

SINNERS: 13 AMATEUR LAYOUT ERRORS

1. **Things That Blink. Incessantly.**
Keep animated repetition to a minimum.
2. **Warped Photos**
Keep photographs proportionate.
3. **Naked Photos**
Use hairline rules to border photos that have ambiguous edges.
4. **Bulky Borders & Boxes**
Use negative space to group or separate things. If you must use a border or box, choose an understated one.
5. **Cheated Margins**
Be generous with margins, including inset and offset for text and picture boxes.
6. **Centering Everything**
Avoid centered layouts.
7. **4 Corners & Clutter**
Clutter: Bad. Clumping: Good.
8. **Trapped Negative Space**
Push extra negative space to the outside edges of your layout.
9. **Busy Backgrounds**
Design backgrounds as negative space. Save tiling for the bathroom.
10. **Tacky Type Emphasis**
Think twice about reversing, stroking, using all caps or underlining.
11. **Bad Bullets**
Use real bullets for lists, and use hanging indents to properly align lists.
12. **Widows & Orphans**
Avoid inelegant breaks at the bottoms and tops of legs of type.
13. **Justified Rivers**
Avoid unsightly rivers of negative space flowing through legs of justified type.

Greenwise Lawn Care

*GREAT SERVICE * COMPETITIVE PRICES*

Agnimin rem quisquam sequam ent mod eum ce etiani omnis expedi qui nonet verit di omnis aut et fugit il ipsandae conserorem lias num volorum, optatque sitiore perspedit excerum quam corro cust, occus nonessi audam fugitae audi offictu rehendem qui neccariati odi te nonem commisit.

- * Mowing
- * Hedging
- * Weed trimming
- * Edging
- * Blowing
- * Mulching

Pressure Washing

- * Lanai's
- * Decks
- * Driveways
- * Window cleaning (exterior only)

CALL TODAY FOR AN ESTIMATE
555-123-4567
www.greenwiselc.com

Regarding layout sins, there are a host of them. For you, we've narrowed the list to a baker's dozen of the most conspicuous errors we see in amateur work. Making any of these mistakes pretty much advertises that you don't know what you're doing. Until spotting these sins in others' work fills you with pity, keep the checklist handy:

1. Things That Blink. Incessantly.
2. Warped Photos
3. Naked Photos
4. Bulky Borders & Boxes
5. Cheated Margins
6. Centering Everything
7. 4 Corners & Clutter
8. Trapped Negative Space
9. Busy Backgrounds
10. Tacky Type Emphasis: Reversing, Stroking, Using All Caps & Underlining
11. Bad Bullets
12. Widows & Orphans
13. Justified Rivers

SIN NO. 1: THINGS THAT BLINK. INCESSANTLY.

Don't animate your visuals to blink ad infinitum. Set a small-file blinkie to turn off after no more than three passes at whatever it is your blinkie does. For a more complex animated graphic of longer duration, run it just once then give it a rest. That goes for narrative animation like banner ads, too, as well as looping. A loop literally circles the end back to the beginning to start all over. When looping animation or video, plug in a pause between the end and the beginning.

While we're on the topic of visuals...

SIN NO. 2: WARPED PHOTOS

It goes like this: The size of your photo doesn't fit your layout. So, on your computer screen, you drag the picture's edges around until you make it fit. Bad idea. Now you have a new problem: a warped photo. You gave the

people in your picture coneheads, or you squashed the beauty shot of the product.



You must resize pictures in proportion to their original size. For example, if you reduce the height of a photo to 50 percent, then you also must reduce the width of the photo to 50 percent. Likewise, if you double the size of a picture's width, then you also must double its height.

gnimin rem quisquam sequam ent mod eum es ellanier
nnis exped qui nonet verit di omnis aut et fugit il ipsandæ
nserorem lias num volorumt. ontataue sitiore persne

Just look at your picture. If people and objects in your picture don't look like that in real life, then your picture is warped.

Warped and naked? Is that a very short person driving the mower or is this photo warped? (Hint: it's not a very short person.)

And without a border, our sky blends right into the background. The photo needs a hairline border.

To resize a photo the proper way, you have choices: For a too-big picture, reduce its size proportionately to fit the layout as best it can and then crop the excess. Crop means cut.

For a too-small picture, enlarge it proportionately to fit the layout as best it can before cropping the excess.

SIN NO. 3: NAKED PHOTOS

This sin applies to photography only, and we're not talking about nudes. A naked photo is a photograph that needs a border. Not all photos need borders. But some do. If you can't tell where the photo begins or ends because the photo color blends with the color of the screen or paper, then the photo probably needs a border to mark its edges. If one photo in your layout needs a border, then give all your photos the same border to be consistent.

When a photo border is necessary, use a hairline rule (as thin as a strand of hair). The idea is subtly to mark the photo's edges without distracting from the photo. You want the viewer to think, "Cool photo," not, "Whoa, check out that bulky border."

WINNERS: 5 STEPS TO VISUAL SUCCESS

Avoiding the sins results in a very different look. This is how to make a layout work:

1. **Establish a clear focal point.** A properly proportioned photo and large contrasting headline provide a clear eye entry point into this design's layout.
2. **Minimize the number of groupings the eye must scan.** Clump like with like, and make negative space work for not against flow. Instead of “4 corners & clutter” all over the page, this layout clumps everything into four key groupings: photo and headline, bullet list, body copy and tags.
3. **Guide the eye with visual sightlines.** Strong verticals from left-aligned copy blocks and tags give the eye a clear visual path to follow.
4. **Set type properly.** This design limits all caps to a large one-word headline. Choosing a single font family for type readability creates visual unity through similarity. Other typesetting details such as proper bullets are spot on. No tacky type here.
5. **Use simplicity and restraint.** Need we say more?



SIN NO. 4: BULKY BORDERS & BOXES

Bulky borders and boxes are sins, too. Beginners tend to go border and box crazy in their layouts, mostly because they worry about visually separating layout items.

Borders and boxes are like fences. They communicate, “Stop.” You have to ask yourself what you’re fencing in or out. Chunky borders and boxes are worse because they call attention to themselves. Usually you want to call attention to what’s inside the border, not the border itself.

- * Mowing
- * Hedging
- * Weed trimming
- * Edging
- * Blowing
- * Mulching

Chunky borders and cheated margins.

Choking hazard warning. The problem here is clutter choking all the negative space. The fat border clutters the overall layout while the lack of margins inside the border strangles the content.

If you need to border or box, think “barely there.” Think lingerie straps. Even better think twice before using a border or box at all. Negative space can do the same separating job only without the showboating and claustrophobic effect.

**SIN NO. 5:
CHEATED MARGINS**

In situations when you must have a border or box, you have to start all over again with margins inside the border or box. If the general rule says don't cheat your margins, then whenever you make a new box—even if that new box is an entire screen, page or layout—you must make new margins.

Collateral and news design, for example, employ boxes for related sidebars, breakouts and pull

quotes, etc. Those boxes each require a set of margins. Margins inside a text box are called inset. Margins outside a text or picture box are referred to as offset. You need a bit of offset, for example, on the outside of a photo to keep its outline from butting up against the photo's edges. Without inset and offset, your type will squish up against the box, inside and out. This not only looks bad but also cuts down readability.

Don't be stingy with your margins—wherever they appear. Train your eyes to spot areas where margins of negative space have been cheated. Remember, *white space is not your enemy*.

SIN NO. 6: CENTERING EVERYTHING

Amateurs tend to center everything. Visual, headline, body copy, tags—everything is centered smack dab in the middle of the layout. Admit it, that's your first instinct. Centering feels safe but results in a visual yawn.

While centered content can communicate traditional, formal and conservative, it also creates visual flow issues. Left or right aligned layouts give the viewer's eye a nice straight vertical line on the right or the left to follow top to bottom. Centered layouts have no such line. The eye bounces around in search of the next eye entry point.

Centering is a composition issue, meaning how you compose or arrange items on the layout. Sins 7, 8 and 9 are composition issues, too.



Greenwise Lawn Care



GREAT SERVICE * COMPETITIVE PRICES



Agnimin rem quisquam sequam ent mod eum es ellanieni
omnis exped qui nonet verit di omnis aut et fugit il ipsandae
conserorem lias num volorunt, optatque sitiore persped
excerum quam corro cust, occus nonessi audam fugitae
audi offictu rehendem qui neceariati odi te nonem commis
lat.

SIN NO. 7: 4 CORNERS & CLUTTER

After centering, the other beginner's temptation is to fill up all four corners of the layout, along with every other available bit of space. This results in a cluttered, thus unappealing and confusing, visual message. *White space is not your enemy.*

Think of the Zen of good design as a balance between the yin and yang of negative space and positive space. Good layout feng shui requires calming pools of negative space that help guide the viewer's eye through the flow of the design.

Rather than spreading out your layout's content to fill every corner, group items together that belong together. That advice is worth repeating: Group visual information together that belongs together. Call this the clumping effect. Clumping results in fewer groupings of visual positive space.

Centering everything, cluttering the corners.

We think people who center everything and clutter all four corners probably need therapy. Symmetrical balance is comforting, like having a blankie. But your design should not make people want to nap.

Architecture in the Garden

Garden seats, arbors and trellises add an elegant touch to your backyard.

Sape endit aspit hilles
sim qui sum, expencil-
lita aditaquae culparum
sedis eiusdam volorem ipic
tectaquat.

Ugit veris esequamus,
quam am, consed eum
voloreium eum dolorer
atemolupta dest accum que
con nat debitatio ero mag-
nihillique rae lique core con
consequae aut accatur?

Qui blam, corepudam
quam aceperferci in ea
doloresti totatem peratium
est verum verferatus ilic tem
saniet rem quiaes maiores-
tiunt es etur rectatis dolupta
de doluptatiunt archilignia
pre cusam et lit es rempore
ne plam aut aut et ut et ut
arum cus ium fugit eos senis
nonsequo eos nam aruptum
faccupatas erum et fuga.

Osapiciatur, sum que
conminu samustest et
prae pro ex es simpori
cullorerum reptate nectore
sequis dem quat ut eaqui
od quame es quatemossit
audi tentionsed es iundae
aut eatemquam est et illiqui
aturitam doloratempus
exernati volorem atempore
volupti iusdae debiscit ver-



Above: *Obis isit fugitia dolo
etureni sinctam fugit aut*



nam, entem estrunt labor-
est, vel ipide maximincient
quoTur?

Quaspiendic to te dest
officil iberum ditae volorem
ab intem consequae ma adis

dis audam eaquiduntius
eossus et facea vel ipit
parum sum volore delis
que dem et officta spedias
magnihilla del magnis
doluptas erum laboreiunto

Take tags, for example. Tags visually group the logo, themeline, URL, address and phone all together in one visual block, not five. Thus, clumping not only visually simplifies the layout but also uses space efficiently.

Clumping: good. Clutter: bad.

SIN NO. 8: TRAPPED NEGATIVE SPACE

Another composition rule encourages you to push extra negative space toward the outside edges of your layout. Trapped space is a puddle of negative space landlocked inside the layout. It's like a bubble that can't escape.

Because it creates a big blob in the middle of your layout, trapped space can draw attention away from your other layout items. To prevent this, make sure your white space opens out to the layout's margins.

Why is there a hole in this layout? Push extra white space to the outer edges of the layout.

SIN NO. 9: BUSY BACKGROUNDS

Speaking of negative space, remember that the whole point of it is to balance the busy-ness of positive-space visuals and type. So why do some folks tile their Web sites with eyeball-stabbing backgrounds busy enough to induce psychosis?

About backgrounds, whether digital or print, have mercy on your design and your audience. *White space is not your enemy.* Don't turn your calming negative space background into busy cluttered positive space that competes with your visuals and type. Background shouldn't interfere with your visual communication. Background shouldn't blink, either, by the way.

Greenwise Lawn Care

*GREAT SERVICE * COMPETITIVE PRICES*

****FIRST MOWING FREE WITH THIS COUPON****

CALL US TODAY
555-123-4567
www.greenwiselc.com

**SIN NO. 10: TACKY TYPE
 EMPHASIS: REVERSING,
 STROKING, USING ALL CAPS
 & UNDERLINING**

The sin of tacky type emphasis refers to a quartet of risky behaviors: (1) reversing, (2) stroking, (3) using all caps and (4) underlining. Think twice before you do any of these things, and never do all four at once.

Reversing. Some say never (ever) reverse type. Others say judicious use of the reverse can add impact. The controversy stems from a couple things.

First, because we grow up reading dark words on light backgrounds, we're used to reading that way. We find it easier to read dark copy on a light field. Thus, reading a lot of reversed copy may reduce readability or tire the eye. If your job is to communicate a great deal of textual information, then you don't want to reduce your type's readability or tire readers' eyes.

Second, too often beginners reverse type by using fonts that have both thick and thin lines. In font lingo, hairline strokes refer to the thin lines. Stem strokes refer to the thick ones. Not all fonts have thicker and thinner parts, but many do.

If you reverse a font with very thin hairline strokes, you may create a production problem. Once printed, the hairline strokes of reversed letters

Busy backgrounds.
 Enough said.

A GALLERY OF **BAD TYPE**

Font details get lost in reverse

Stroking chokes letterforms

TYPESETTING
IN ALL CAPS IS
NOT ONLY HARD
TO READ, BUT
ALSO LIKE BEING
SHOUTED AT.

Want to typeset
like a 13-year-old
kid? Underline for
emphasis!!!

*(And use a bunch of exclamation
points while you're at it.)*

may disappear. This is because paper is absorbent, and reversing floods a great deal of wet ink onto the page to create the dark background. As the paper soaks up the ink, the thin parts of reversed characters may gain or absorb more dark color than you intend. Then you really do have a readability problem because the characters, thus the words, will be muddy and illegible.

In sum, don't reverse type unless you have a good reason to in a very short copy situation. If you do reverse type, choose a font with sufficiently thick letterforms to maintain legibility.

Stroking. Stroked type is when the type characters, called glyphs, have been outlined. Amateurs do it because they can! Or because they think it looks neat-o or helps make an important word stand out. In truth, it distorts glyph proportions and obscures original hairline strokes. It's like outlining the Mona Lisa with a big fat whiteboard marker. There are probably better ways to get people's attention.

All caps. Imagine yourself driving down an unfamiliar roadway. In the distance you see a road sign. You're not close enough to make out individual letters in the words, but you can tell what the sign says because of the shapes of the words.

People read words, not letters. But when you capitalize words, they lose their shapes.

The reason words have recognizable shapes is because of ascending and descending letters. Ascenders are tall lower case glyphs that go up: b, d, f, h, k, l, t. Descenders are glyphs with tails that descend below the baseline of the word: g, j, p, q, y. Ascenders and descenders give words their shapes.

Type in all caps has no ascenders or descenders and so requires the reader to do a little extra decoding. If you want to use all caps, make sure they don't interfere with your visual communication purpose. And don't even think about using all caps for body copy.

Underlining. Last, never underline type to emphasize it.

There are better ways to accentuate type than reversing, stroking, using all caps or underlining. In a headline, use a large point size and an interesting font for impact. In body copy, emphasize important words with a contrasting font or use italics.

In fact, the uninformed often emphasize type by committing multiple tacky type sins at once. Then, to make a bad situation

worse, they add three exclamation points! (If an exclamation point is warranted, one is always enough.) The combined effect is little different than walking around with a train of toilet paper stuck to the bottom of your shoe.

SIN NO. 11: BAD BULLETS

The sin of bad bullets refers to two issues:

1. Using the wrong kinds of bullets for lists
2. Improperly aligning bulleted lists

Simple but elegant dots or numerals are almost always a good choice. Asterisks, hyphens and smiley faces are not. For decorative bullets, match their tone to your design. Avoid cheese. That takes care of the first bad bullets issue.

The second bad bullets issue has to do with proper alignments. Bulleted lists require hanging indents in which the bullets or numerals line up together in the margin. Then the type all hangs together, too, in a separate vertical line:

- Always align bullets with bullets vertically.
- Always align type with type vertically.

Get the point?

SIN NO. 12: WIDOWS & ORPHANS

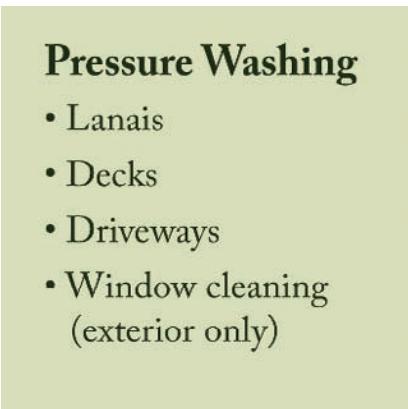
The terminology for widows and orphans is unfortunate. The typographic problems they refer to are as well. A typographic widow refers to a few lonely words or a hyphenated word stranded at the bottom of a column or leg of type. An orphan refers to a few lonely words stranded at the top of a leg. If you can't remember the difference between widows and orphans, just remember to avoid visually incomplete type at the tops and bottoms of legs. As always, look. Train your eyes to spot visual awkwardness.



Pressure Washing
* Lanai's
* Decks
* Driveways
* Window cleaning
(exterior only)

Bad bullets, good bullets.

Remember that asterisks are not bullets. Use real bullets, and please learn how to create hanging indents.



Pressure Washing

- Lanais
- Decks
- Driveways
- Window cleaning
(exterior only)

SIN NO. 13: JUSTIFIED RIVERS

Unless you're a pro or work for a newspaper, fully justified blocks of type can result in wide gaps between words. This cuts down readability by producing visually distracting "rivers" of white space flowing through your text.



Agnimin rem quisquam sequam ent mod eum es ellanieni
omnis exped qui nonet verit di omnis aut et fugit il ipsandae
conserorem lias num volorum, optatque sitiore persped
excerum quam corro cust, occus nonessi audam fugitae
audi officiu rehendem qui neccariati odi te nonem commis
lat.

Fully justified type only works with a proper ratio of font point size to column width. You can drain justified rivers of negative space by:

1. Increasing the width of your column, thus the length of your line of type.
2. Reducing the font point size.
3. Or both.

Our best recommendation on fully justified text? Don't. Align your text flush left/ragged right instead. Problem solved.

Count the gaps. Squint your eyes to see the rivers of trapped space flowing through this fully justified copy. Ugly, isn't it?

That covers all 13 offenses. Now go forth and sin no more. Don't forget to take the checklist with you.

■ ■ ■ TRY THIS

1. Go back and look at the "Try This" work you did for chapters 1, 2 and 3. Identify your own layout sins, if any.
2. Design a handout flyer explaining the 13 layout sins. Make sure your flyer doesn't commit any of the sins.
3. Find an example of the world's worst design. (Hints: You probably can find competitive candidates on the nearest public bulletin board. Do not, however, nominate anything your boss or client designed.) Circle and name all the layout sins the world's worst design commits.
4. Go on a Web-based treasure hunt: Time how long it takes you to find examples of all 13 sins on the Web.