Magazine Columns:
Influencing How We Read

Magazine columns are an important design element which cannot be overlooked. More often than not, publishers like the magazine to contain as few columns as possible. This is the reason why in most magazines the cover story or the main story is generally of two columns, portraying its importance while still looking elegant in nature.

Less important stories, however, have their work cut out, and can generally be found to be laid within 3 or 4 columns. Mostly it is because these stories are short. In some other cases, you might even find several different kinds of columns mixed on a single page. Let us see how magazine columns influence the overall magazine layout -

Single Column

Single column layouts are used very sparingly, as text laid out in such a fashion can look quite imposing in nature, and might be skipped over by readers. In some cases, when this type of magazine layout is used, then the text size is generally increased to about 60 characters per row. Another trick is to make the outer margins wider, and using the white space gained to depict imagery or, if you are going for a more dignified look, leave it white. This kind of layout is generally found in the Editor's letters at the beginning of a magazine.

Two Columns

The two-columned magazine layout is one of the most common ones out there and is mostly used to depict top stories or highlight articles. Making some room around the columns also allows you to play with the white space available. In fact, if you want things to look interesting, you can make the outer margin a little bigger than normal, and then make two narrow columns for an understated, but eye-catching magazine design layout.

Three Columns

Three columns are not too far behind when it comes to portraying elegance while still allowing you more space to play around with and arrange content. To break the monotony of such columns, you can add a little break to the page and give it some character. Also, ensure that the number of characters/row are way lower than 60, or reduce the type size to break the monotony.

Four Columns

Four columns are ideal if you are looking for a little bit of flexibility, as now you can tinker with varying column widths. You can either lay out your text within two or three columns, while filling the fourth one up with relevant images. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that if you are going to use all four columns for text, then ideally you should not have more than 30-35 characters per line.

Five Columns

Five columns are mostly used in news sections, sections dealing with cultural events or other informational parts of the magazine. Although typically you get to play around more with this sort of layout as compared to two or three-columned layouts, but it is safer to use this layout in combination with images so as give the page a more dynamic feel. Also, ensure you use the text sparingly or use it only for very short text blocks, such as image captions. The type size, as you would have guessed by now, should also be smaller.

Other Magazine Layout Options

Creating a magazine layout can be more creative than you would think. This is probably why you would see your fair share of six, seven, eight, and sometimes even nine columns on a single page! Of course, you can play around with laying text in the first four columns, then perhaps use the fourth column for pulling out quotes, and then use the final one of images. In short, you are free to experiment with whatever layout you think is promising.

Magazine Layouts - Where Content and Design go Together
A great magazine is not only reliant on a well-designed magazine layout template but also great content. After all, at the end of the day, magazines are meant to be read. As a designer or publisher, it is, therefore, your role to not only ensure the attractiveness of the content but also prop it up with a suitable magazine layout. In many cases, a great layout design can even make bad content look good, while constantly shaping the ideas presented within.