

5 Step Formula Based on Work of David Ogilvy

Ads and sales fliers are common desktop-published documents. Whether designing ads for clients or for your own business, you can improve the effectiveness of those ads with just a few time-proven design strategies.

When readers look at your ad what do they see first? Research indicates that readers typically look at:

1. **Visual**
2. **Caption**
3. **Headline**
4. **Copy**
5. **Signature** (Call-To-Action, Advertisers name, logo, contact information)

One method of making sure your ad gets read is to arrange elements in that order, top to bottom. However, your ad should also lead with its strongest element. Sometimes the visual may be secondary to the headline. In that case you may decide to put the headline first. A caption may not be necessary at all times and often you'll want to include additional elements such as secondary illustrations or a coupon box.

While this isn't the only way to design an ad, it is an easy to implement, successful formula for many types of products or services. On the next few pages I'll show you the basic layout and three variations on this format, also called the *Ogilvy* after advertising expert David Ogilvy who used this layout formula for some of his most successful ads.

Basic Ogilvy Ad Layout



Basic Visual, Caption, Headline, Copy, Signature Ad Layout

Advertising expert David Ogilvy devised an ad layout formula for some of his most successful ads that became known as the *Ogilvy*. The illustration on this page is the basic design that follows the classic visual, headline, caption, copy, signature format. From this basic ad layout, other variations are derived.

Try changing the margins, fonts, leading, size of the initial cap, size of the visual, and placing the copy in columns to customize the basic format of this ad layout.

1. **Visual** at the top of the page. If you are using a photo, bleed it to the edge of the page or ad space for maximum impact.
2. For photos, place a descriptive **caption** below.
3. Put your **headline** next.
4. Follow with your main **ad copy**. Consider a drop cap as a lead-in to help draw the reader into the copy.
5. Place your contact information (**signature**) in the lower right corner. That's generally the last place a reader's eye gravitates to when reading an ad.

[illegible]

Coupons attract attention and can increase response to your ad. Even just the appearance of a coupon - using the familiar dashed line around a portion of your ad - can have the same effect. The illustration on this page is the basic Ogilvy ad layout design but with copy in a three-column format and the addition of a coupon in the outside corner.

1. **Visual** at the top of the page.
2. **Caption** below photo.
3. **Headline** next.
4. Place main **ad copy** in first two columns of a three-column grid. Place your contact information (**signature**) at the bottom of the middle column.
5. In the third column put a **coupon** or a *faux* coupon. Placing the coupon in the outside corner of your ad makes it easier to clip out.

Headline First Variation of Ogilvy Ad Layout



This ad layout puts the headline above the visual. Sometimes the headline carries more weight than the visual. The illustration on this page is the basic Ogilvy ad layout design but with copy in a two-column format and the headline moved above the visual. Use this variation when the headline is the more important element of the message.

For more variation try changing the margins, fonts, leading, size of the initial cap, size of the visual, and altering the column layout in this ad layout.

1. **Headline** first. When your headline packs a bigger punch or is more important than the photo, put it up top to grab the reader first.
2. **Visual** next.
3. **Caption** below photo.
4. Place main **ad copy** in two columns.
5. Place your contact information (**signature**) at the bottom of the second column in the lower right corner.

Headline Right Variation of the Ogilvy Ad Layout



In this ad layout the visual and headline share the top position..

Illustrated on this page is the basic Ogilvy design but with copy in a two-column format and the headline moved to the right side of the visual. This ad layout format equalizes the visual and headline as well as makes more room for longer headlines or vertical images.

To further customize the look of this ad layout, change the margins, fonts, leading, size of the initial cap, size of the visual, and alter the column layout. You might try a headline left variation if the photo orientation is more suitable to that arrangement.

1. **Visual** first, to the left. If the visual lends itself to a more vertical arrangement or if you want to equalize the importance of the visual and headline, try this.
2. **Headline** next, to the right of visual. When you break your headline up into several lines like this, you'll probably want to avoid headlines that are too long.
3. **Caption** below photo.
4. Place main **ad copy** in two columns. You might want to use a drop cap as a lead-in.
5. Place your contact information (**signature**) at the bottom of the second column in the lower right corner.