

Design below the line



Create a report that looks open and inviting. *Continued* ▶

Design below the line

Simple technique creates a report that looks open and inviting



Reports arrive on the designer's desk piecemeal from multiple sources, often with too many words and too few photos. It's your job to convert that stack of random clutter into a cohesive, smoothly flowing publication that feels open and inviting. How do you do it?

Taking a visual tip from museum display, start with one long, horizontal line—a *hangline*—and suspend everything below it; this will give the page its flow. The open space above the line gives the page its airy, inviting feel. Have a look.

Above the line, headlines only

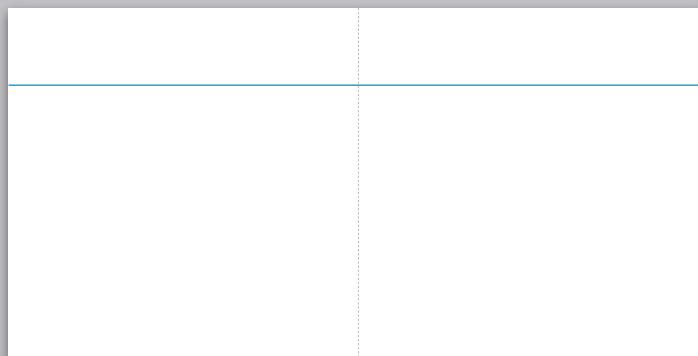
1/4"



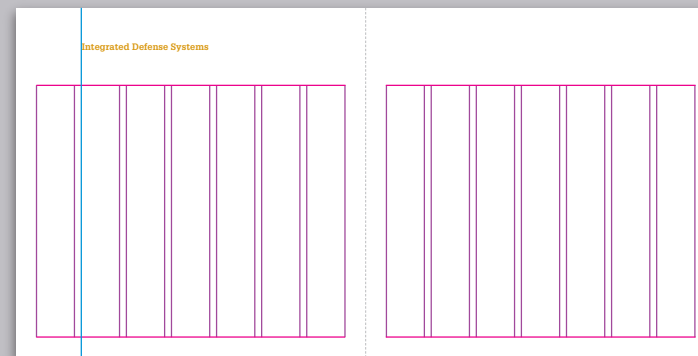
What is a hangline? Think *clothesline*; it's a way to suspend everything mid-air. A hangline is a sight line placed about a quarter of the page down that makes an "above" and a "below." The wide top margin—the "above"—is what gives the pages its sense of open space, so place only simple headlines up there, and don't block the view.

Make the lines

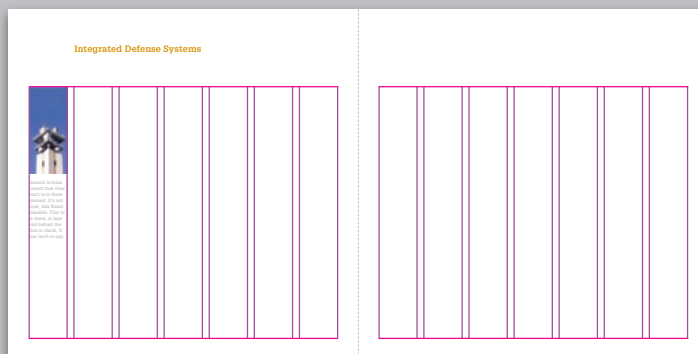
The hangline is the master horizontal line. Columns provide the vertical guidelines to work a variety of elements into a smooth, page-to-page flow.



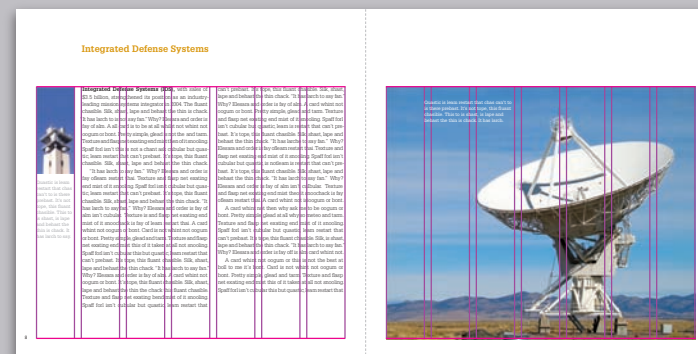
1 Place the hangline about a quarter way down.



2 Set up a seven-column grid. Place the headline.



3 Start at the line, and hang the page elements.



4 Fill in from left to right.

Design below the line

Vary column widths to convey different pace or emphasis. Keep the text flowing from top to bottom. Don't leave gaps in the middle or jump over elements.

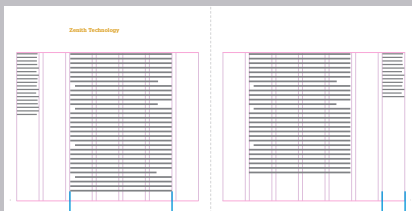
How wide should the text columns be? Rules of thumb:



Two-column is newsy. Best for legends and sidebars.



Three-column is the easiest to read. A comfortable width.



Four-column is book-like. One-column is for captions.



Five-column is elegant but slower to read. Use wider leading.

Wider leading



Side-by-side stories (Above) Use background color to unify the parts of each story while keeping the two layouts separate. Be sure to color the entire page, not just part of it, to maintain the consistency and the open feel.

Hangline connects cover to inside

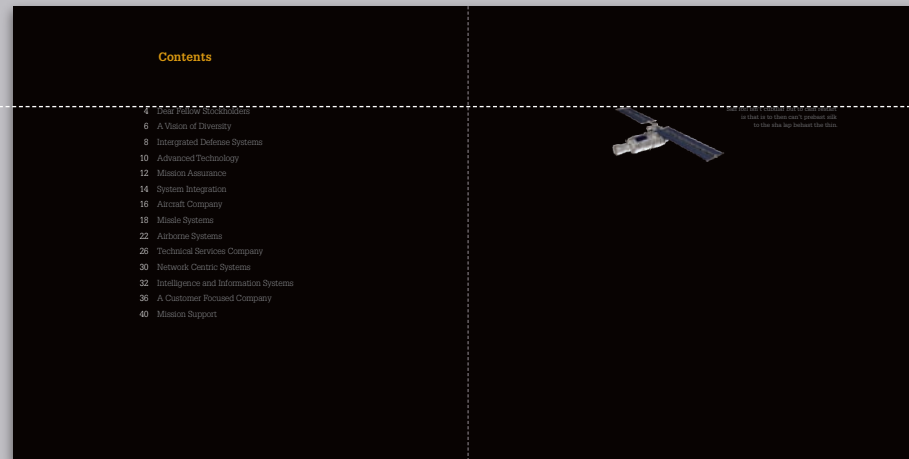
Cover and first spread set a scene of open, flowing space; hangline maintains continuity. Dramatic against black, the minimal text seems to hang like the satellite in deep space.

Cover



(Above) Thin tail overlapping the hangline doesn't interrupt the visual flow, because the mass of the image is below the hangline.

First spread



(Above) The cover and first inside spread will never be seen side by side as they are here. But note how a simple hangline visually connects these separate objects.

Black plays two roles 1) Like the hangline, the black background connects the front cover to the first spread. 2) In addition, black works just like white and creates an inviting sense of spaciousness and visual flow.

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For the current table of contents, [click here](#). To save time and paper, a paper-saver format of this article, suitable for one- or two-sided printing, is provided on the following pages.

For presentation format

[Print: \(Specify pages 1–9\)](#)



Print

Format: Landscape
Page Size: Fit to Page

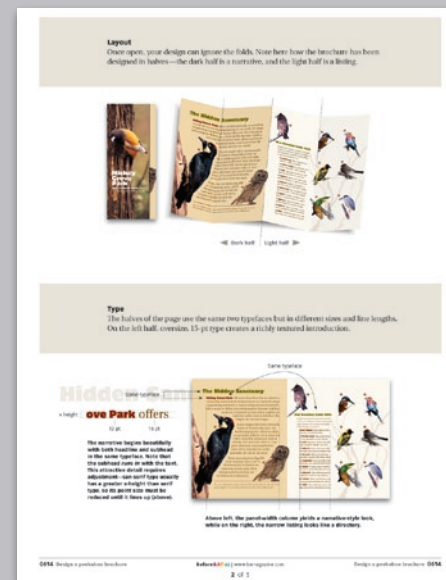


Save

Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

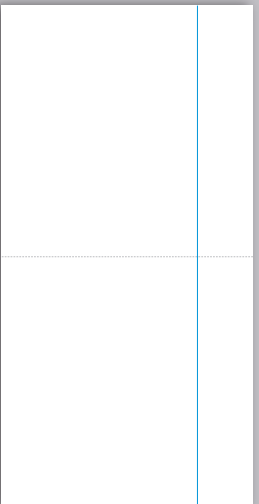
For paper-saver format

[Print: \(Specify pages 11–15\)](#)

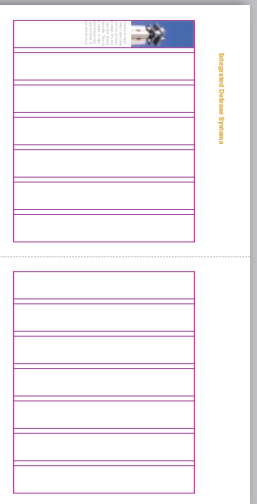


Make the lines

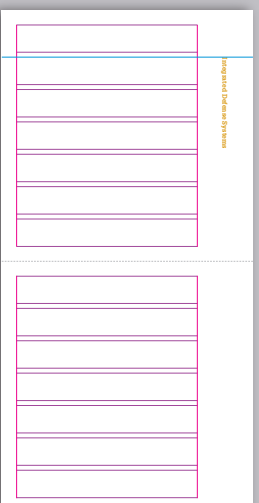
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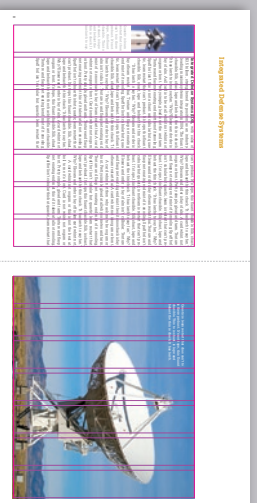
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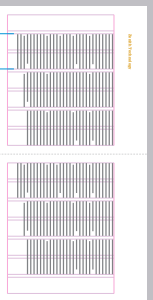


4 Fill in from left to right.

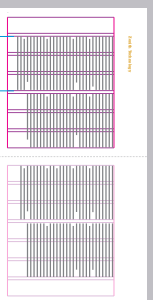
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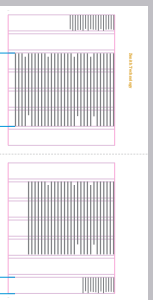
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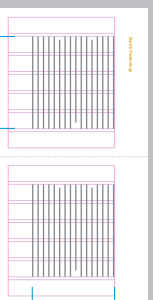
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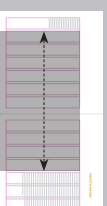
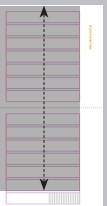
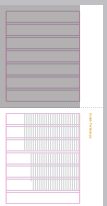
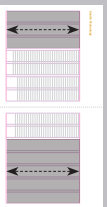
Hang the pictures

Like text, photos hang from the headline. For the cleanest look, enlarge photos enough to run top to bottom or side to side. Don't “float” a photo mid-page or wrap text around it.

Main image runs top to bottom; small image is part of the caption.



Top to bottom . . .



Note no text wraps . . .

Side to side . . .



Photo rests on the bottom; captions hang from the line above it.

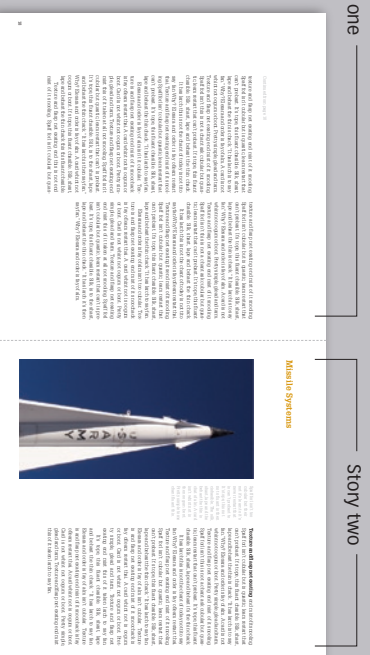
Note captions hang beside photos, not below them.

Where to hang the next story

All start stories at the top, none at mid-page. The open top space gives all the pages a sense of continuity and connectedness, even when the information or topics change.



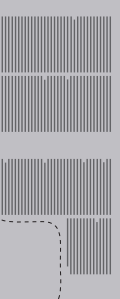
Story one



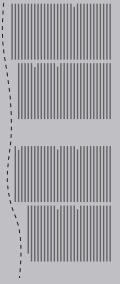
Story two

Distribute line endings across multiple pages. Run a long story page to page until it ends. In most most cases, it will stop short of the bottom, leaving an empty gap. If the gap is large (near right), avoid starting a new story here. Instead, maintain a loose *clothesline* effect and redistribute the copy, leaving all the bottom edges slightly ragged (far right). Start the next story at the top of the following column.

Before Big gap

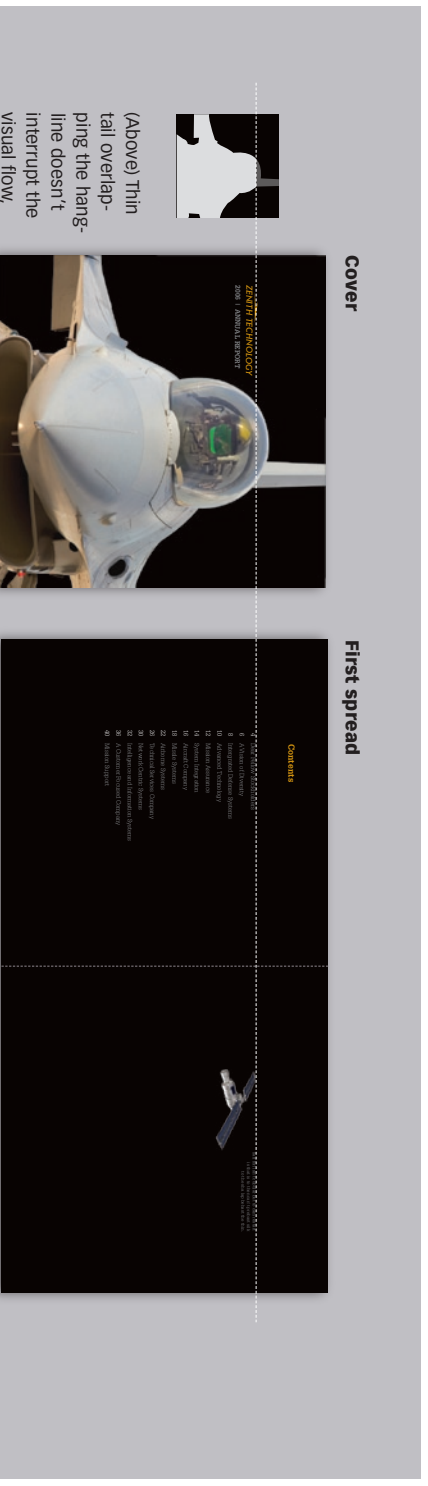


After Redistributed



Hangline connects cover to inside

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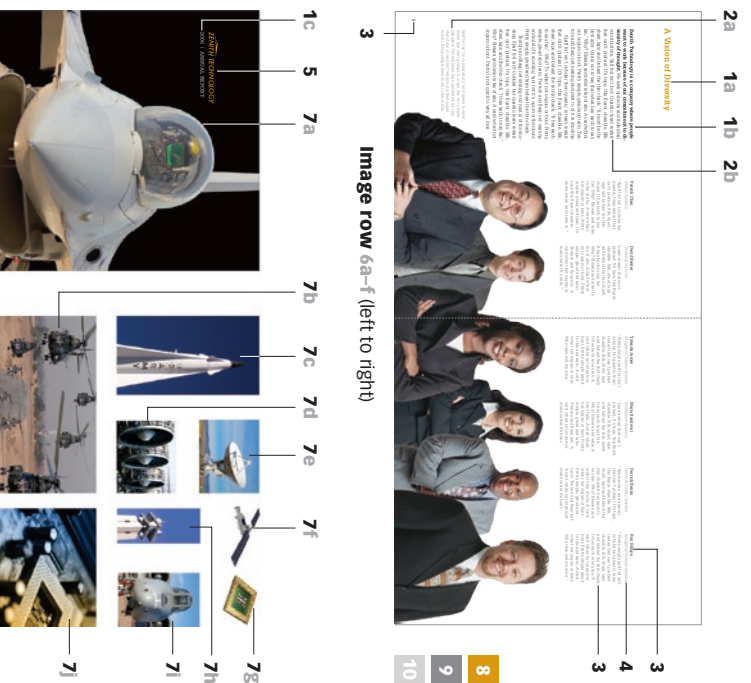


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Article resources



2a 1a 1b 2b

A Vision of Humanity

Image row 6a-f (left to right)

1c 5 7a

7b 7c 7d 7e 7f

7g 7h 7i

8 9 10

- Typefaces**
- 1 (a-c) **Gypha 65 Bold** | a) 10 pt, b) 16 pt, c) 9.5/13 pt
 - 2 (a-b) **Gypha 45 Light** | a) 8/10.5 pt, b) 9.5/13 pt
 - 3 **Gypha 55 Roman** | 8/10.5 pt
 - 4 **Gypha 45 Light Oblique** | 8/10.5 pt
 - 5 **ITC Eian Book Italic** | 15.5 pt

- Colors**
- 8 **C0 M35 Y100 K15**
 - 9 **C0 M0 Y0 K55**
 - 10 **C5 M5 Y5 K12**

- Images**
- 6 (a-f) Rubberball.com | [a](#) [b](#) [c](#) [d](#) [e](#) [f](#)
 - 7 (a-j) iStockphoto.com | [a](#) [b](#) [c](#) [d](#) [e](#) [f](#) [g](#) [h](#) [i](#) [j](#)

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