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Connect. Motivate. Have Fun.

Picture your group

Have a dozen or more mug shots?
A grid of squares gets that gang of
yours looking good—together.

Continued ►

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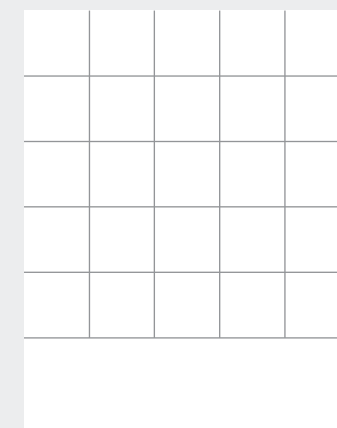
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So how do we picture a group of us? The key to a great design is to get uniform. Get the scale, cropping and backgrounds of your photos as similar as possible, then arrange the results on a neat grid. A few ideas:

Divide the page into a grid. Two types:



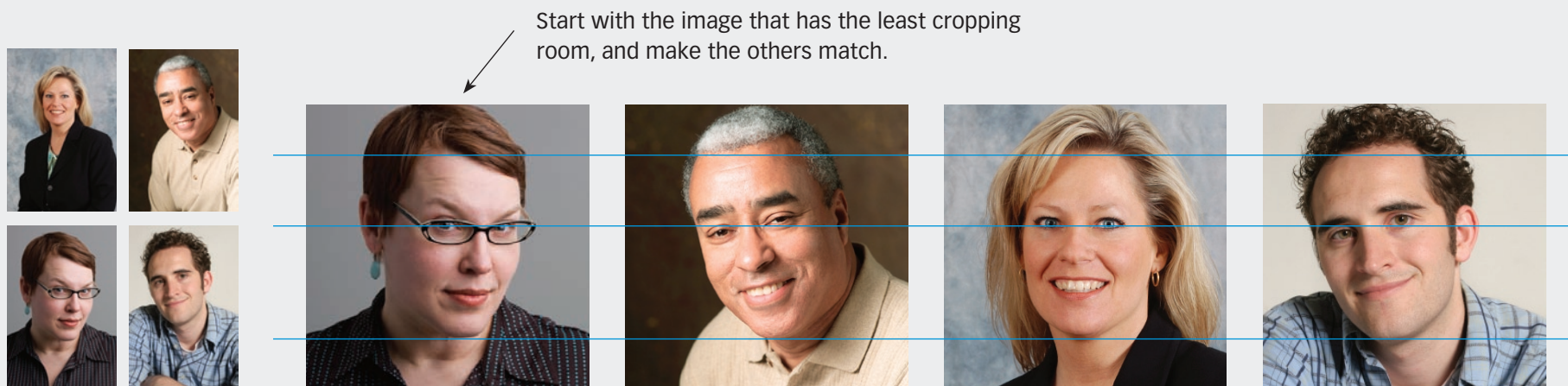
Equal divisions yield page-shaped fields. This has two assets: 1) The photos have a familiar, portrait shape, and 2) every shape including the page is identical. Downside: Letter-shape proportions are visually ambiguous.



Square divisions are symmetrical, simple (all four sides are the same) and unambiguous. This imparts an unusually sharp, *intentionally designed* look. Downside: Square mugs are harder to crop.

Scale and crop for uniformity

The first step is to get your photos looking as similar as possible. Heads should be the same size, eyes at the same level, backgrounds smooth as possible.



Start with the image that has the least cropping room, and make the others match.

Before Well-lit photos taken at different viewing distances.

After Start with the most closely cropped original (above, left), then scale and crop the others to match. Center each face in its frame, and put everyone's eyes on the same level. Male and female adult heads should be pretty much the same size. Head shape, hairstyle and tilt affect the perceived size, so make small adjustments by eye.



Except for your school pictures, a group of photos is rarely taken under uniform conditions and so will benefit from post-production work. Lighting is key; adjust it as well as you can. The things to avoid (left, left to right) are heavy shadows (the kind a flash makes against a wall), washed out highlights (often from a flash), odd color casts and blurry images. Similarly, a dark photo in a field of light ones, or vice-versa, will draw unwanted attention.

Place your photos

Place your photos on the grid, facing the perimeter photos inward (mostly) and distributing the dark-light values as evenly as you can.

Faces inward (mostly)



Distribute by value



Snap your photos to the grid. Face the perimeter photos inward or straight ahead. Where possible, distribute the dark-light values evenly (note the lighter images are highlighted above). Once grouped, look for things you missed earlier—for example, are *all* the faces centered, and are they *really* the same size? Make small scale and cropping adjustments.



Soften with color



Adding a dark field will lower the contrast, which softens the message. The dark also makes a canvas out of which to reverse our name (left).

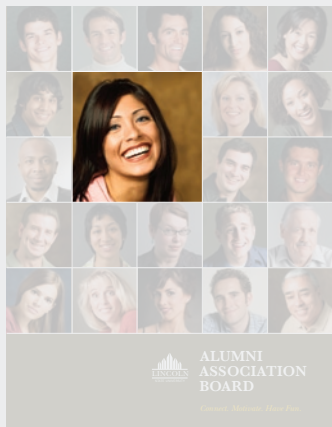

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Centered. | Note the alignment.

Variation 1 Big images

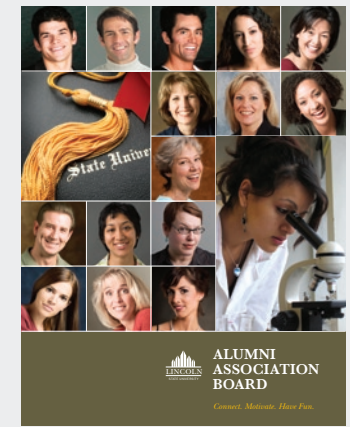
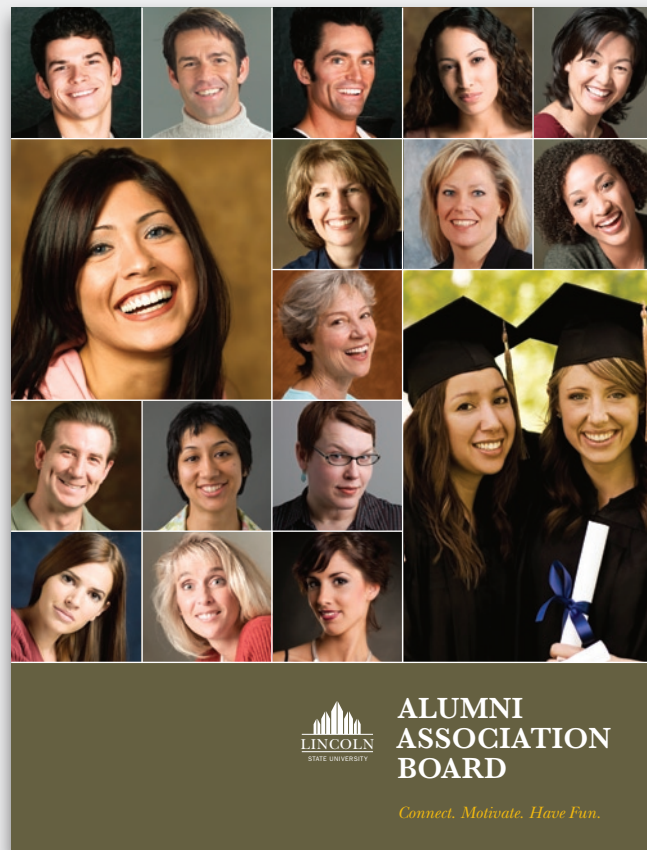
One or two big images in a field of small ones can add emphasis or context. Be sure to maintain the visual balance of the layout.



A mug shot enlarged
One mug shot bigger than the others will draw special attention. Square format is retained.



Offset
Similar-but-different image will broaden the story and lessen the impact of the first image. Different proportions and absence of alignment help it remain different.



A different kind of image
Completely different images give the mug shots context. The page now conveys several stories in one.

Variation 2 Add words

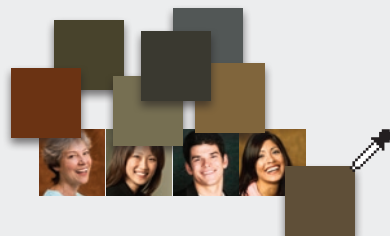
Replace some photos with colored squares, which can function as a table of contents, highlights or links. Centered words mimic the centered faces.

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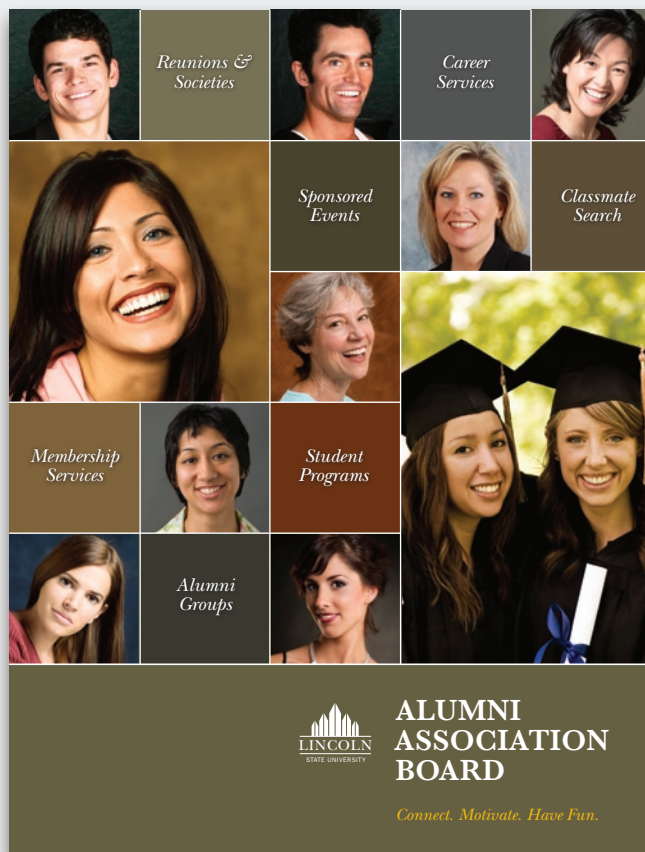


A single color flattens the page (Left) Distributing photos yields an interesting checkerboard pattern, but same-color squares flatten the design—note how they “connect” and form a single field.

(Right) Bring the design to life by eyedroppering from the photos a palette of desaturated colors (below). Note how the squares no longer connect but form a vibrant tapestry.

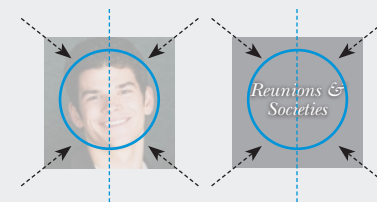


After



Center focus

The strength of a square is its natural pull into the center. Centered faces and text take advantage of that and yield a sharp, repetitive design of real clarity. Note the tiny shadow behind the text.

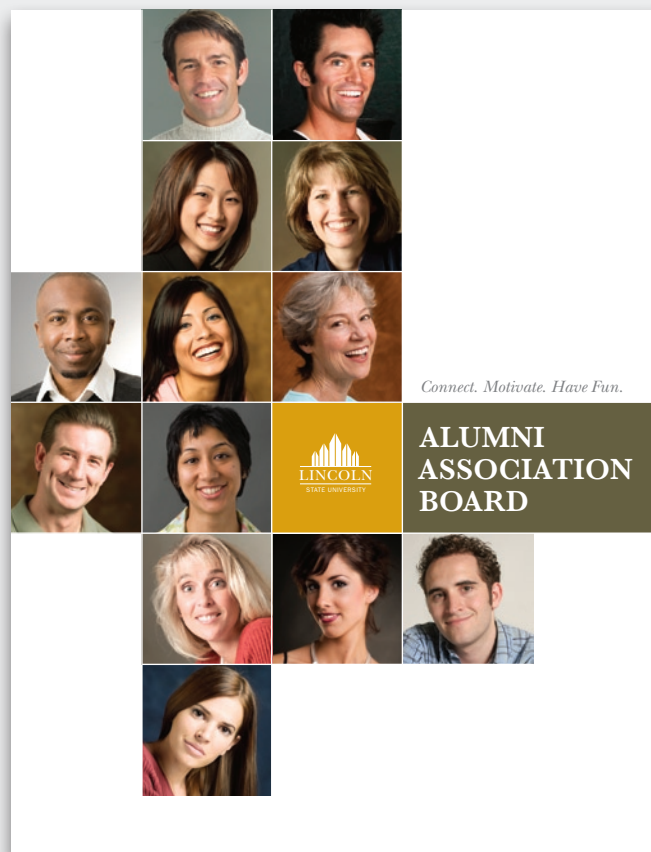


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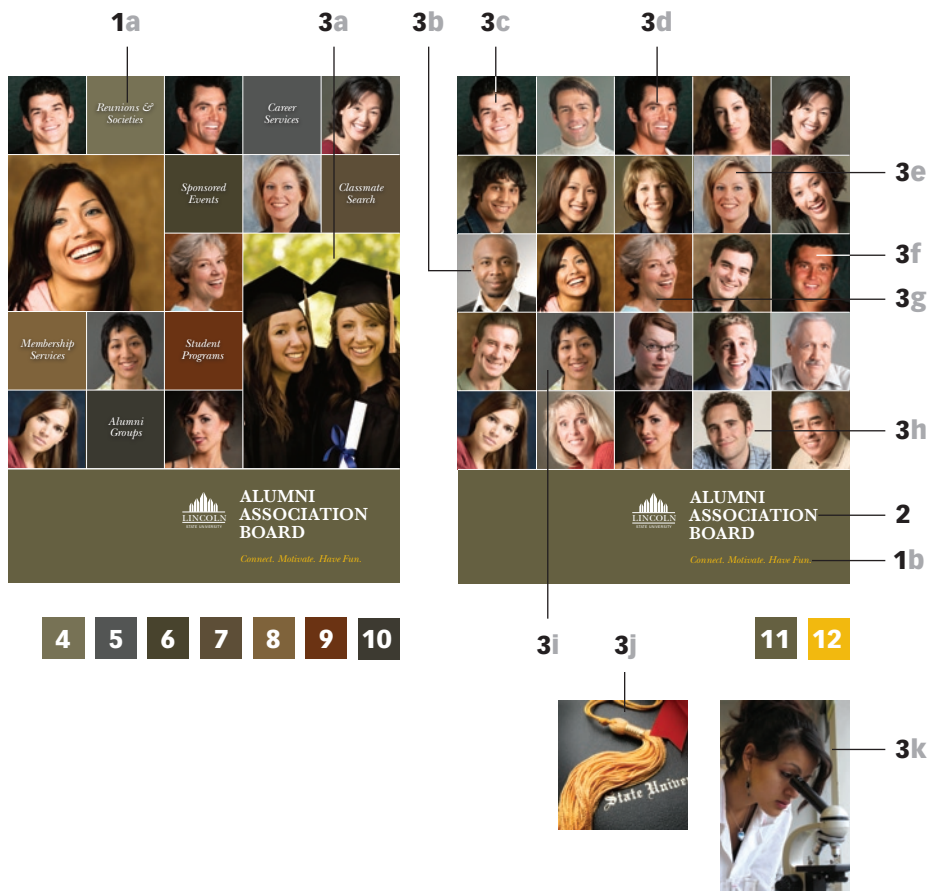


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Hard and soft edges The higher the contrasts, the more energy a design has. (Above, left) Against white, the photos' hard edges actively move the eye left, right, up and down. (Above, right) Dark field has soft edges, and what a difference! It's the same layout, but the page is much quieter.

Article resources



Typefaces

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Images

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[e](#) [f](#) [g](#) [h](#) [i](#) [j](#) [k](#)

All others are from www.rubberball.com

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- 9 C36 M78 Y100 K45
- 10 C65 M60 Y70 K55
- 11 C45 M40 Y70 K40
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Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

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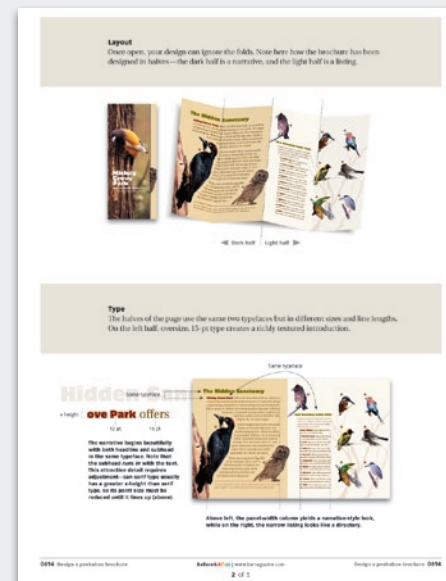


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Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

For paper-saver format

[Print: \(Specify pages 11–15\)](#)





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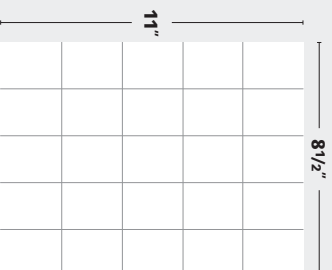
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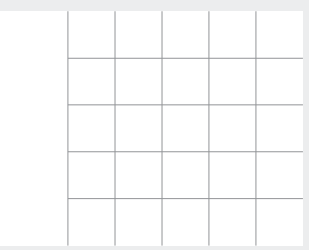
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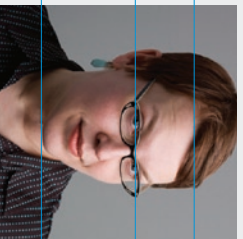
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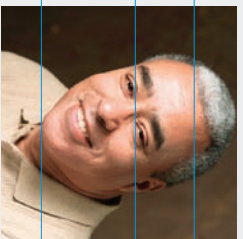
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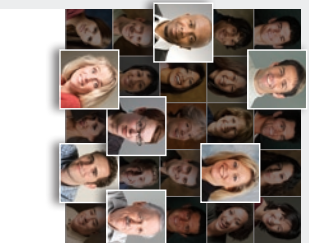
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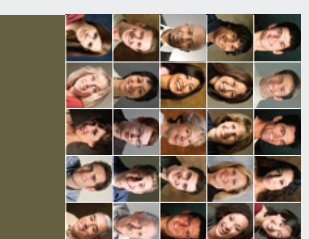


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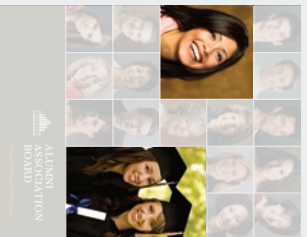
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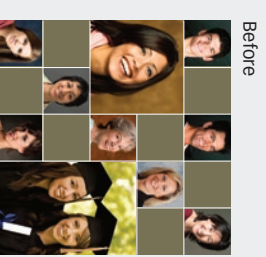
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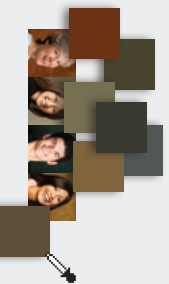
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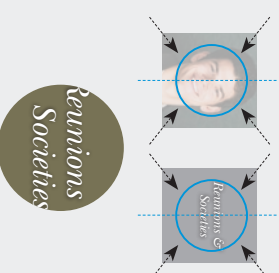
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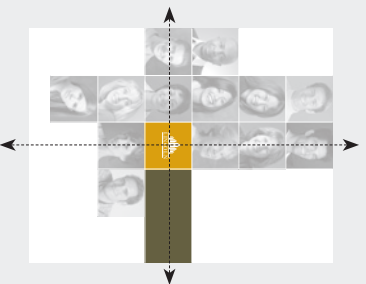


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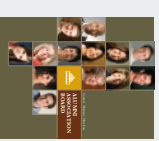
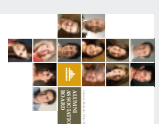
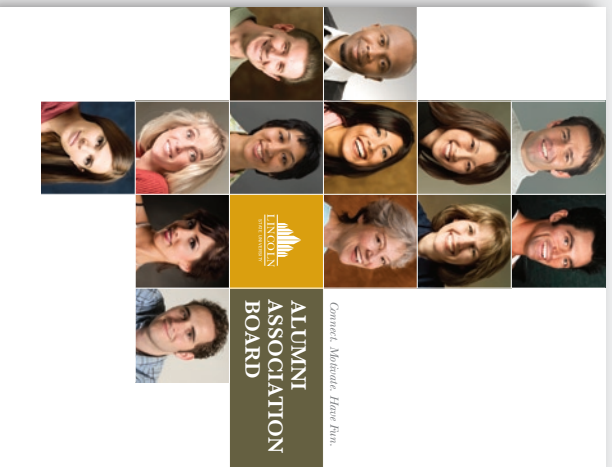


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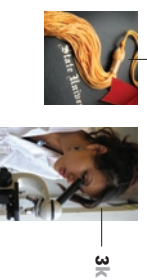


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4 5 6 7 8 9 10



3i 3j 11 12

3k

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