All marketing materials are about communication.

Communication is all about clarity.

Giving your ezine, catalog or sales page STRUCTURE will allow the *artistry* to be *seen*. The structure needs to come from INSIDE. It can't be *imposed*. When it's done well, it will be invisible to the reader because it simply helps them focus on the content*.*

"A confused customer never buys" (Christine Kane)

Spaciousness, clarity and consistency help readers immediately scan what is there – it makes things clearly *look* like what they *are*.

The *images, videos & content* are what should be 'creative.' The *layout* need to be consistent and clear for readers to be able to SEE that content.

"Don't make people 'think' – everything should be obvious and self-explanatory" (Anonymous?)

Look for any elements that don't truly add to what you're communicating. If it feels like something's confusing, don't *add things to it* to make it clear – go back and make 'like' things look *exactly 'like" (example: make all photos the same width, and line them up on the left, make all heads the same size,*

"People don't *read*, they *scan* – especially on the web" (Anonymous?)

The following guidelines will help you achieve that so that readers can more easily understand what you're offering and see that they *want* what you have.

Clarity comes from ...

1. Structural Organization
- Organize the information so it makes sense when people *scan* the page
- Don't make them think – make it obvious what *kinds* of things are where
- The page should be in *sections*, the sections should be *obvious* and each section should be organized consistently.

2. Consistency
- "Like" information should be in the same order and format.
- Images should be consistent: consistent width, consistent 'distance' from the subject, consistent 'style,' i.e. all cartoons, or all clear photos, or all stylized photos (stylized the same way)
- Spacing must be consistent (ex: images aligned left must all align to exactly the same place – so if some have white borders and your page is white, *remove those borders* so the image itself will align left)

3. Economy
- Do the most with the least amount of different things. No more than 3 fonts (or font-sizes) – one for headers, one for subheaders, and one for basic text

4. Simplicity
- Keep graphics simple
- If you have a lot on one page (or one ezine) consider removing images or creating TWO pages/ezines

5. Distinctiveness & Emphasis
- Only make things *look* different if they *are* different
- If you look at the page, what stands out to you? Are those the most important things? If not, fix the formatting so that lesser-import things use the basic formatting and only the more important things are enhanced

6. Space
- Create space around sections and images
- Make sure there's enough cell-padding and cell-space

Deborah Henson-Conant's
Harness Your Muse
Mentorship Program

How to Start:

- **Start in a medium you're *utterly* comfortable in.** For most people that's pencil and paper for the very first draft.
- **Do your 2nd draft in a medium you're basically *comfortable* in** unless you're utterly fluent and comfortable in the final format (most people aren't!). For example, unless you're a seasoned web-designer *don't do layout when you're in a webpage format*. If you're comfortable in MSWord, start there – or in whatever medium you ARE comfortable.
- **Using only space**, **line breaks**, **bullets** and **2 levels of headers**, lay out your information first, so you can see *at-a-glance* exactly what's there
- **Is it easily 'scannable'?** Meaning, can someone quickly scan the page and immediately see what *kind* of information is where? For example, are 'lists' of things clearly 'lists' (i.e. bulleted or numbered)
- **Anything you add** must increase the clarity and scanability
- Create consistent blocks *where images will be*
- **Scan it with your eyes half-closed.** Is it OBVIOUS what this is and what information is where? If not, the problem is most likely that its inconsistent or lacking space between unlike elements.

When in doubt: take it out.

If your layout is confusing, don't ADD something to try to clarify it, go back to the structure and make that structure simpler and more consistent.

Elegant Simplicity at the Core

The *experience* should be "Elegant Simplicity" – even if you're going for a 'funky' feel – that 'funkiness' to do with the choice of images, and headers – but the *layout* needs to be elegantly simple so that it's *clear*.

CONTENT is creative – LAYOUT should clarify

The *layout* must always be simple, consistent and clear. The *content* is what is creative: the *content* of your text, the *content* of the photos, the *content* of the videos.

Don't feel bad if you have trouble with this! This can be a *huge* struggle if you have a deep artistic soul. You'll have trouble separating the *content* from the *structure.* That's why I made this guide for you (and for me!!!)

Typographic Enhancements

This is a list of **typographic enhancements** to increase readability (and scanability) in online pages, whether they're **blogs** or **landing pages.**

The point is not to be *artistic,* but to *clarify meaning* and make it easier for people to scan the page and 'get it' without having to read everything.

- **Make the SECTIONS clear.** People should be able to scan the page in a few seconds and get the lay of the land – i.e. understand what's there by seeing what's bold, what's a header/subheader, what's in a different color or font, what is a LIST of things.

- **HEADERS & Subheaders** - make them BIG and easy to see (sometimes I also make the color different than the rest of the text). It's important that a header isn't just *visually* 'larger' but is 'defined' as a header so that beings with no eyesight (like Google analytics bots) can 'see' that you mean it to be a header.

- **Easy short paragraphs** (2-3 sentences or 4-5 lines)

- **Images:** photos / illustrations (but no clipart!!! Ick!!) If you don't have an image that works for you, you can use PicMonkey (or photoshop – or even MSword) to create the *sense* of image-ness using important words from your page/blog *(see example – you can just 'imagify' a single word – or even a letter, too)*

- **Bullets** (or arrow-bullets, etc.), **Checklists & Numbered lists**
- **Boldfacing** (even if it's just the first part of each paragraph)
- **Varied fonts** (within reason - and only to help identify different TYPES of type - for example, using a typewriter-like font for testimonials) Boxes for specific text (like testimonials or a list of features)
- **Horizontal lines** (to separate sections)
- **Your signature** (if it's appropriate)
- **You don't need to use the word testimonial** – just make it look like a quote (add quote marks at beginning & end) and accredit it. I often put it in typewriter text and enclose it in a box with a different color background and a photo *(see example)*

"I play almost daily at the hospital or hospice, and put all of this into practice immediately, so it really sinks in."
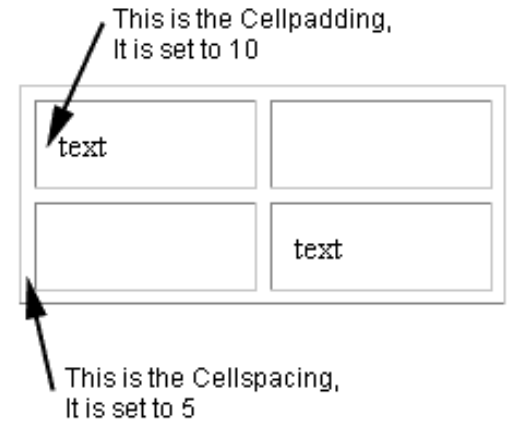
Betsy Scott Chapman

Other Helpful Info

Adding Space

Cellpadding versus Cellspace

- **Cell padding** is the space between the **cell walls** and the c**ontents inside them**. (Think "padded cell"!)
- **Cell spacing** adds space between cells.

This is the Cellpadding, It is set to 10

text

text

This is the Cellspacing, It is set to 5

Margins around photos

To get consistent white-space around photos, set consistent "margins" around each photo (i.e. each photo should have the same margin settings as each other photo)

Random Info (which I will consolidate better at a future date!)

Fonts

- Use only 2-3 fonts maximum and keep sizes consistent (and don't use more than 3 headings)
- Line up all headings on the page (if they're graphics, make sure the borders on each are even, so they 'look' to the eye as if they're all lined up)
- Limit what you include in a newsletter (or on a sales page)
- Remember this is a conversation and you don't want to overwhelm
- Make sure that 'like' things *look* 'like'

There's a difference between a 'catalog' and a 'salespage'

Catalog

- All images should be 'similar' just of different 'content'
- **Similar means:** *same* size, similar distance from the subject – only the *subject* is different
- **Square** images can be very appealing
- Makes sure you have sufficient (and consistent) *margins* around photos so text doesn't intersect the photos (12px is often a pretty good distance)

Salespage

(No time to write more here!)

Links

- Keep them as simple as possible and all consistent (either one consistent color & bold, or blue and underlined or using the SAME button consistently)
- Don't have 'long links' as part of the 'text'

Photos

- Within reason, photos should be similar sizes and especially similar *widths*
- White borders (cell space) around photos must be consistent – text can't come right up to the photo