

Parker R.C., Berry, B.,1998, *Looking Good in Print*, Coriolis Ventana.

Pages copied: 74-85

White Space

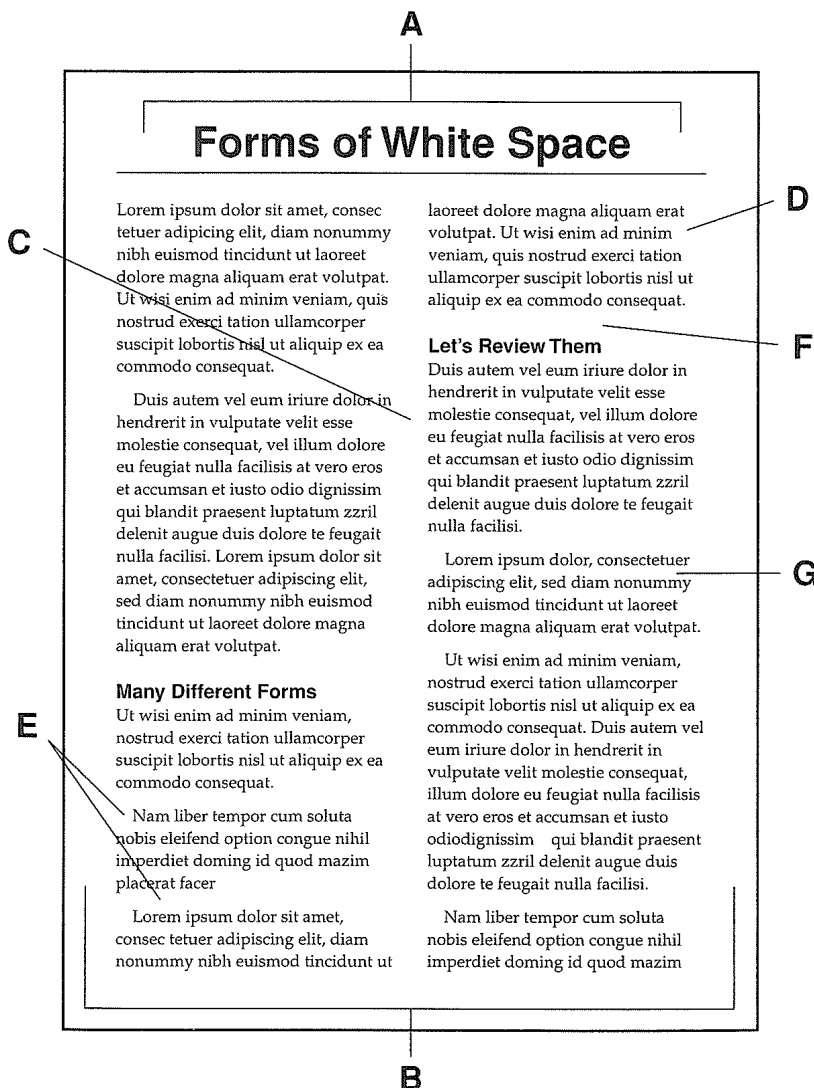
White space—page space that is free of text or artwork—is one of the most undervalued tools of graphic design.

Designers divide page space into three classifications: black space, gray space, and white space. *Black space* is a photo or illustration, *gray space* is text, and *white space* is the empty space left over. It probably comes as no surprise that black space draws the eye first, but you might be surprised to learn that white space comes next. There's a logical reason for this. Readers' eyes are drawn by contrast, and white space contrasts more sharply with neighboring elements than gray space does, on the average. White space also provides a place for the reader's eyes to rest. Unbroken expanses of gray space, like those found in stock-market listings and reference books, send a grim message to the reader: "Expect to spend lots of time here."

White space can take many forms as illustrated in our diagram:

- A. *The open area surrounding a headline*—Adding white space around a headline is usually a better way to attract attention to it than increasing the type size.
- B. *The page margins of an advertisement or publication*—Wide margins direct the readers' attention toward the center of the page.
- C. *The vertical space between columns of type*—As columns get wider, more space is needed between them.
- D. *The space created by ragged line endings of unjustified type*—Justified text is considered more formal than flush-left text, simply because it lacks these gaps.

- E. *Paragraph indents and extra line space between paragraphs*—These small but effective increments of space make text look more inviting by breaking it into discrete chunks.
- F. *The space associated with subheads*—Larger breaks in the gray space indicate more dramatic changes in topic.
- G. *Leading between lines of type*—Tightly-packed lines of type darken a publication page.



JUST IN CASE...

This is probably too obvious to mention, but white space merely means space devoid of text or graphics. If you're printing on tan paper, your white space will be tan. (Feel free to say "duh" if you felt that was beneath you.)

Sinks

One of the easiest ways to enliven your publication is to include a sink—a band of white space, also called a drop—at the top of each page.

A sink draws attention to the page elements below it by adding contrast. It can greatly dramatize headlines.

That Sinking Feeling

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You can place photographs to slightly extend into the sink, rather than align with the top text margin.

Rising High

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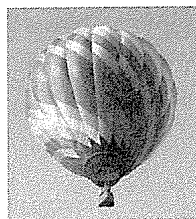
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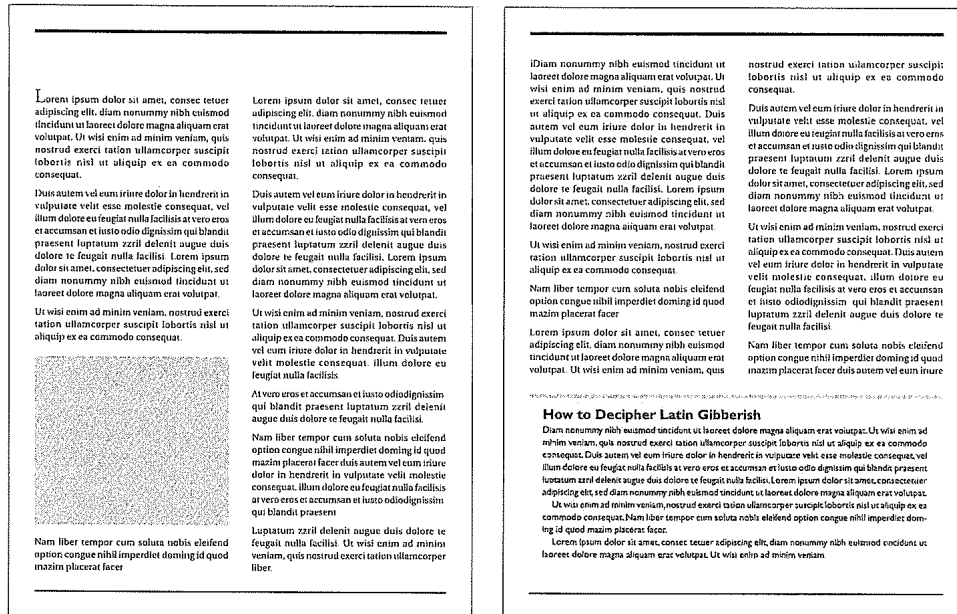


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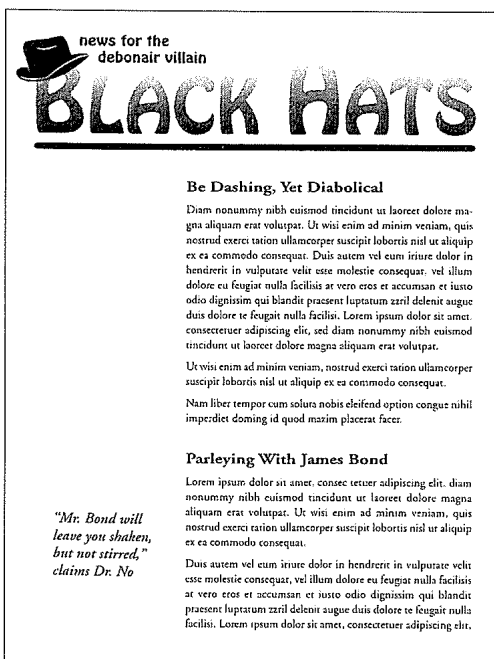
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A consistent sink provides important page-to-page continuity throughout your publication. The publication loses unity if the text begins at a different level on each page.



Vertical White Space

A good way to make your text more approachable is to build a significant amount of vertical white space into each page—perhaps by omitting a column of text.



A vertical column of white space on your page can improve the readability of your text and open up your page. If you're planning on setting your text in a single column, vertical white space is practically a necessity—otherwise, your column width will be excessively large.

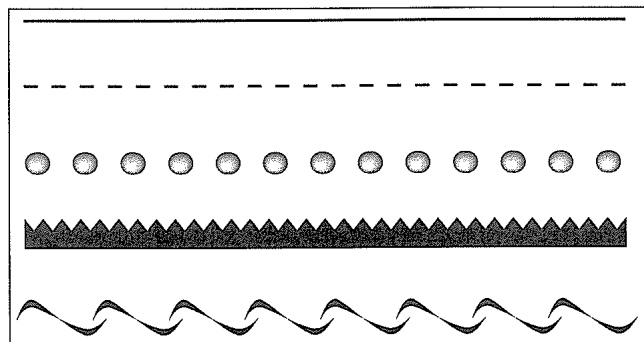
Vertical white space also provides a good place for elements like sidebars, illustrations, and pull quotes—you can align them horizontally with the text they're meant to enhance.

Don't get carried away with this technique, though. If you fill your empty column to bursting, it no longer serves the function of white space.

Rules

Rules are lines used to emphasize or frame page elements (headlines, pull quotes, captions, and so on). They're also used to separate page elements from one another.

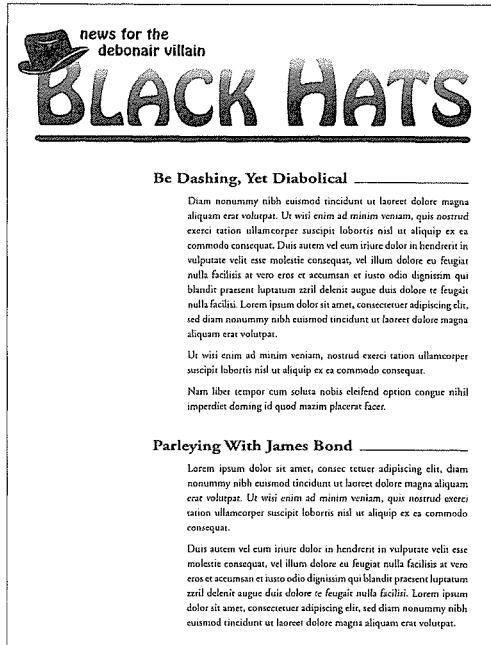
Many varieties of rules, from the simple to the ornate, are available. They can be horizontal, vertical, or angled; thick, or thin; or solid, dotted, dashed, patterned, or graphical.



Vertical rules, called *downrules*, are often used to separate columns—particularly when type isn't justified.

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Horizontal rules can be used to separate topics within a column or to draw attention to subheads.



Horizontal rules are also used to draw attention to pull quotes.



Choose rules that fit the tone of your document. Thick rules are attention-getters. Use them in high-contrast documents like ads and newsletters.

news for the
debonair villain

BLACK HATS

Be Dashing, Yet
Diabolical

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Parleying With
James Bond

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Thin rules are more businesslike, appropriate for documents with a lot of copy.

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When using rules to embellish display text, try varying the length of the rule to fit the text length. Most desktop publishing programs offer the option of doing this automatically.

Who Is Fireside Distributors?

We are best known as the largest fireplace accessory distributor in the U.S. But did you know Fireside Distributors offers one of the largest selections of sweep products anywhere?

Our products include: Merry Sweep, Webster, Dicon, Metalbestos, Flitz, Chimfex, Chamber-Aid, Adapt-A-Place, American Stove Products, Mirror, Lyemance, Air-Jet, Worcester, Homesaver, Kemstone, Dura-Vent, Versagrid, O.D. Funk, Condar, Chimline, Schaefer and Flam-X.

Our experienced staff is looking forward to talking with you and welcomes the opportunity to answer your product and installation questions.

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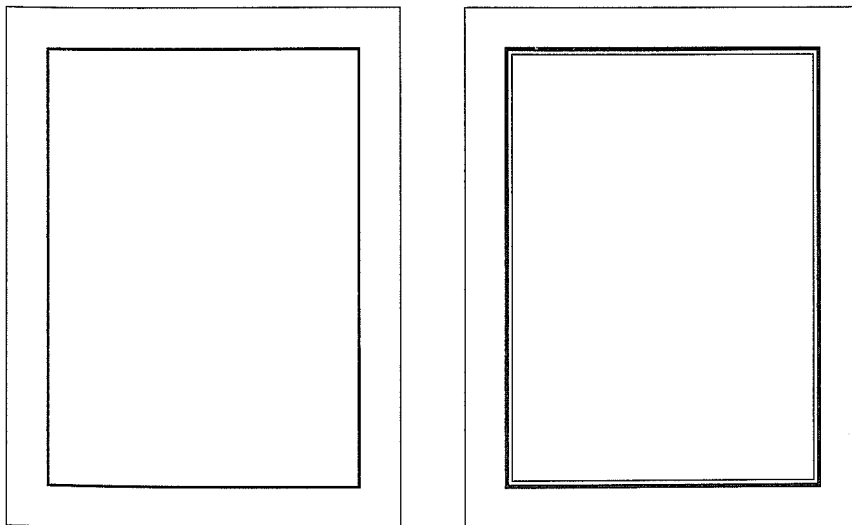
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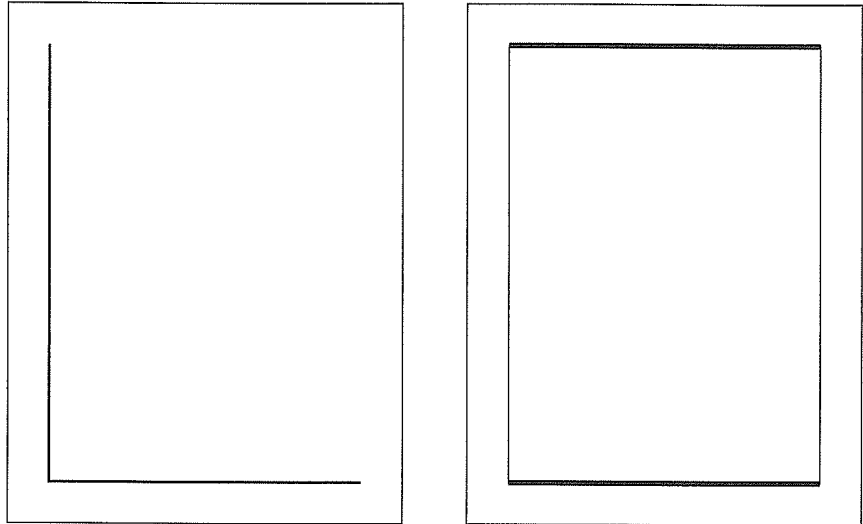
Borders

Use borders to frame the live area—the space in which text and artwork appear.

Tangible borders are rules, boxes, or other graphic boundaries that surround the contents of the page. You can use the rectangle-drawing tool in your desktop publishing software to draw simple borders.



You can also use the straight-line tool to create partial borders or borders with different styles of rules for the vertical and horizontal sides.



More complex borders can be drawn in an illustration program or borrowed from a clip art gallery. There are numerous clip art packages that focus on borders exclusively.

Even if you don't choose to box off your live area, your publication will probably have *assumed* borders if you're using a grid to aid with layout. The edges of artwork and text columns will delineate the edge of the live area, forming a border subconsciously perceived by the reader.

Gorilla Goes Ape, Attacks Grocery Store

"He seemed particularly interested in the bananas," recalls store manager

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When Good Gorillas Turn Bad

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Boxes

Boxes can be used to separate or isolate elements on the page.

Conceptually, boxes are easy to understand—they're just smaller versions of borders. Instead of framing the entire page, they frame some portion of it—an article, a chart or graph, an advertisement. Simple, no?

Well, frankly, no. Layout novices probably misuse boxes more than any other design element. (They also tend to overuse them, which doesn't help matters.) The most common mistake is to use a box purely for emphasis. For instance, a novice might place a box around the headline of an important story to draw attention to it.

The trouble is, boxes aren't really emphasis tools. They *can* emphasize, but their primary function is separation. Placing something in a box isolates it from the rest of the page. By boxing a headline, you're isolating it from its corresponding story, which isn't advisable.

Boxes are usually used to isolate supplementary information, so the reader isn't interrupted or distracted while reading primary information. Sidebars, for instance, are often set in boxes.



Boxes are also used for repeated features in a periodical, like the table of contents or the publication's masthead. This not only separates them from the primary content but makes them easy to find.

BUT WHY?

If it seems odd to you that boxes should be considered containers for secondary information, consider a familiar analogy—computer file directories.

Suppose there's a folder on your hard drive that contains two items, a file and a subfolder. Which is more important: the file or whatever's in the subfolder? The file, of course. You place the most important item "highest" in the hierarchy so you can get to it easily.

The same logic applies to pages. Unboxed elements are perceived as top-level items. You won't see the lead story of a newspaper stuffed inside a box; it's always loose within the live area.

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Information from an article that a reader might want at a glance is often placed inside a box. For instance, an article about a rock band might include a box containing the location, date, and time of their next concert.

The "Head Cases"
Rock the Civic Arena

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Head Cases Concert

Where: Civic Arena

When: Tues, Apr 9, 8 PM

Why: No earthly idea

Cost: \$25

A common mistake made by design novices is to use overly decorative boxes or boxes with extremely thick lines. Remember, boxed text is usually supplementary information. Overly prominent boxes draw an undue amount of attention. This is especially true for small boxes.

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Boxes are also used to define the boundaries of a visual. They're especially useful for photographs with light-colored or indistinct edges; otherwise, the photo blends into the background, creating a vague, unfinished look.



Drop Shadows

Drop shadows create an attention-getting three-dimensional effect.

Drop shadows can draw attention to boxes or visuals. They can help emphasize a photo, illustration, or checkbox by isolating it from its background.

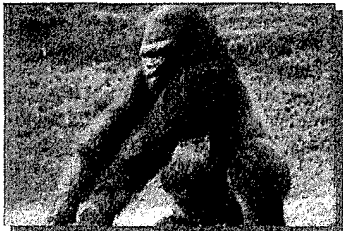
Use drop shadows with discretion. They tend to be overused, in part because they're so easy to create.

Gorilla Regains Composure, Apologizes

"He still seemed rather interested in the bananas," recalls store manager

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When Bad Gorillas Turn Good Again

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