MUG SHOTS

Yes, you can design stories without art. But your pages will look lifeless and gray.

After all, most stories are about people: people winning, losing, getting arrested, getting elected. (Often they get elected first, then arrested.) Readers want to know what those people look like. So show them.

Remember, mug shots attract readers. And attracting readers is your job.

- **Size:** Mugs usually run the full width of a column, 3-4 inches deep (though you can indent half-column mugs into the text).
- **Cropping:** Mug shots should fill the frame tightly — but not too tightly. Leave air above the hair, if you can; avoid slicing into ears, foreheads or chins.
- **Cutline:** Every mug needs a cutline. Mug cutlines often use a two-line format: The first is the person's name; the second is a description, title, etc.

**OPRAH WINFREY**
Awarded the National Book Foundation's 50th anniversary medal for her book club.

**VERTICAL STORY DESIGN OPTIONS**

In vertical designs, mug shots go at the very top of the story. In descending order, then, arrange story elements like this: photo, cutline, headline, text. Any other sequence may cause confusion.

- **Photo**
- **Cutline**
- **Headline**
- **Text**

This is the typical vertical alignment of story elements. It conforms to the way readers scan stories: First they look at the photo, then they read the headline, then they tackle the text.

This layout violates a basic rule of story design: Avoid interrupting any leg of text with an art element. Readers may think the story has ended and that a new one begins below the photo.

Designers sometimes park a mug at the bottom of a column to keep it from butting against another photo higher up on the page. A good idea, but a weak design. Avoid placing art at the bottom of a leg of text. Readers assume either that it's an ad or that the photo belongs to another story.
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Because mug shots are usually one column wide, it's easy to attach them to a horizontal story: Simply square them off beside the headline and text.
And this is where a little math comes in. Assume the mug is 3 inches deep. Assume the cutline is roughly a half-inch deep. That adds up to a total depth of 3½ inches.
For short stories like this, headlines are small; roughly a half-inch to an inch deep. That makes every leg of text in this design approximately 3 inches deep.
Here's a typical layout for a 6-inch story:

If each leg of text in this design is roughly 3 inches deep, that means you can keep adding on legs to accommodate a 9-, 12- or even a 15-inch story.

You can position that mug shot at either edge of the story, too. Since most mugs generally face straight ahead, one side's just as good as the other.

Longer stories need more depth, so they'll wrap beneath the mug.

Note: Since the text has just grown one column wider, notice how the headline needs to extend one more column, too.

In longer stories, a mug can run in any leg (except the first leg — nothing should come between the headline and the start of the text). Or you can park several mugs side by side:

To keep the story rectangular, the headline aligns with the top of the photo; the bottom of each leg squares off with the bottom of the cutline. To make sense, the headline needs 5-10 words: two lines' worth.

Note how, as the headline gets wider, it goes from two lines (above) to one (left). But since bigger stories use bigger headlines, the depth of the legs will stay roughly the same.

Note how the headline covers only the text — not the photo. Sometimes, though, extending the headline above the mug may help all the elements fit better.

The mug can now go in any leg except the first — and many designers would choose one of the middle legs. Try to maintain at least 1 pic of space between the cutline and the text. And always dummy at least 1 inch of text under any photo.

Notice how these three mugs are evenly aligned. Two reasons for that: 1) It's ordered, balanced and pleasing to the eye; 2) It gives each mug equal weight instead of emphasizing one person disproportionately.