – ie less than 7.5ems. Don't go wider than 16ems. Remember too that a read should be in serif/and browsing material in a sans serif.

### 28. Pay attention to detail

– the difference between those pages that sing, and those that look deadly dull is the detail. Don't just run in text, but think about how it can be made more appealing. Use pullout quotes, fact boxes, white space.

### 29. Watch the rules

– rules and borders should be consistent. They serve only two purposes – to separate material or to join it together. You don't want your reader to look at the rules ... you want him to see the content.

### 30. Keep in style

– the paper's design is part of its brand, don't break out of it on a whim or in an attempt to establish your own personal look.



## GOOD LAYOUT IS INVISIBLE

... it means that the reader is attracted to the page and knows exactly where to begin.