

# DESIGN FOUNDATIONS

Everything You Need to Know Before You Start

# Follow the EPCO rule when creating any design.

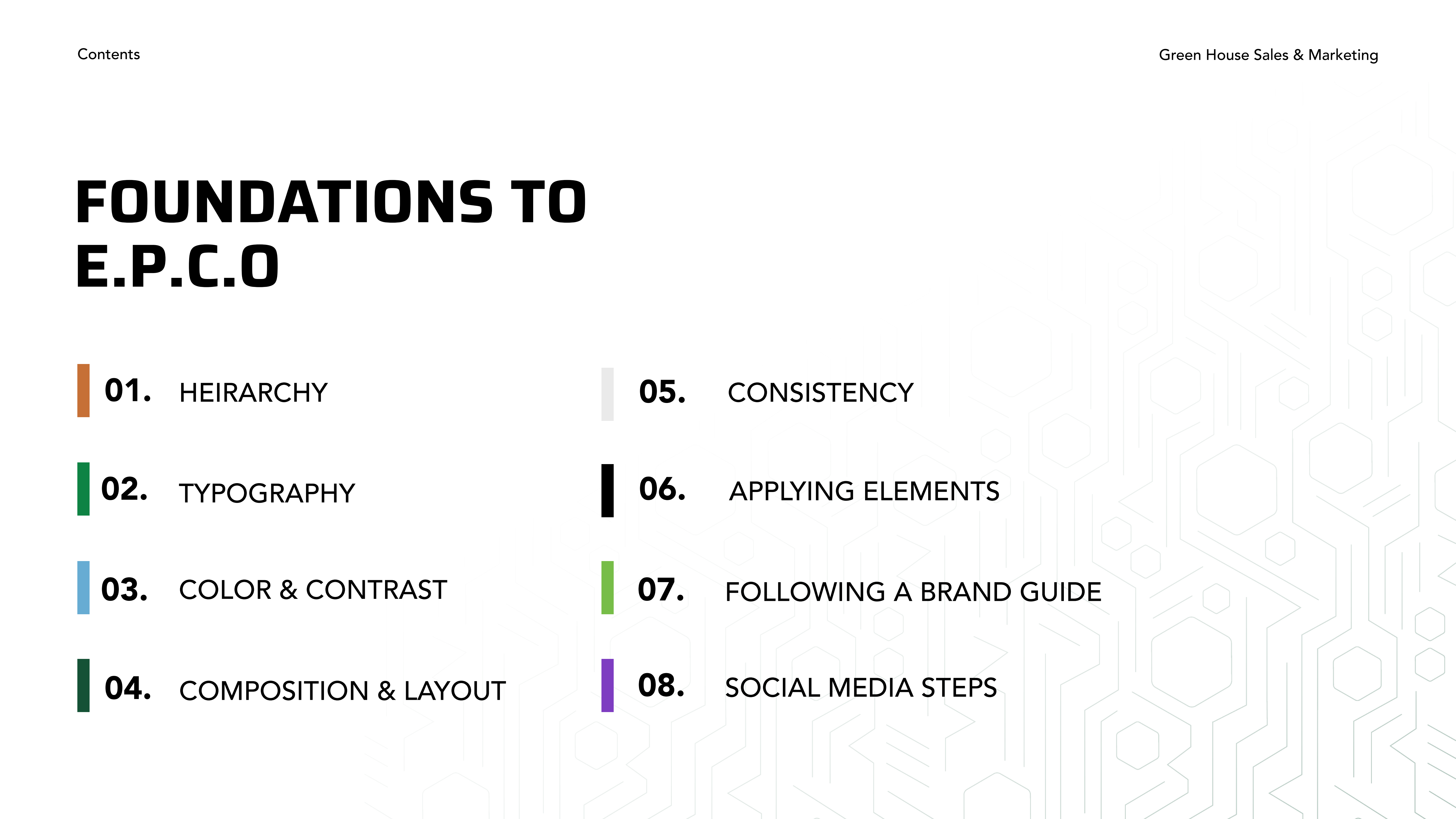
Every digital asset should be:

- E** — Engaging: Catch attention and provide value.
- P** — Professional: Look polished, intentional, and credible.
- C** — Consistent: Use unified styles, colors, and type across everything.
- O** — On-Brand: Reflect Green House's or other clients visual identity and tone.

If a design doesn't meet all four, it's not ready to post.



# FOUNDATIONS TO E.P.C.O

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- 01.** HEIRARCHY
  - 02.** TYPOGRAPHY
  - 03.** COLOR & CONTRAST
  - 04.** COMPOSITION & LAYOUT
  - 05.** CONSISTENCY
  - 06.** APPLYING ELEMENTS
  - 07.** FOLLOWING A BRAND GUIDE
  - 08.** SOCIAL MEDIA STEPS

# 01. HIERARCHY

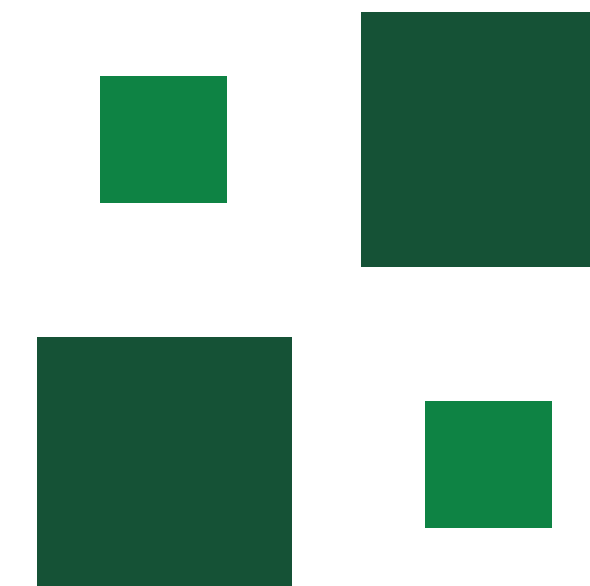
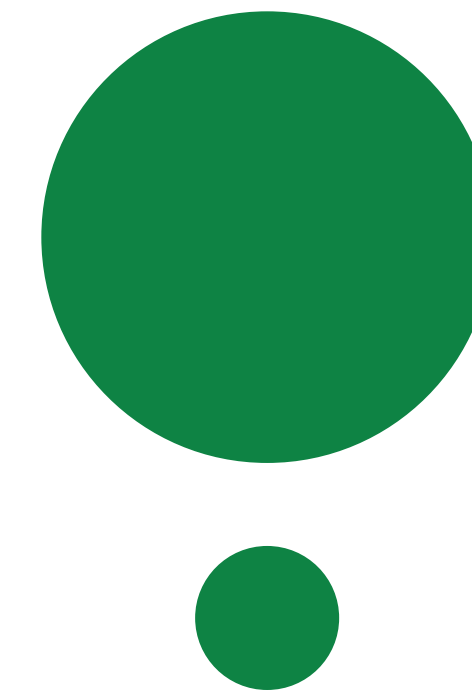
**Guide the eye. Don't make the viewer guess.**

Visual hierarchy is how you lead someone's eye through a design, from what's most important to what's next.

**Use size, weight, spacing, and color to make your message clear at a glance.**

## \* TIPS:

- Make the main idea the biggest and boldest.
- Use subheads and spacing to organize supporting info.
- Think: "If someone looked for one second what would they see first?"
- Build out the content before designing.



# BUILDING HIERARCHY

To Create Hierarchy, You Have to Build Out Your Content First.

Before you can design hierarchy, you have to understand **your message**.

**That means writing or organizing all the content first. Your header, subheader, and supporting details.**

Once your content is laid out, you can use hierarchy (size, weight, color, and spacing) to guide the viewer through it.

*If you skip this step and jump straight into design, you're just decorating, not communicating.*

1

**Main Title / Section Information**

2

**Secondary Information. A brief explanation of the headline and why the reader should care**

3

Tertiary Information. The body copy provides the details. This is where you explain the message fully, share important information, give examples, or persuade the reader to take action.



# EXAMPLE:

## Basic Visual:

and you will read this one last.

**YOU WILL READ  
THIS FIRST**

AND THEN YOU WILL READ THIS

Then this one

## With Intentional Content:

Saturday, April 27 · Downtown  
Greenfield Park

**SPRING  
MARKET 2025**

A day of local art, food, and  
community.

Free entry for all — come support local!

## 02. TYPOGRAPHY

Type is your voice, make it clear and consistent.

Typography sets the tone of your design. Clean, consistent type builds trust and makes your message easy to read.

### \* TIPS:

- Stick to 1–2 font families (header + body).
- Use size, weight, and color to create hierarchy.
- Avoid stretching or squishing text.
- Watch line spacing, breathing room improves readability.

Elegant & Sophisticated

**BOLD & MODERN**

*Playful & Whimsical*

**STRONG & CONFIDENT**

*If the brand doesn't have established fonts, consult the designers to choose fonts that align with the brand's style.*

# EXAMPLE:

## Inconsistent Pairing

---

**Bagel Fat One**   **Aa**

*Beau Rivage*   *Aa*

!  
\*notice how the lower case "a's" are a different form/shape

## Clear Consistent Pairing

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**Saira**   **Aa**

Avenir Next   Aa

!  
\*notice how the lower case "a's" take on the same form/shape

Decorative fonts should be used carefully. Mixing two decorative fonts can look unprofessional or messy. To see if two fonts work together, first define their purpose, then compare their letter shapes, using letters like 'O' or 'A' is helpful. Look for similar shapes/forms (rectangular, oval, or round) to ensure they complement each other.

Google Fonts lets you search by letter shape, making it an excellent tool for finding font pairings that are both visually appealing and accessible.



## 03. COLOR & CONTRAST

Color draws attention and builds emotion.

Color helps set mood, build recognition, and guide focus.  
**But too much color, or poor contrast can overwhelm your message.**

### \* TIPS:

- Use your brand palette intentionally.
- High contrast = readability.
- Keep backgrounds subtle behind text.
- Use color sparingly to highlight key points.

\*Example from Prince Orthodontics Brand Guide showing approved color applications



# COLOR CONTRAST EXAMPLES:

**THIS IS TOO HARD TO READ**

More difficult with medium weights

Especially with smaller type

If a combination feels hard to read or lacks contrast, don't use it or you can check using a contrast checker tool. As designers we utilize **Adobe Color Contrast Checker**

When working with light colors, adjust by darkening or lightening the hue, but keep the brand's voice and intention intact.

**THIS IS EASY TO READ**

Medium weights remain legible

Even with smaller type because it has enough contrast

*Notice how though these examples use Green House brand colors, that doesn't mean every color can be paired together.*

# PRINCE ORTHODONTICS

## COLOR CONTRAST EXAMPLES:

Unintentional use of color distracts from key information in the text.

### Bad Color Usage

#### Clashing Colors

Intentional color usage enhances the text legibility by creating a clear distinction between the text and it's background

Clear color usage allows for contrast and ensures readability

### Clear

#### Ensure Readability

Intentional color usage enhances the text legibility by creating a clear distinction between the text and it's background

Intentionally decreasing contrast, to help other words stand out

### Subtle

#### Intentional Highlighting

Intentional color usage enhances the text legibility by creating a clear distinction between the text and it's background



# GREEN HOUSE COLOR CONTRAST EXAMPLES:

Unintentional use of color distracts from key information in the text.

## Bad Color Usage

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### Intentional Highlighting

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# 04. COMPOSITION & LAYOUT

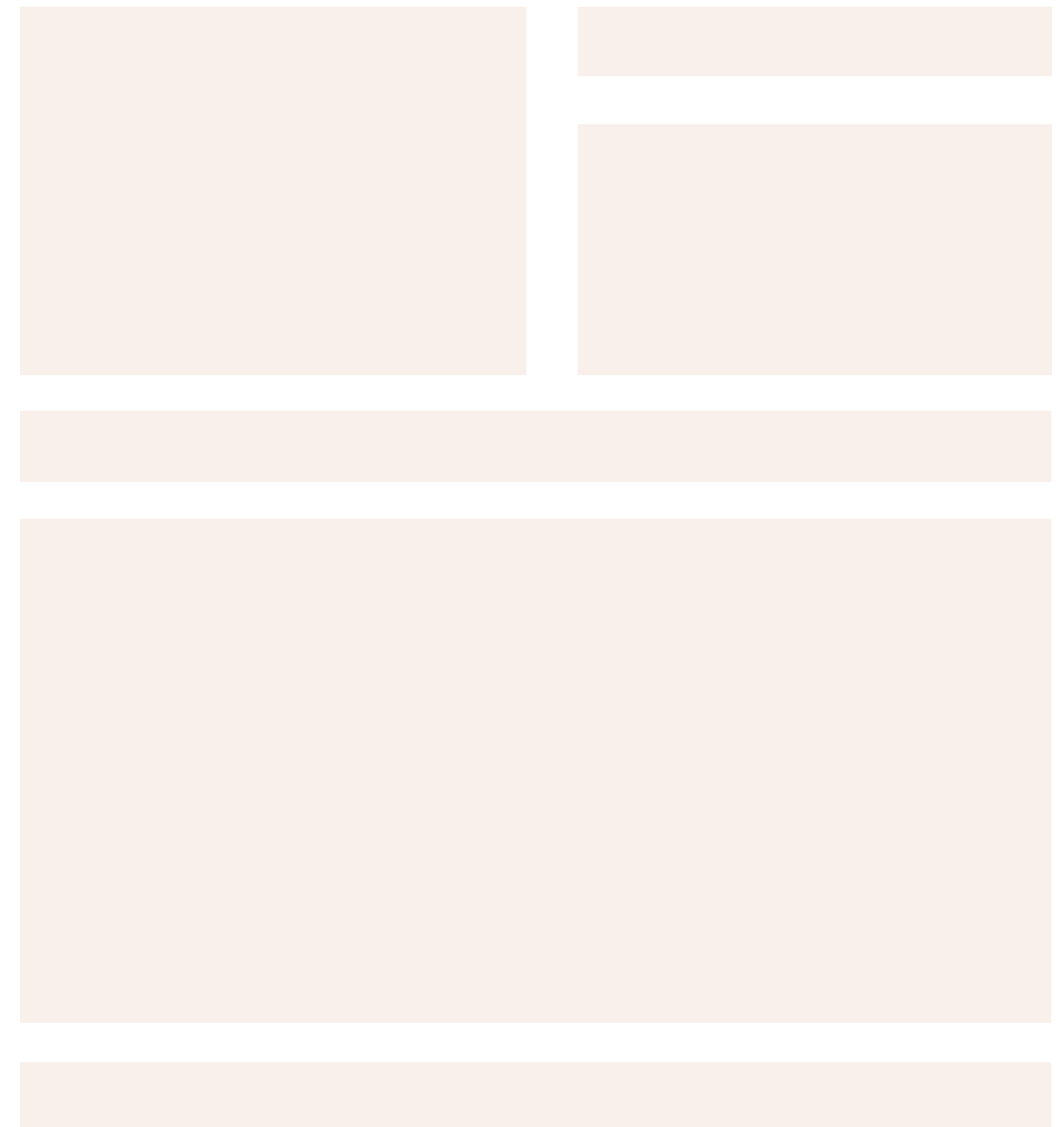
**Balance every element with purpose.**

A strong layout makes your design feel professional and easy to follow.

**Composition** is how you arrange elements on the page to create visual flow and balance.

## \* TIPS:

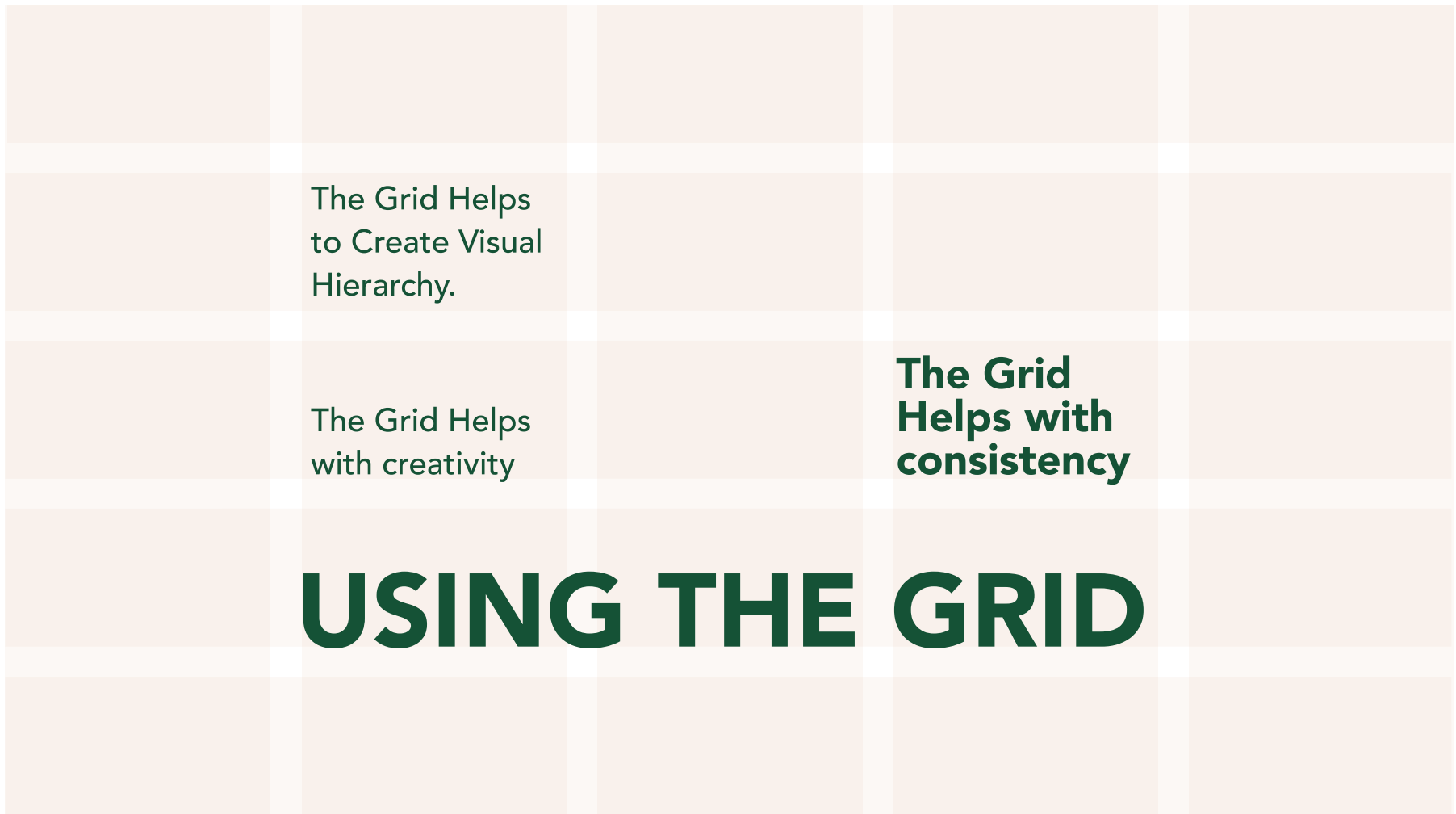
- Align text and visuals along a clear grid.
- Leave enough white space to avoid crowding.
- Group related content together.



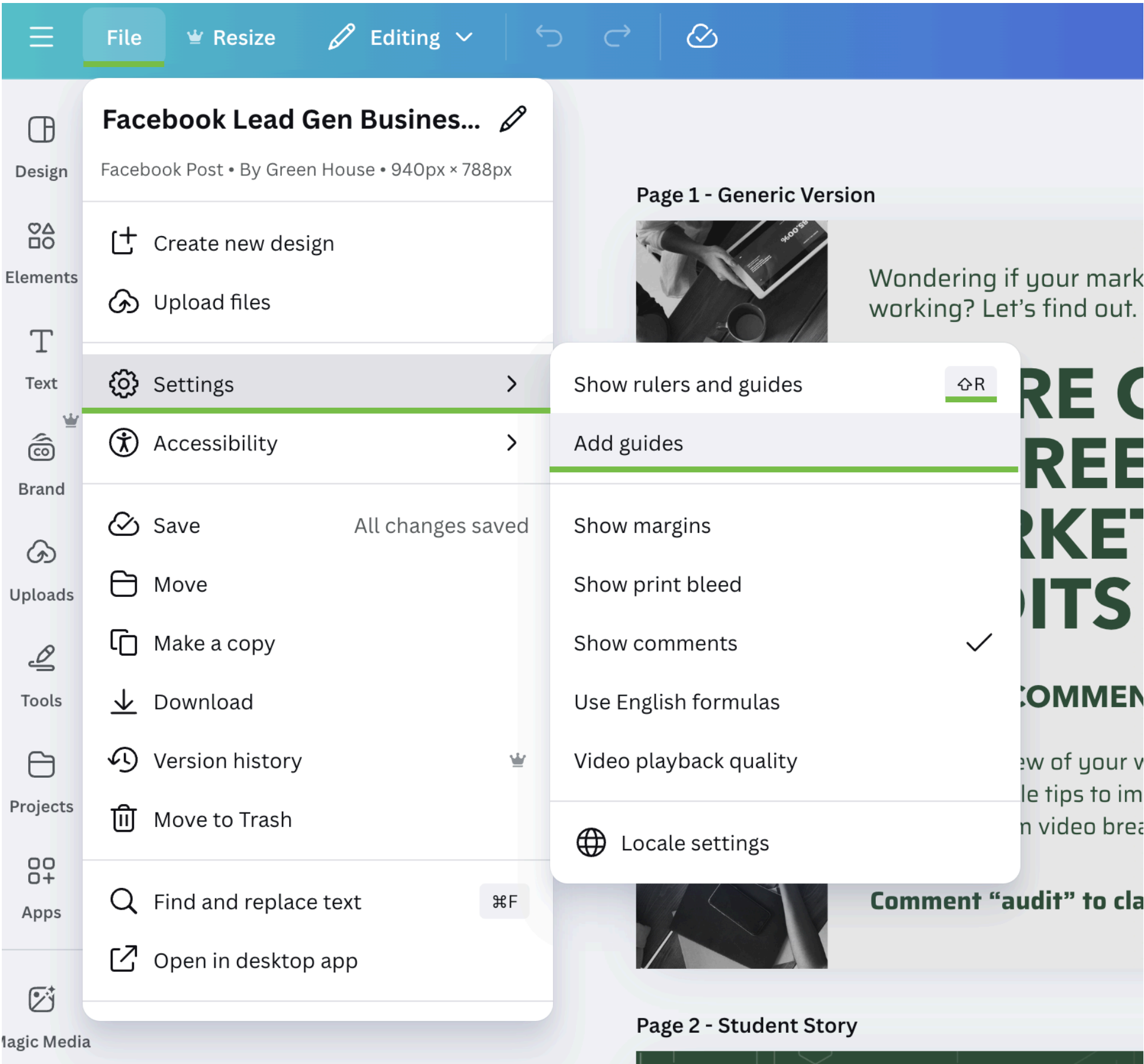
# COMPOSITION EXAMPLES:

There’s no single “right” way to build a grid, what matters is that it helps you create balance and alignment.

The more rows and columns you include, the more control you’ll have over placement, spacing, and visual rhythm.



You can set grids in Canva!





# DIFFERENT COMPOSITIONS:

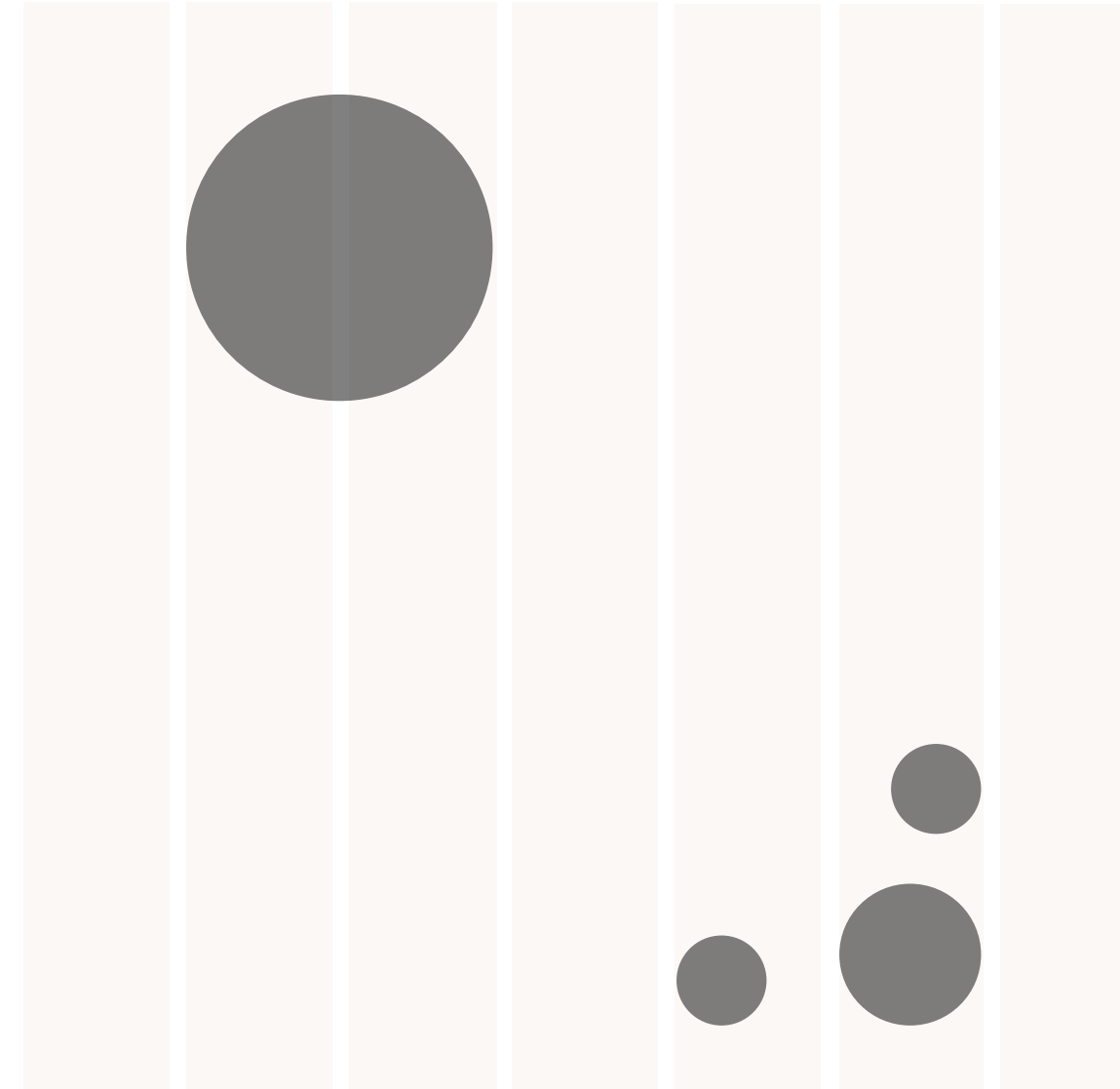
Once your grid is set up, you can start exploring how elements interact within it.

Play with symmetry for balance and structure, or asymmetry for movement and visual interest.

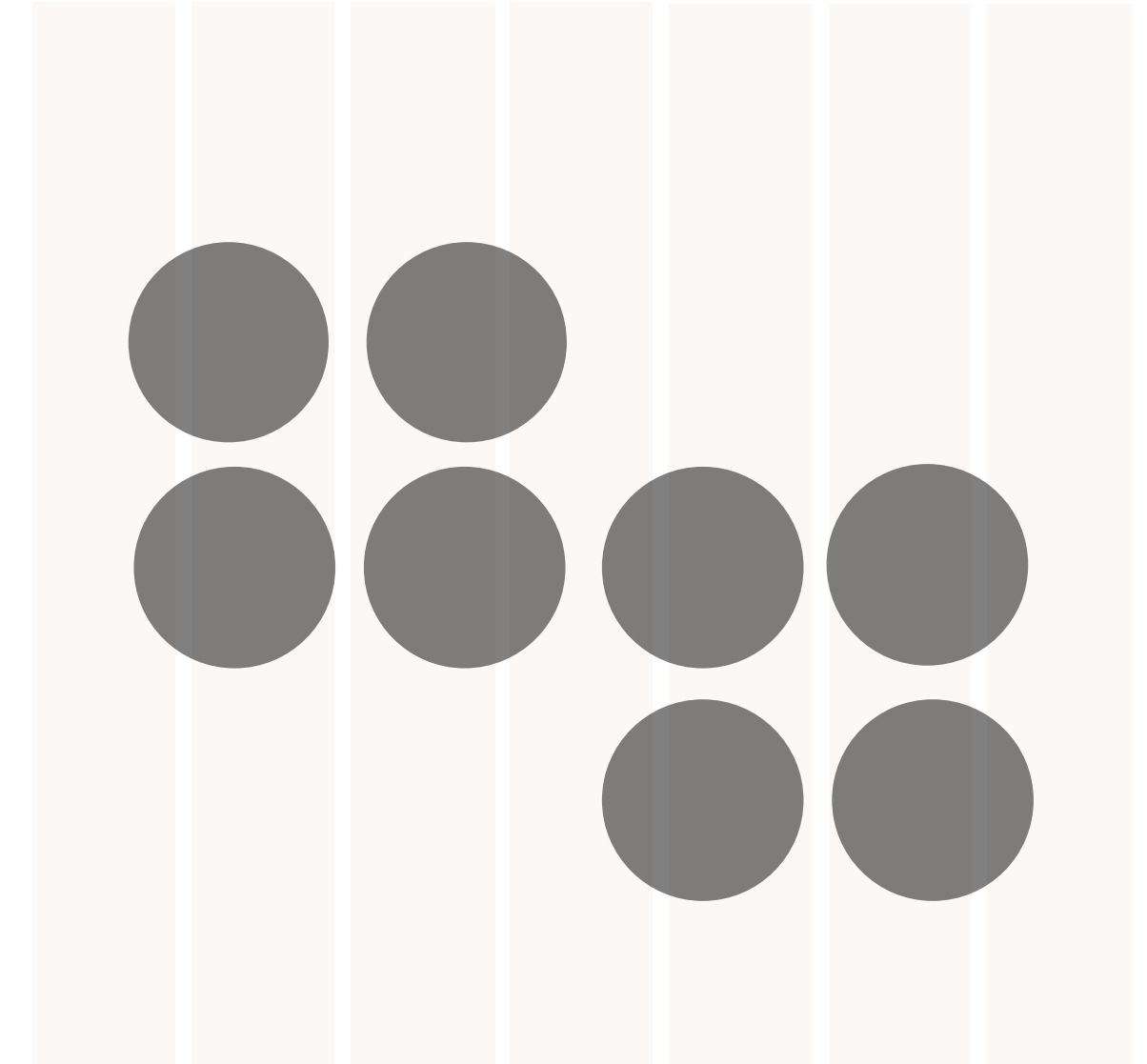
Your grid gives you a foundation to now decide where hierarchy lives.

Place your most important elements strategically so the viewer's eye knows exactly where to go first.

## Asymmetry



## Symmetry



# 05. CONSISTENCY

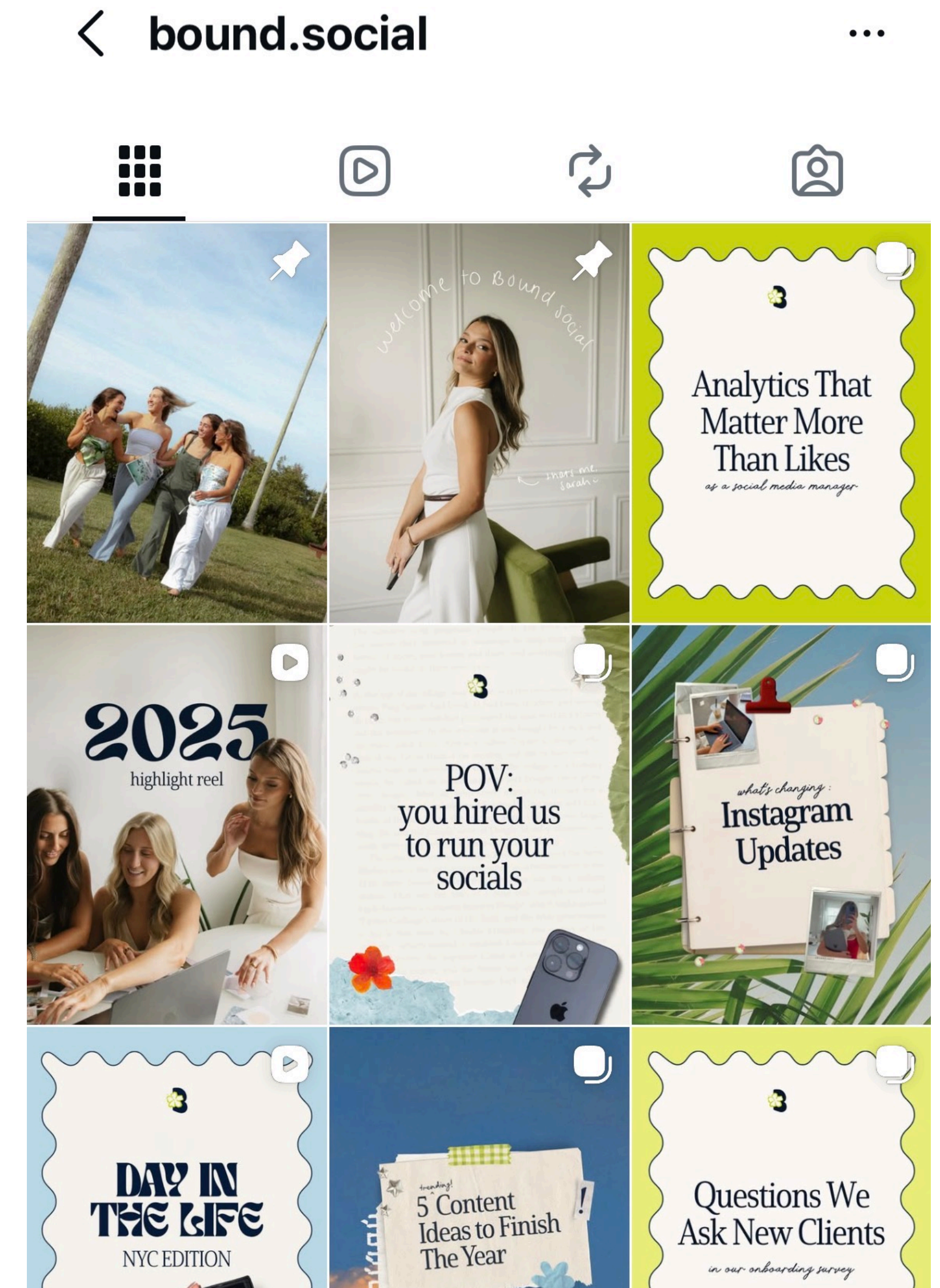
Consistency builds trust and brand recognition.

When your visuals look consistent, they feel reliable and intentional — which strengthens your brand.

**Every post should look like it came from the same team.**

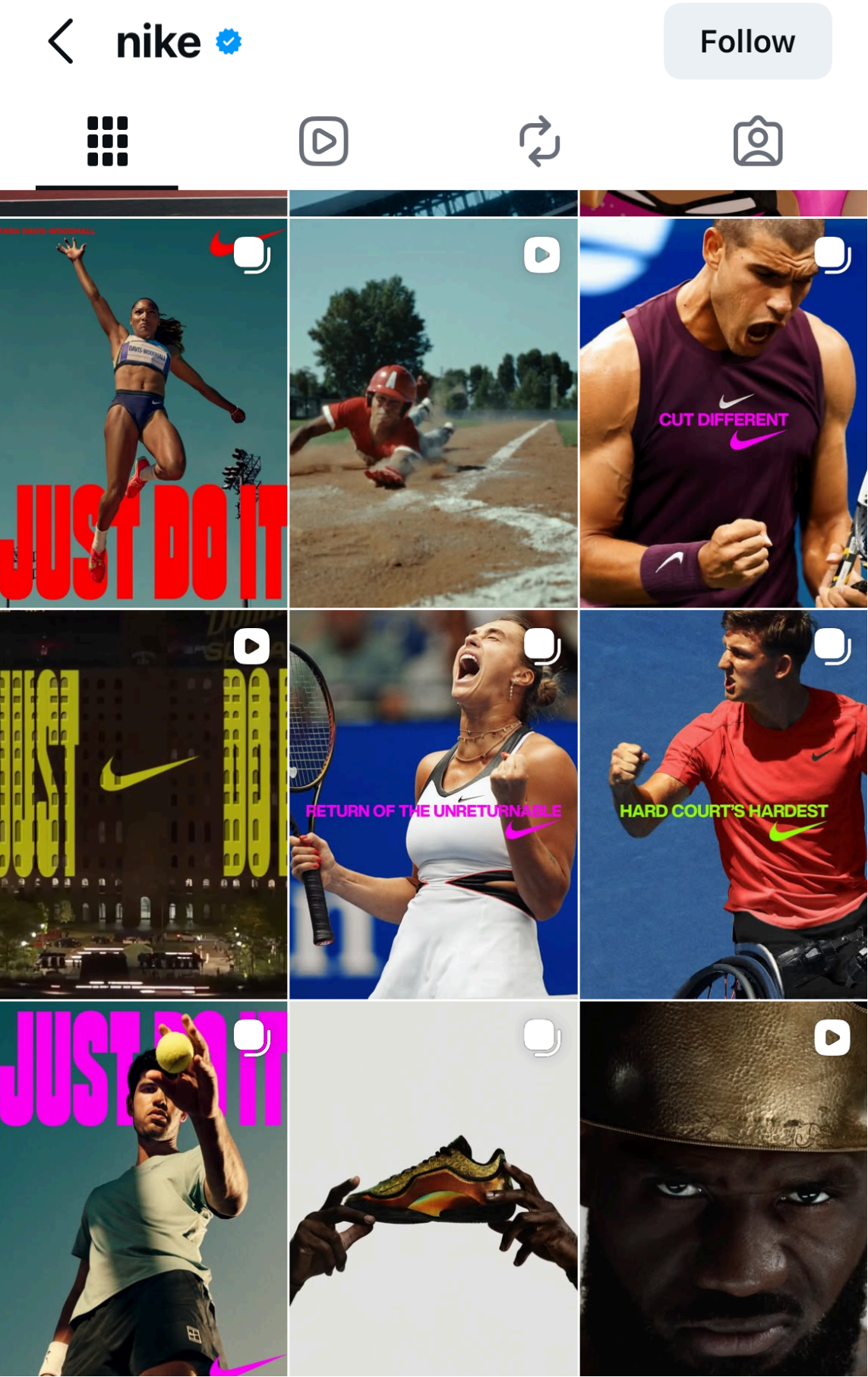
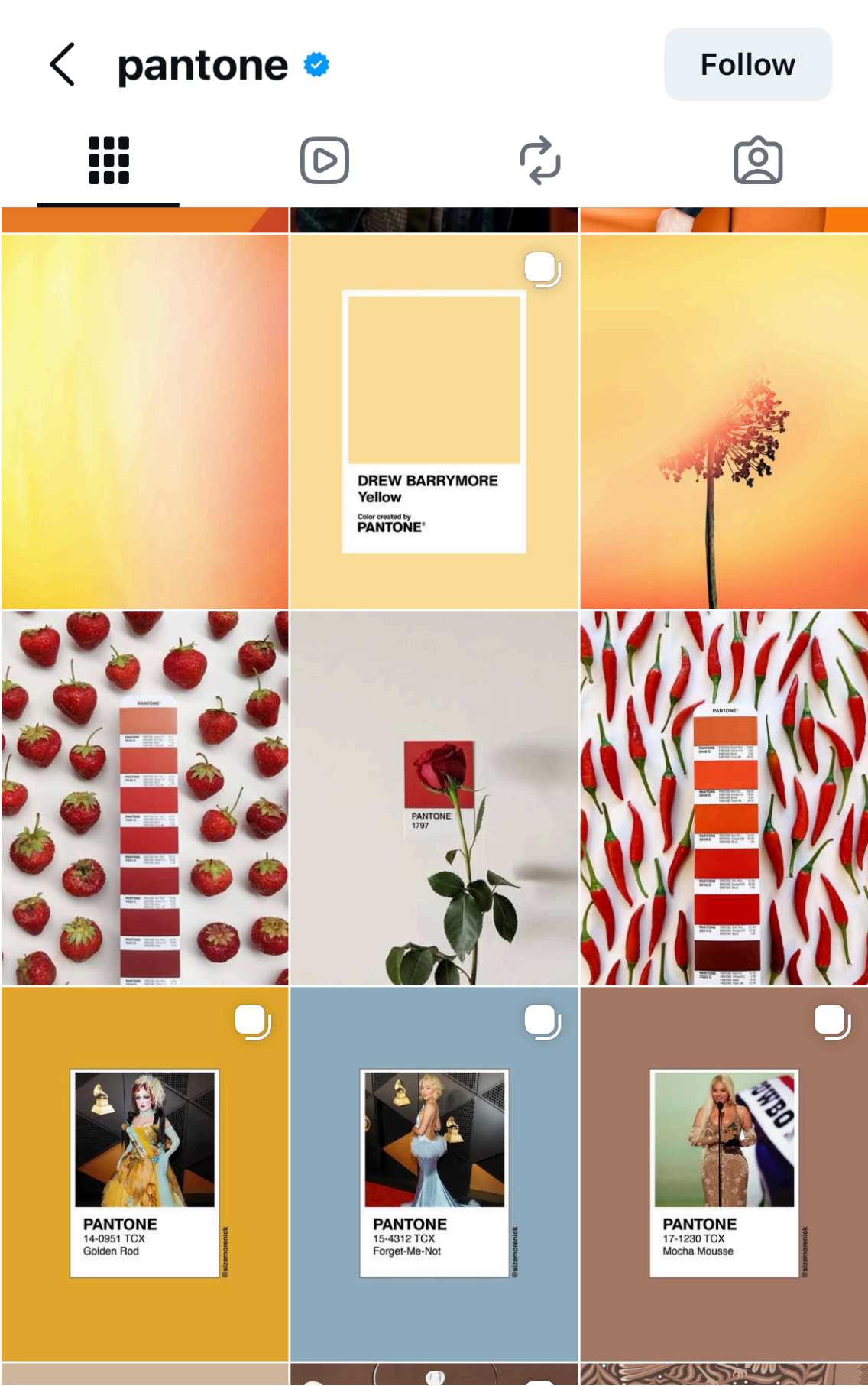
## \* TIPS:

- Stick to brand fonts, colors, and logo placement.
- Reuse layout patterns for familiarity.
- Keep tone and style cohesive across platforms.





# CONSISTENCY EXAMPLES:



## Social Media Examples:

- Bound Social
- Pantone
- Nike
- Adored Vintage

Pinterest is always a great place to gather inspiration as well.



# 06. APPLYING ELEMENTS

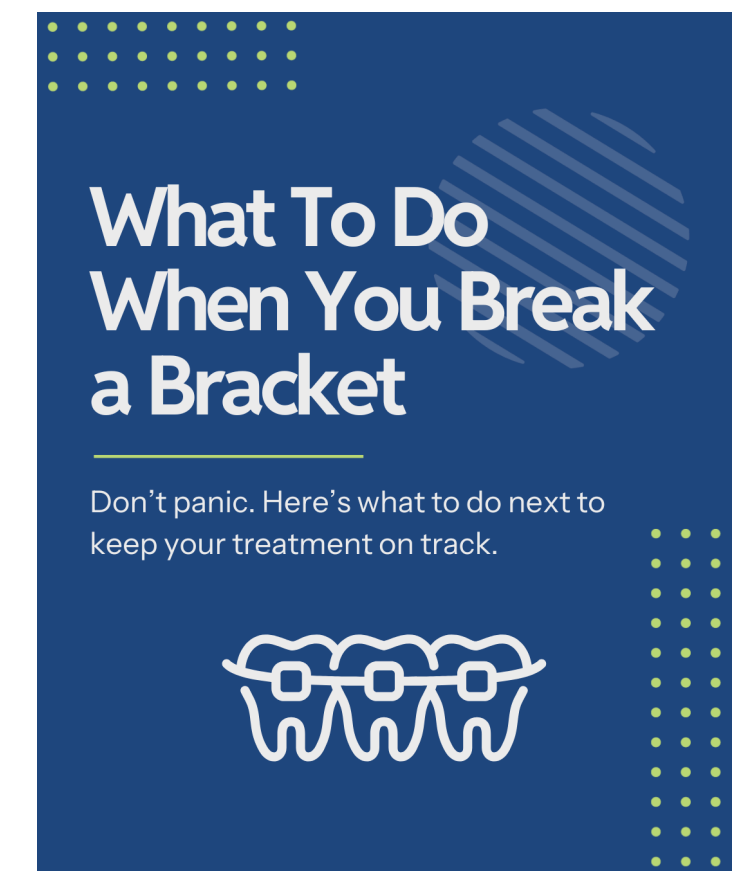
Goal: Add visual interest without overwhelming the viewer.

## \* TIPS:

- **Patterns or textures:** Subtle backgrounds or borders add depth.
- Unexpected elements: Asymmetry, overlays, or pops of color can break uniformity.
- **Imagery:** Use high-quality photos or illustrations relevant to your message.
- **Gestalt Principles:** Group related items with proximity or similarity for clarity.

*Unsplash, Pexels, or Adobe Stock (through uvu.edu account) are great places to find additional imagery.*

*Freepik is a great option for illustrations and other additional elements*



# SPACING & PADDING



Proper spacing and padding create structure, balance, and readability in your designs.

Thoughtful spacing helps elements feel intentional, while inconsistent spacing can make a design look messy or unpolished.

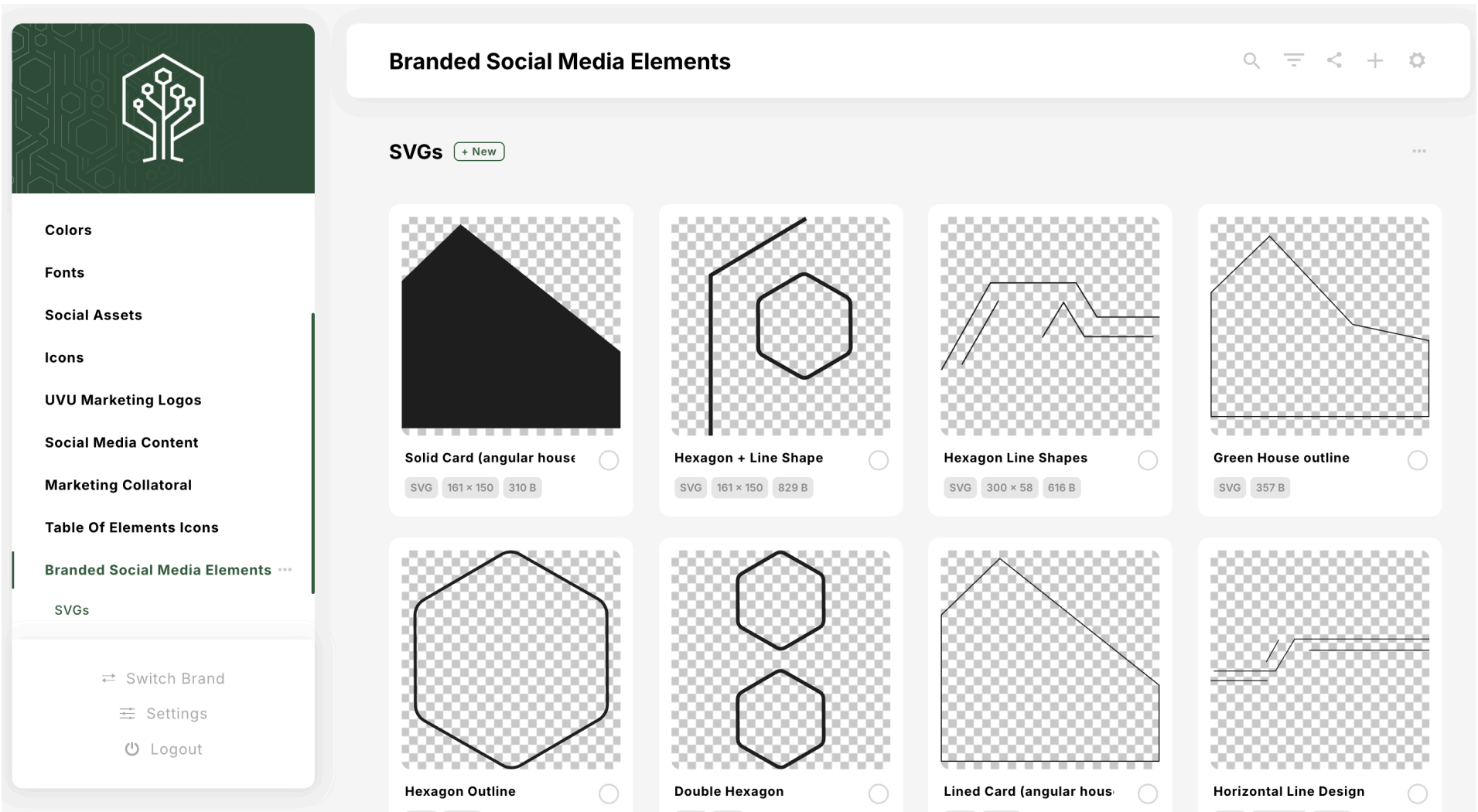
**Padding** is the space inside an element between its content (like text or an image) and the edge of its container.

**Spacing (or margin)** is the space outside an element or the distance between that element and others around it.



# ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

Brand elements like patterns, textures, icons, or shapes add depth and personality to a design. Use them purposefully to enhance the layout without overpowering it. Each element should align with the brand’s color palette, tone, and overall style to create visual interest and maintain consistency across all assets.



*You can find additional elements made by Green House on Brand Bay*

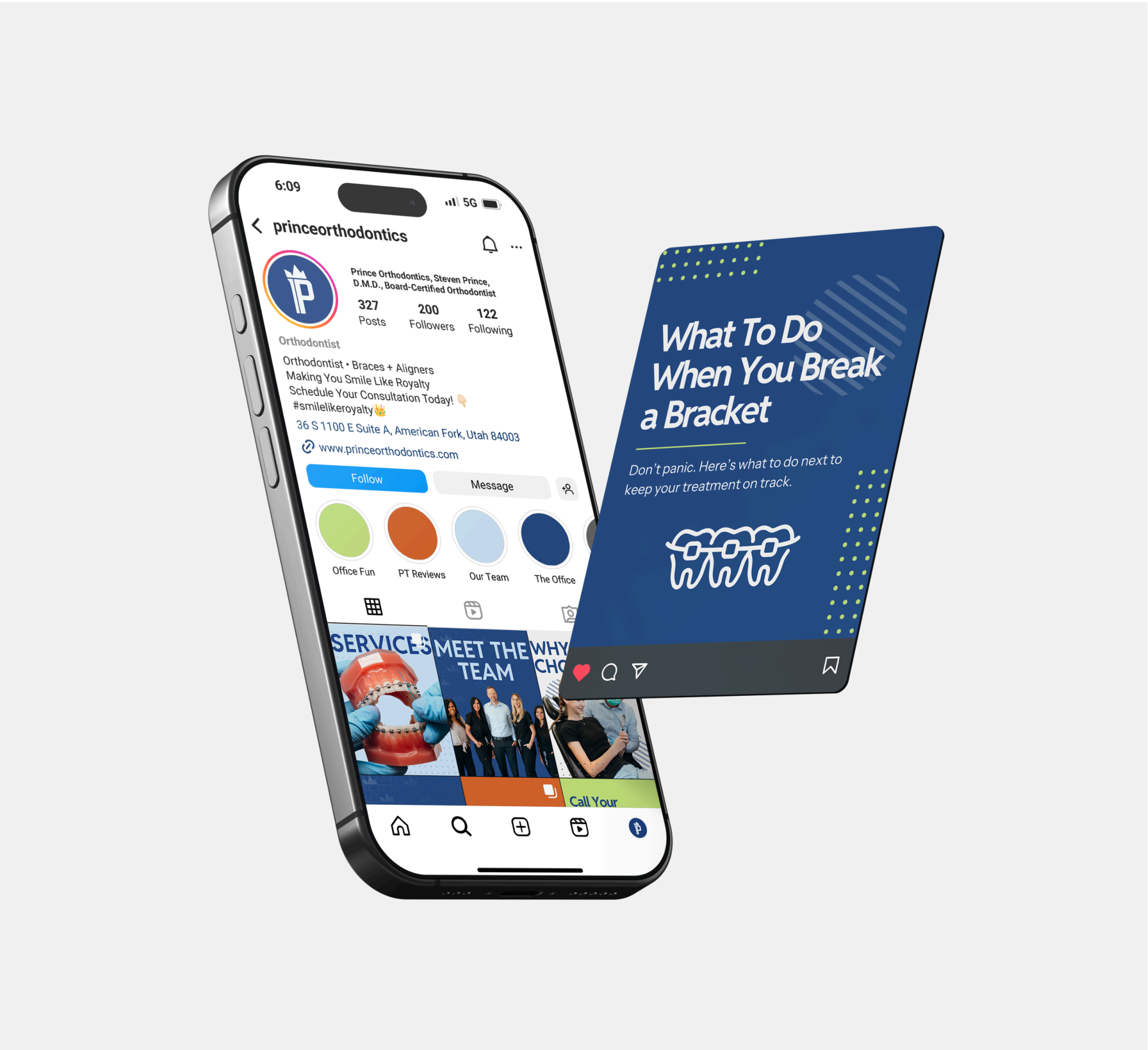
If the brand you are working with does not have additional elements you an use elements on Canva, Unsplash, Pexels,\_or Adobe Stock (through uvu.edu account)\_are great places to find additional imagery.

***Freepik** is a great option for illustrations and additional elements*



# EXAMPLE

A strong example of using additional assets is Prince Orthodontics. Icons were sourced from **Canva** and incorporated alongside their branded elements, including signature colors, dots, and circles, to enhance the design while staying on-brand.



# 07. FOLLOWING BRAND GUIDELINES

Goal: Ensure all digital and print assets reflect the brand’s voice and identity.

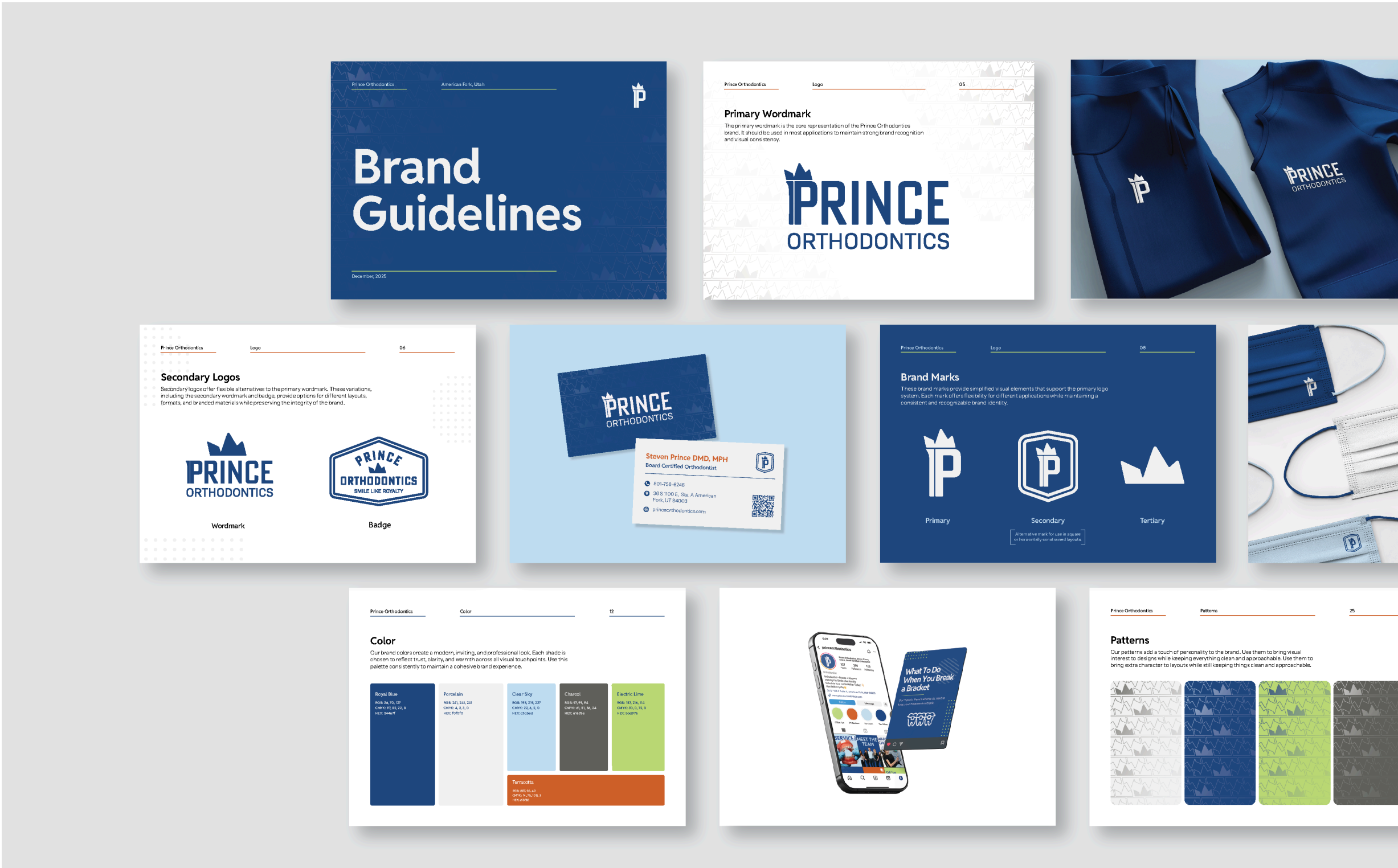
\* TIPS:

Use approved fonts, colors, and logo variations.

Follow sizing, spacing, and composition rules outlined in the brand guide.

Know print vs. digital requirements (type size, color space, resolution, file type).

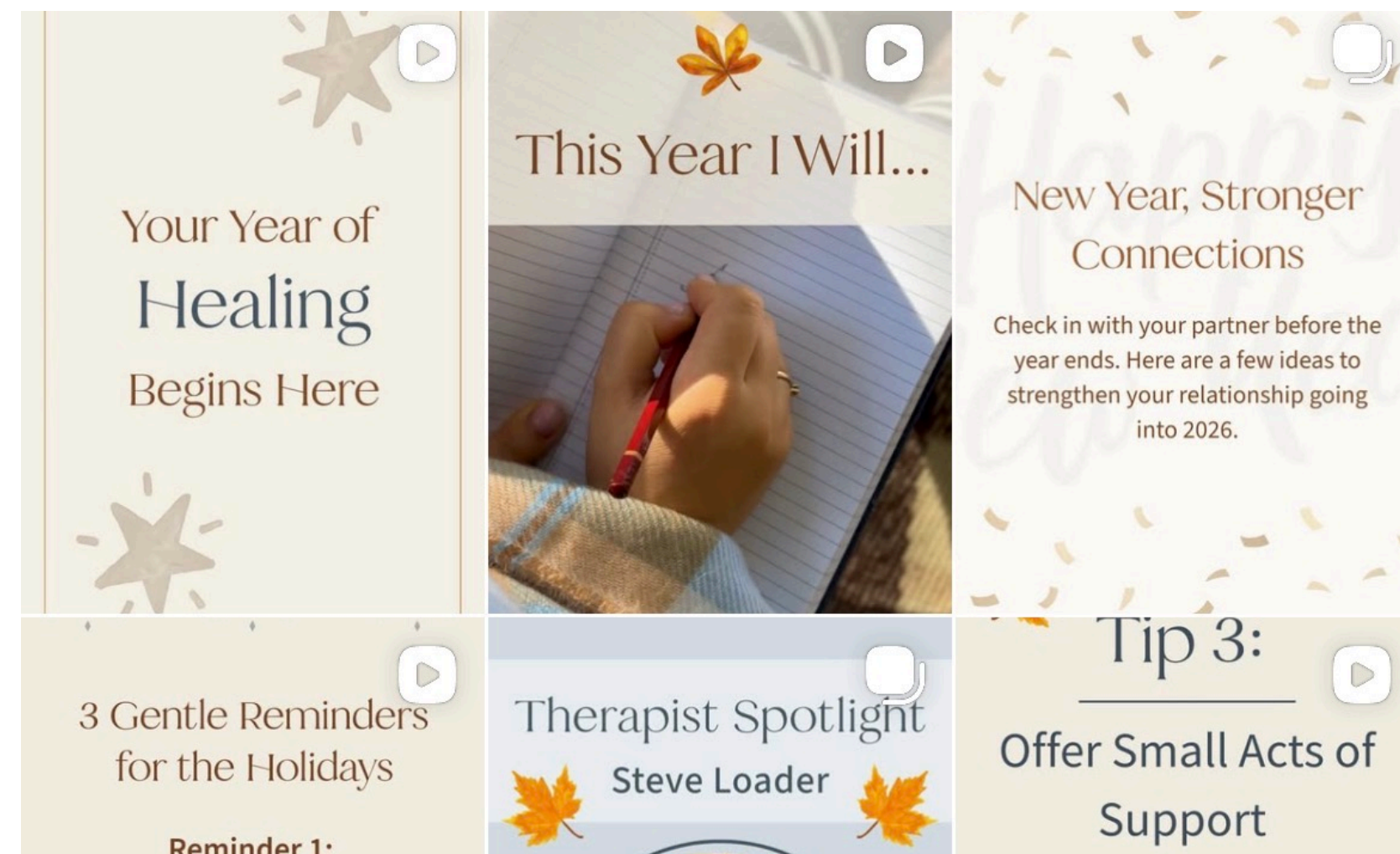
You can find brandguidelines made by Green House on Brand Bay





# 08. SOCIAL MEDIA STEPS

When designing and writing for social media, clarity, consistency, and accessibility are key. Each post should communicate the message quickly and clearly while reflecting the brand's visual and verbal identity.



1. Content Writing
2. Applying The Grid
3. Typography
4. Visual Consistency

# CONTENT WRITING

Writing should be clear, on-brand, and engaging across all post types.

## **Static Posts:**

Use minimal, direct text that supports the design. Create clear hierarchy with a short headline and concise supporting line. Every word should serve a purpose.

## **Captions:**

Keep short and conversational. Lead with key info, use a friendly tone, and include a call-to-action when needed. Always proofread for grammar and tag accuracy.

## **Video Scripts:**

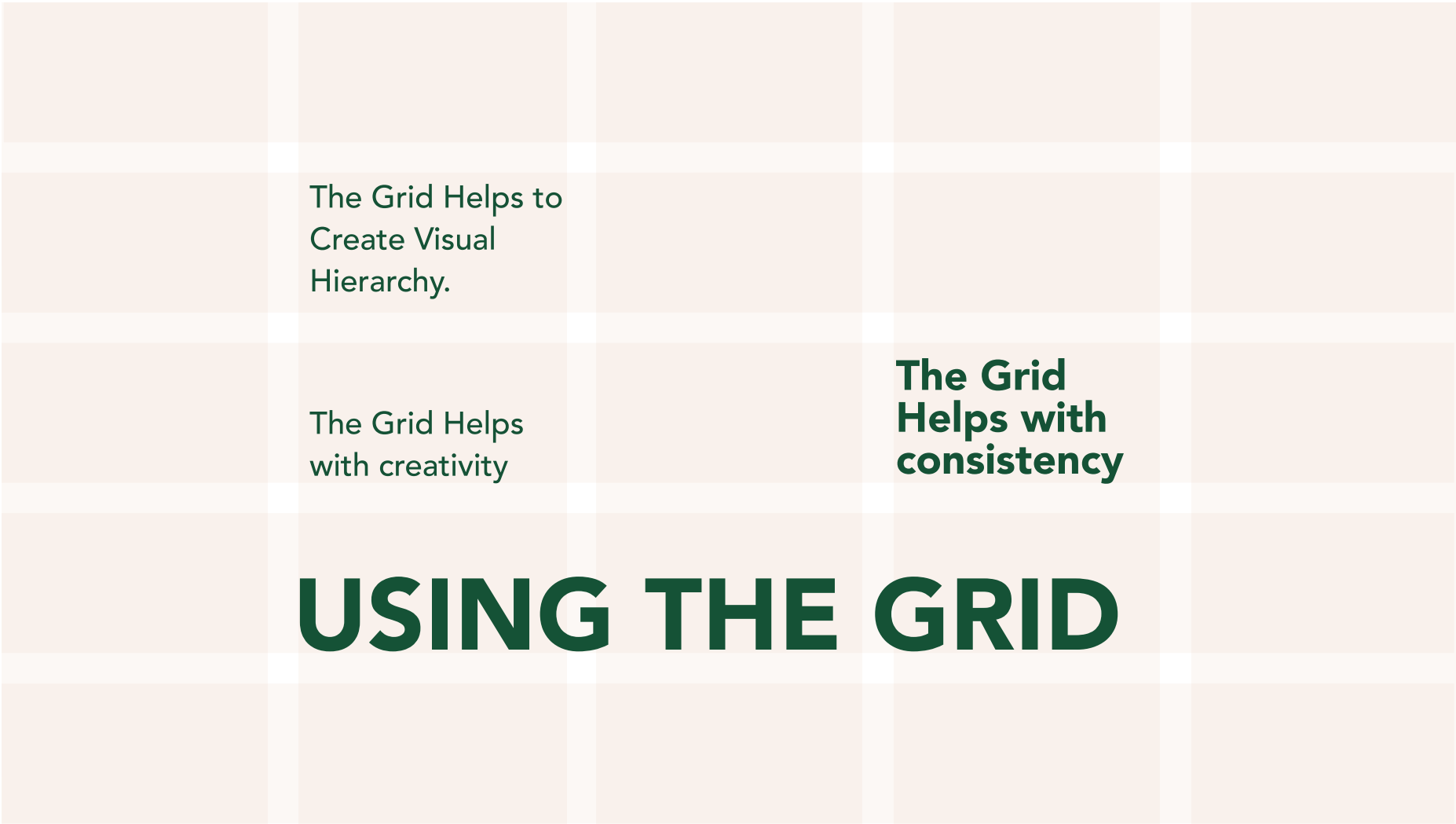
Hook viewers in the first few seconds. Keep sentences short, focus on one message, and end with a simple takeaway or CTA. Match tone and pacing to the platform.

*Don't start designing before planning your content, without a clear message, you risk losing the viewer's attention.*

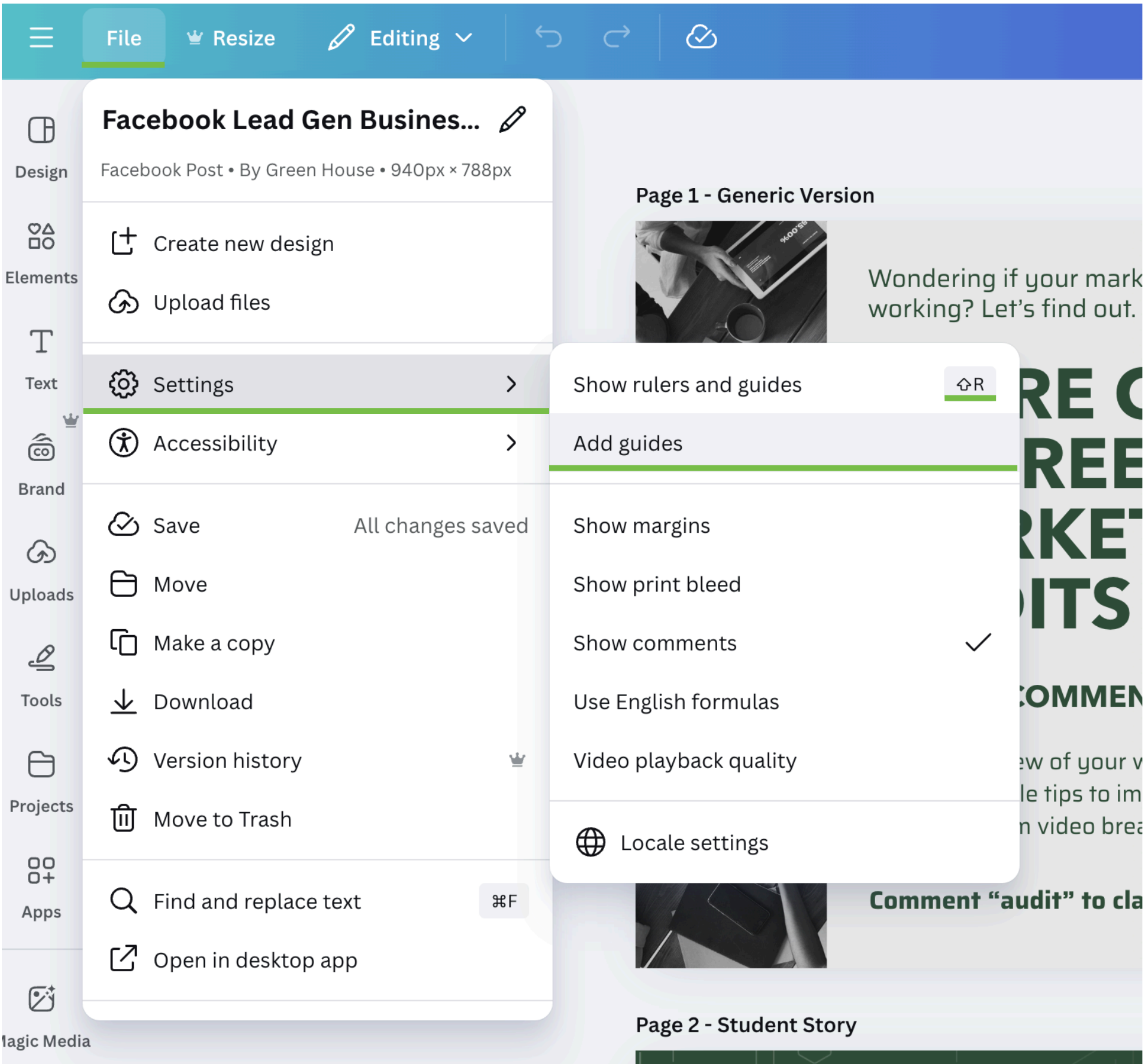
# APPLYING A GRID

There’s no single “right” way to build a grid, what matters is that it helps you create balance and alignment.

The more rows and columns you include, the more control you’ll have over placement, spacing, and visual rhythm.

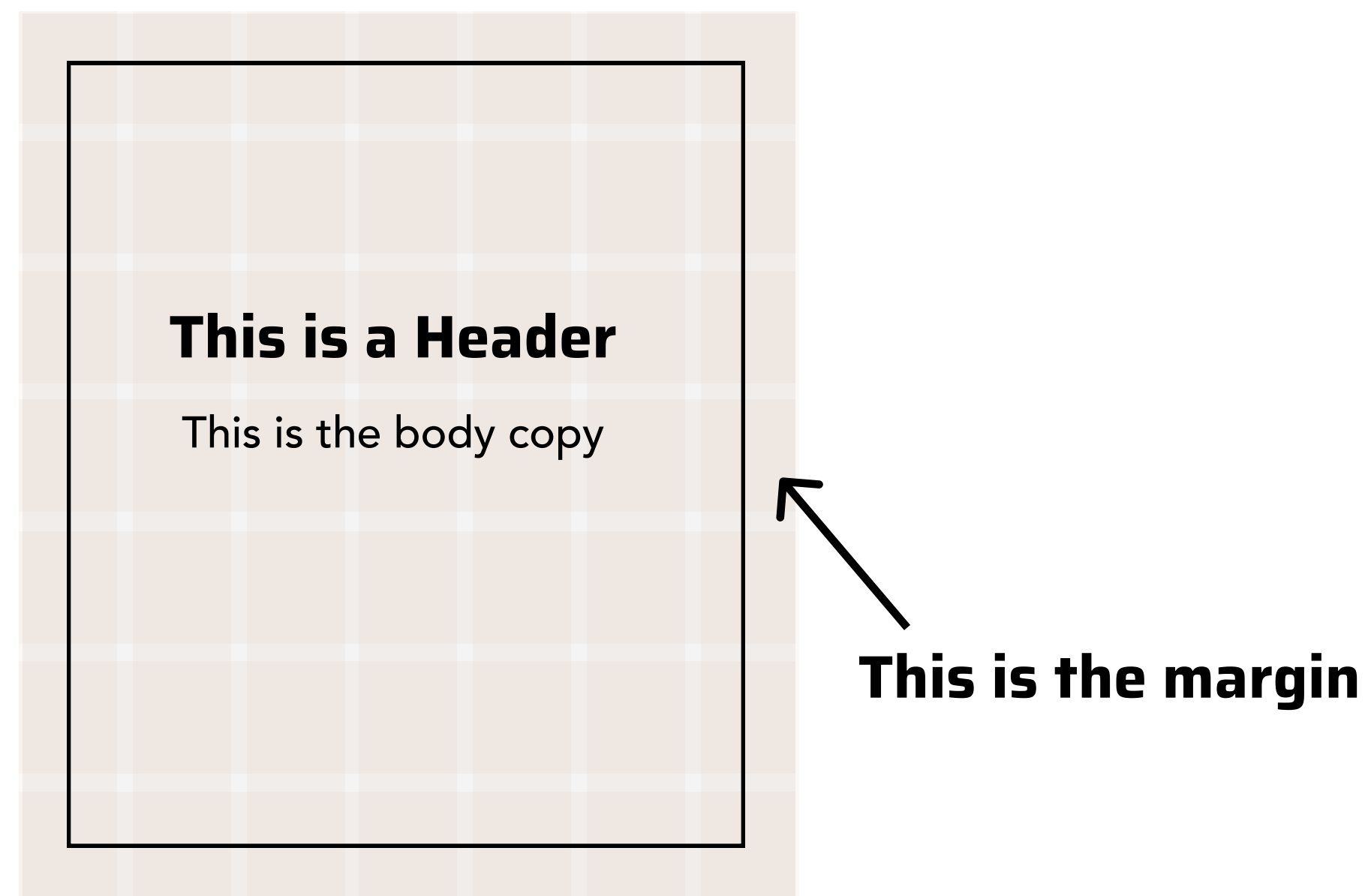


## You can set grids in Canva!

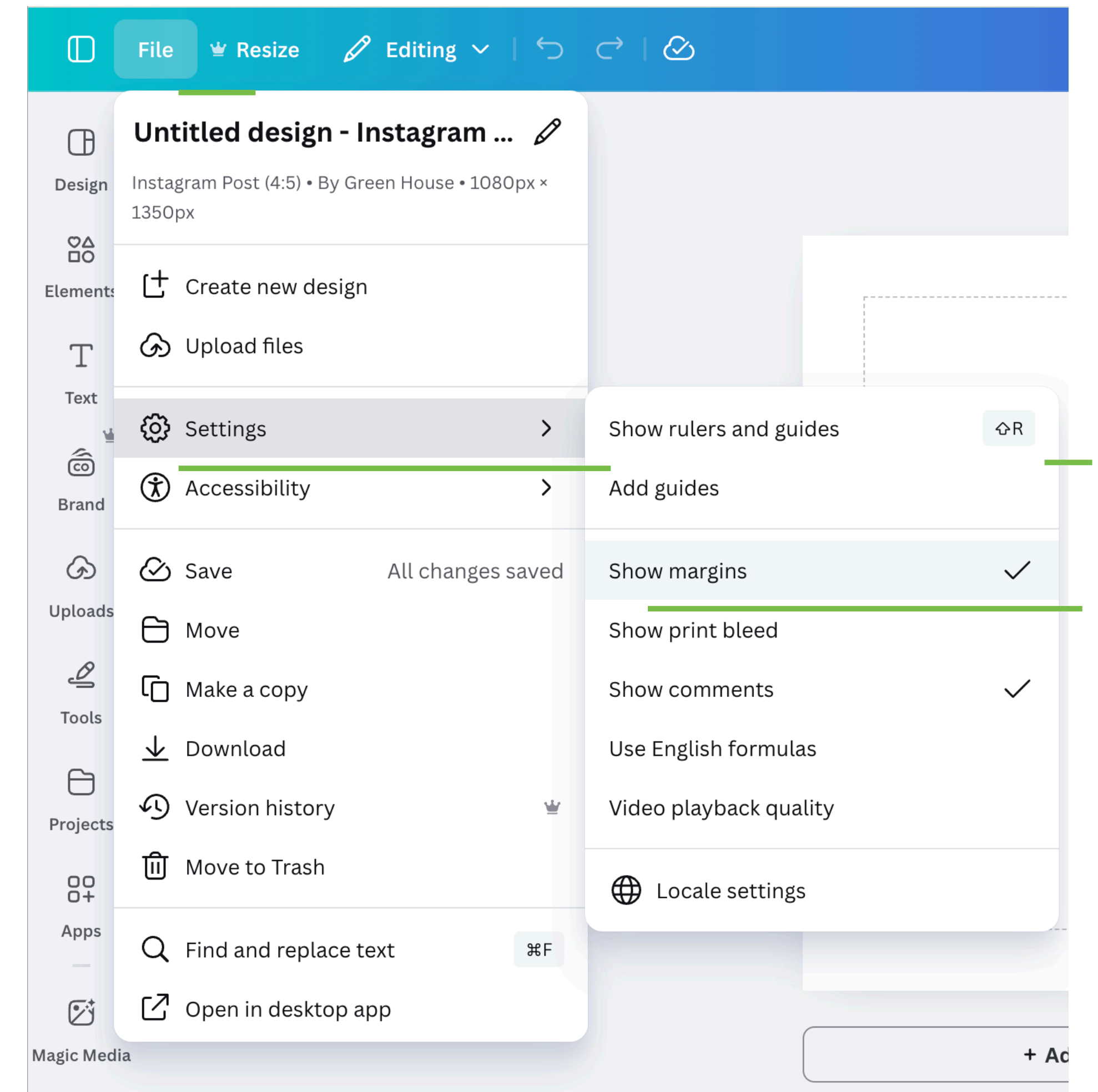


# APPLYING PADDING/ MARGINS

The example below is a margin you should design within when creating content. Keep text within a margin to avoid cropped information.



You can set margins in canva!





# TYPOGRAPHY

Writing should be clear, on-brand, and engaging across all post types.

**Readable text is essential for accessibility and professionalism across platforms.**

- The smallest type size should be no smaller than **30pt**.
- Use brand-approved fonts that are clean and easy to read.
- Maintain high contrast between text and background.
- Avoid decorative or script fonts for body text.
- Keep type consistent across posts to strengthen brand recognition.

Hierarchy example using different font weights and pairings.

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**Header: Saira Bold**  
**60pt**

**Subheader: Avenir Medium**  
**45pt**

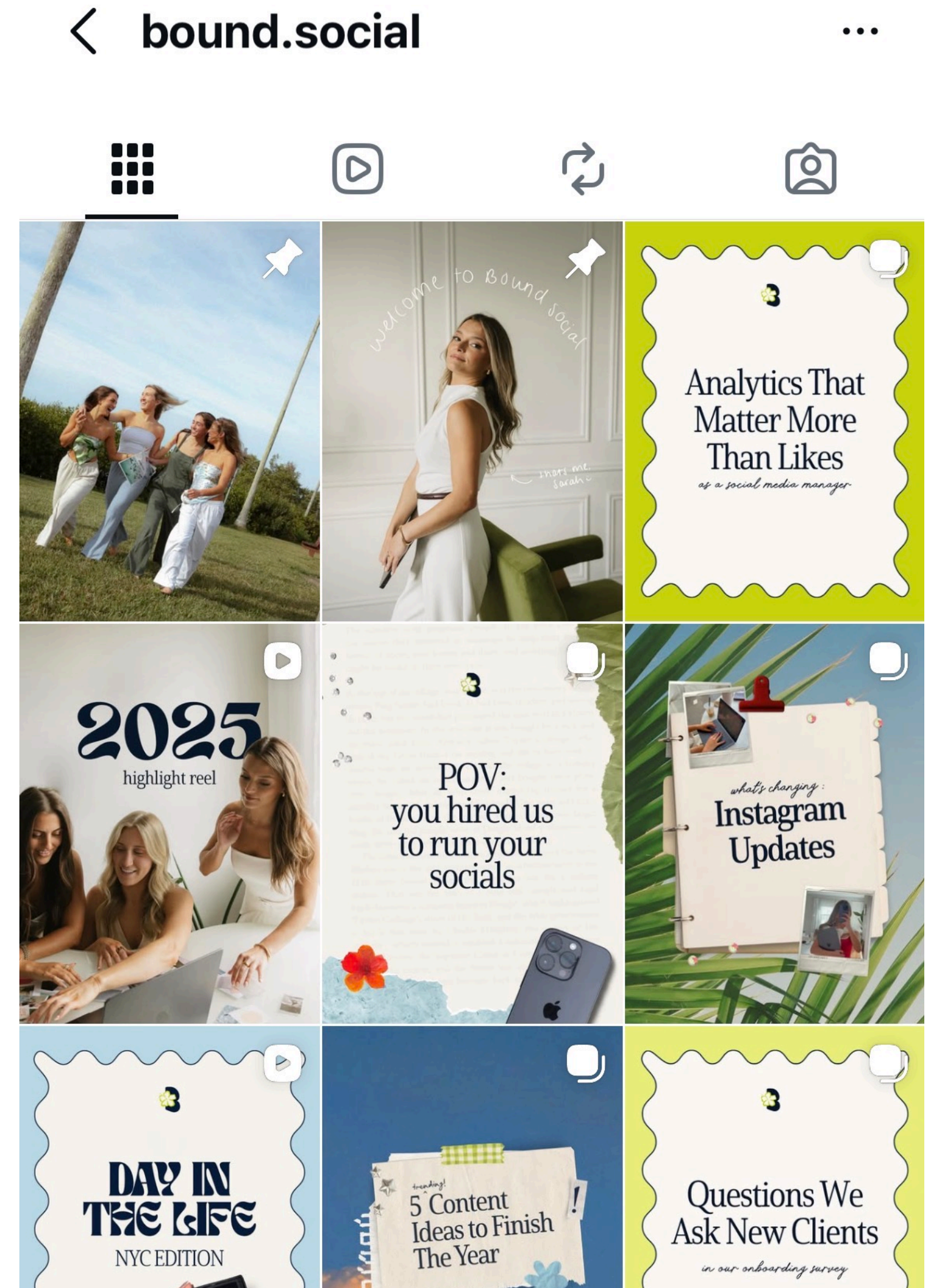
Body Copy: Avenir Regular  
30pt

# VISUAL CONSISTENCY

Writing should be clear, on-brand, and engaging across all post types.

**Visuals should feel cohesive and recognizable at a glance.**

- Follow the brand's color palette, typography, and imagery style.
- Use approved templates or layout systems to maintain consistency.
- Ensure all images are high-quality and sized correctly for the platform.
- Keep spacing, alignment, and margins consistent across posts.
- Prioritize clarity: avoid cluttered or overly complex visuals.



# BUILDING OUT THE CONTENT:

## Content:

Tips for Staying Productive

*Brain storm content through ChatGPT, but make sure to give it the correct information ex: the brand, the voice/ values and the goal of the post.*

## Slide: 1

Hook / Attention Grabber:

"Struggling to stay focused during the day?"

## Slide: 2

Key Message / Value:

"Try these 3 simple productivity hacks:"

Body Copy:

Break tasks into 25-minute sprints.  
Eliminate distractions by turning off notifications.  
Take short breaks to recharge your mind."\*

## Slide: 3

Call-to-Action / Takeaway:

"Which hack will you try first? Comment below and let us know!"

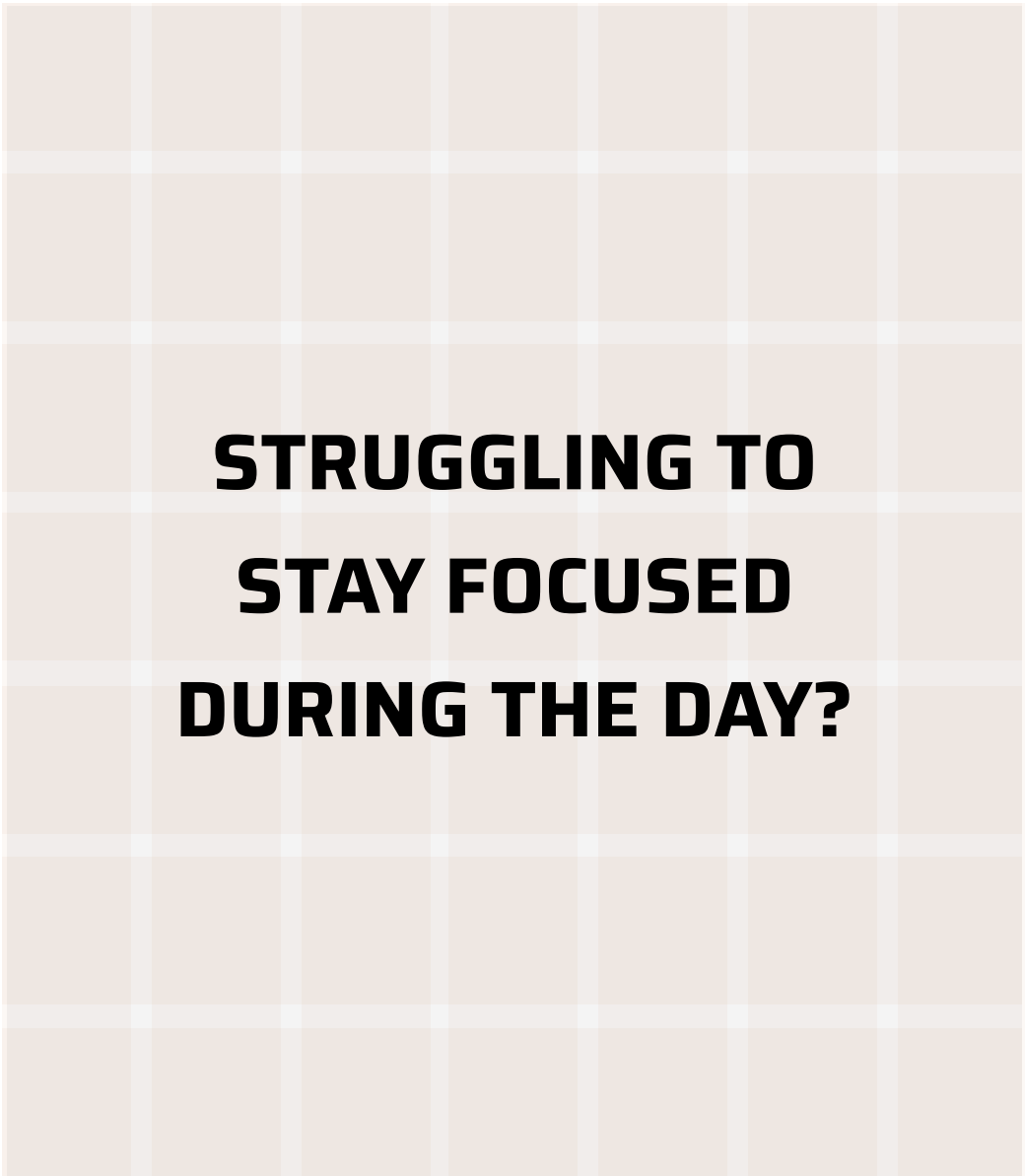


# LAYOUT CONTENT WITH GRID AND BRAND TYPOGRAPHY

*This is a good time to brainstorm and look for inspiration through Pinterest or Dribbble*

## Slide: 1

(This post is shrunk to to fit slides)



## Slide: 2

(This post is shrunk to to fit slides)



## Slide: 3

(This post is shrunk to to fit slides)

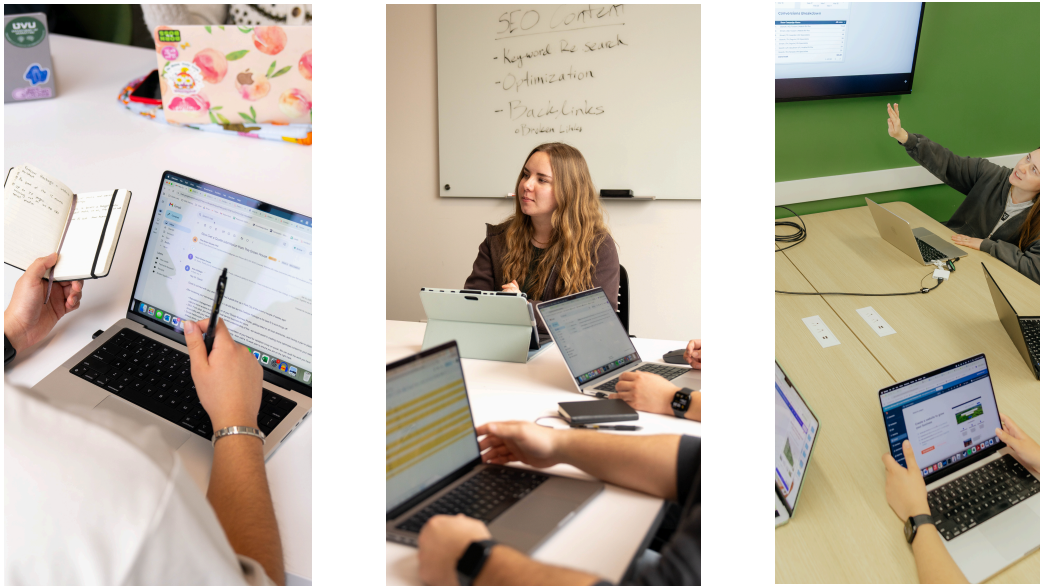


# GRAB BRAND ELEMENTS

Colors:

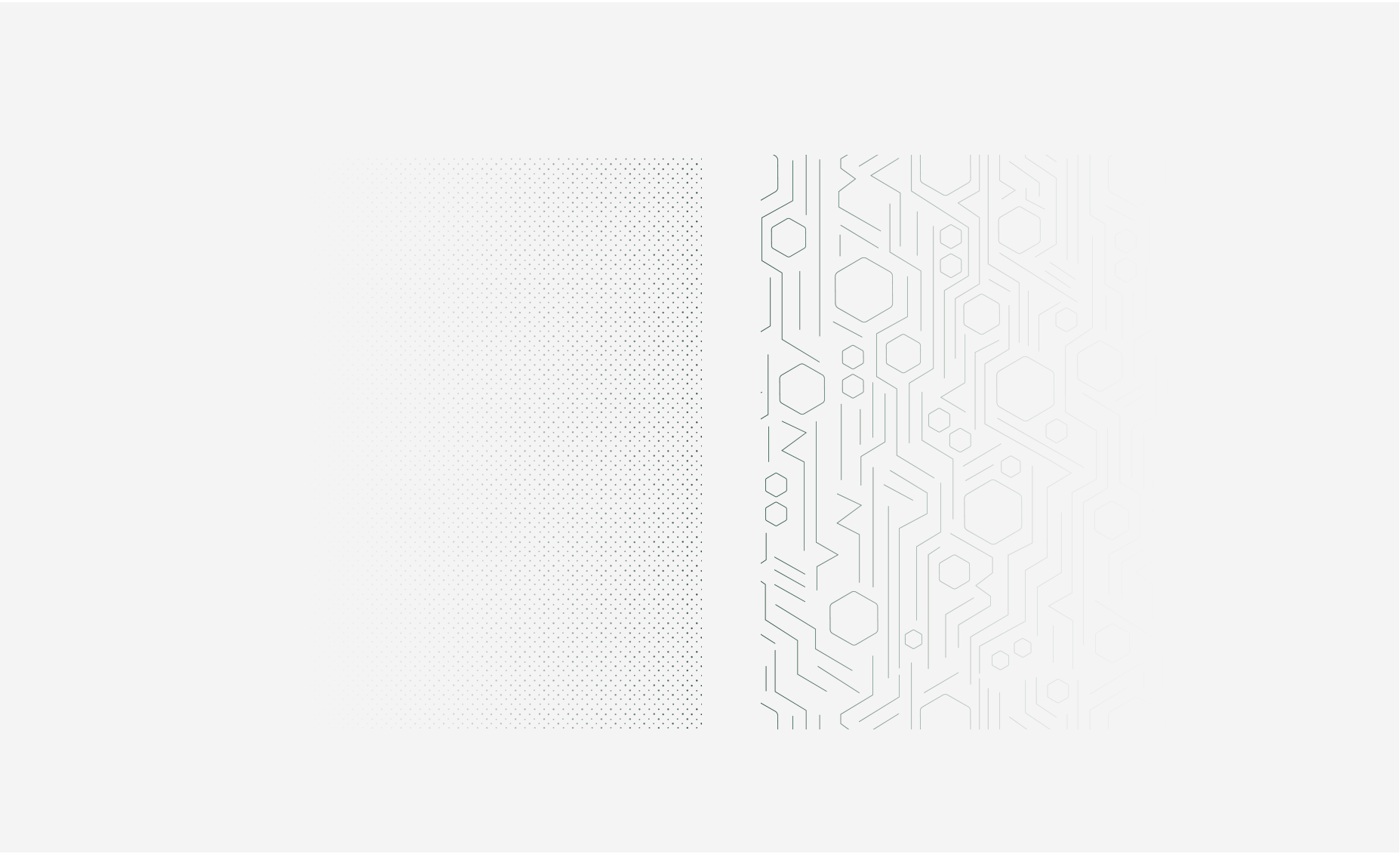


Additional  
Assets/Imagery:



*You can grab these items from the brand through Brand Bay and any imagery within our google drive ( you can find the favorite GH photos in the Graphic Design Folder)*

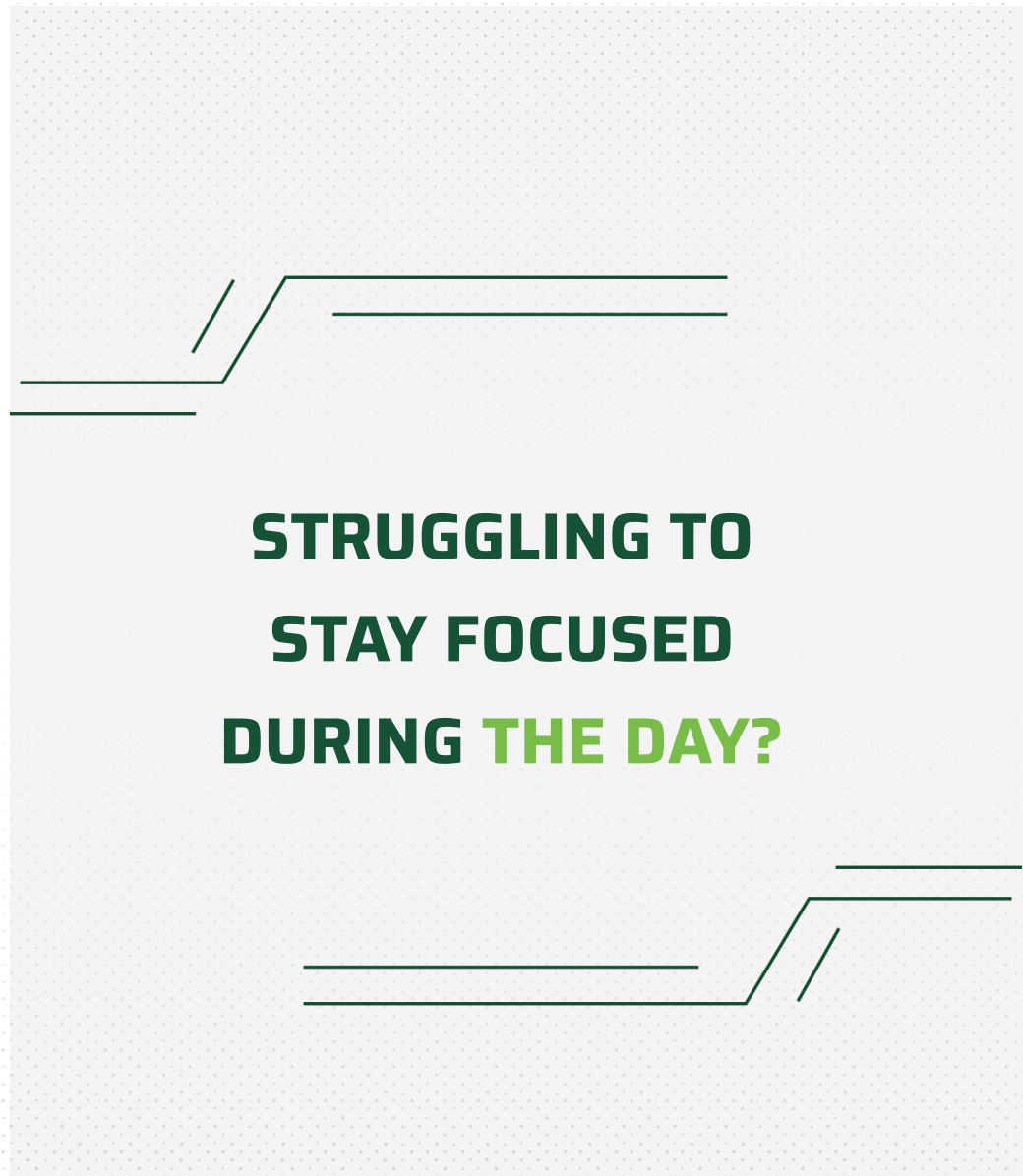
Patterns:



# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER STATIC:

*If the brand has team or office photos, you can add them during the Additional Elements step. Static posts can be created with or without imagery, following the same process.*

Slide: 1



Slide: 2



Slide: 3

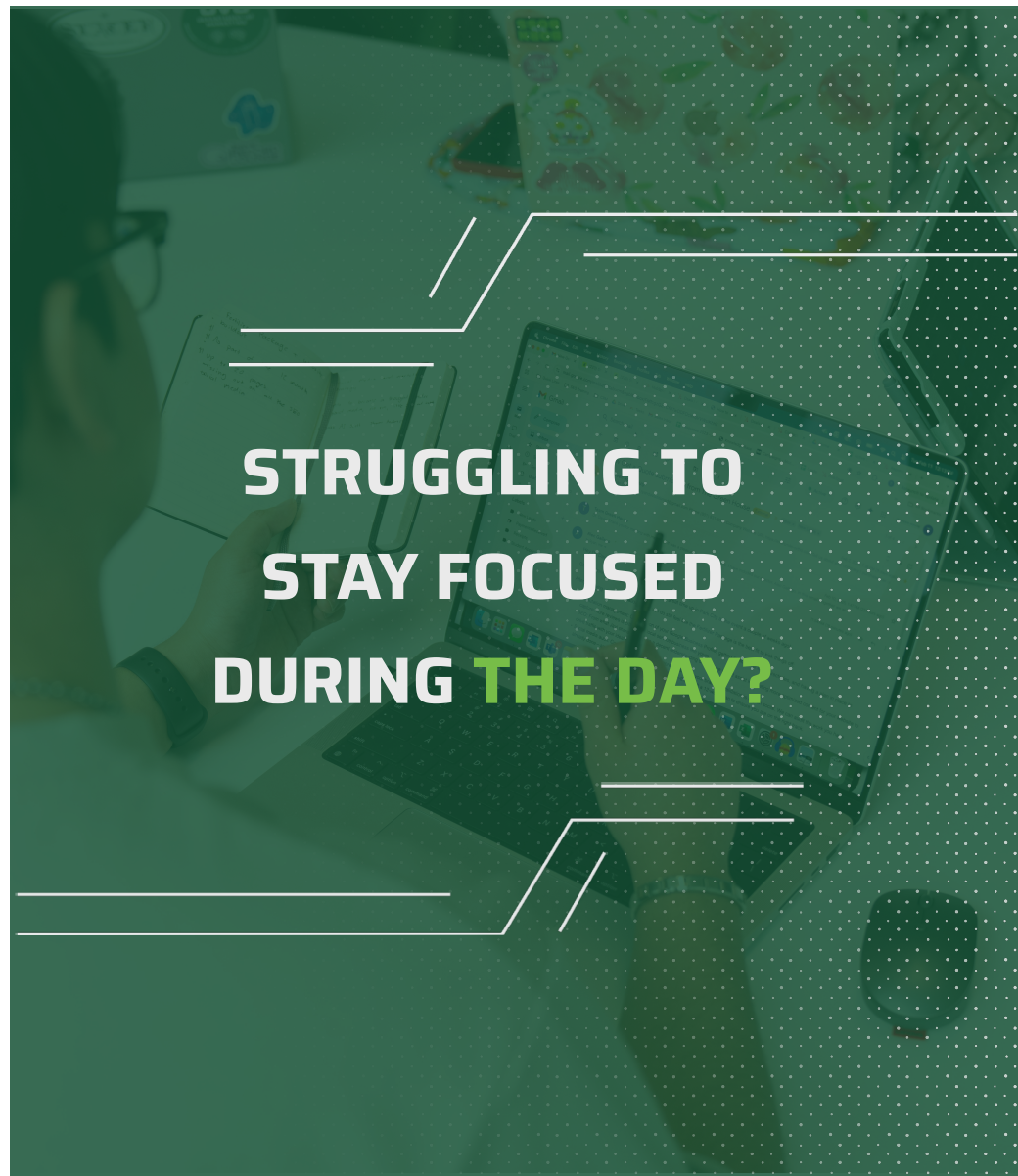




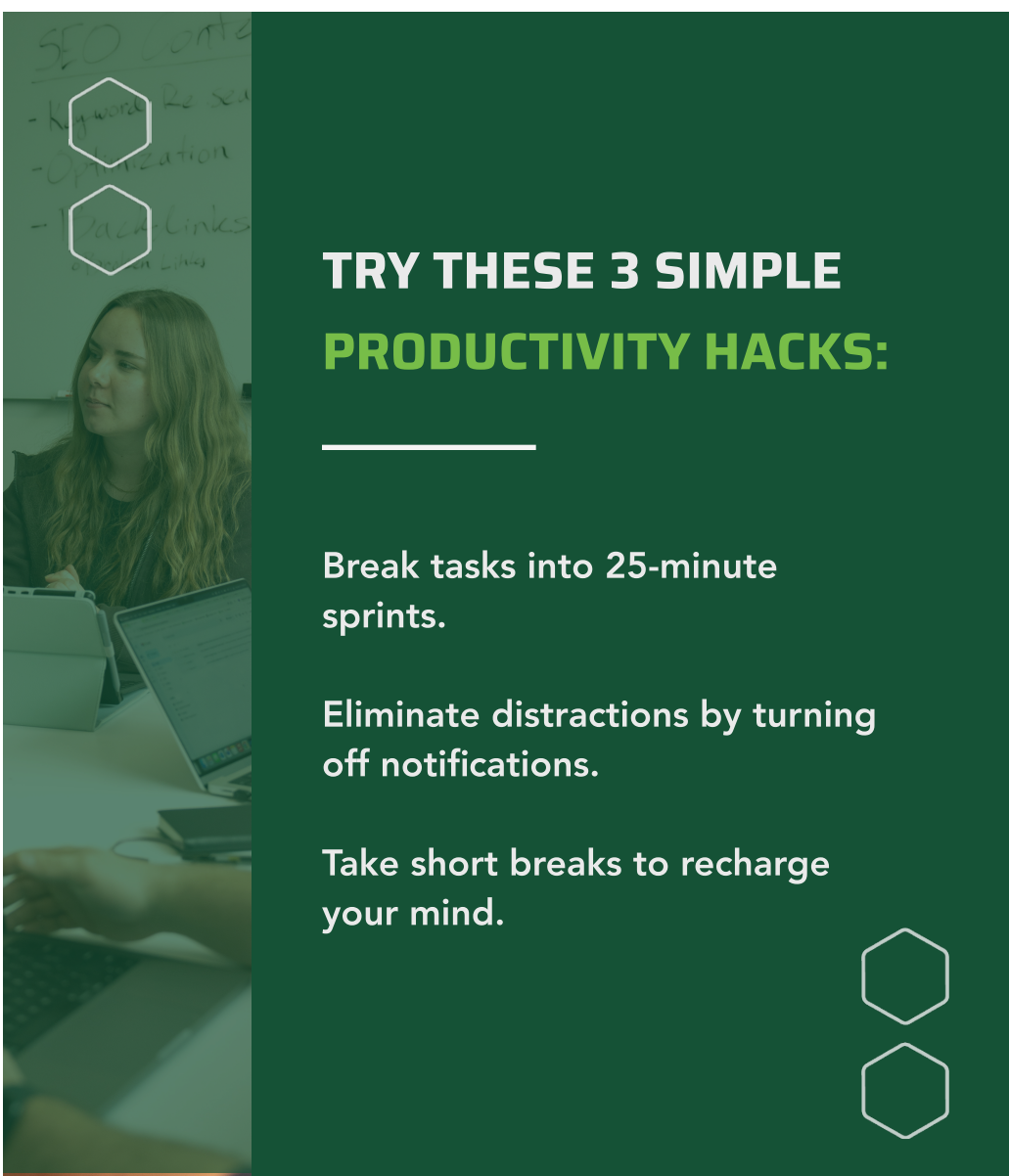
# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER VISUAL:

*If the brand has team or office photos, you can add them during the Additional Elements step. Static posts can be created with or without imagery, following the same process.*

Slide: 1



Slide: 2



Slide: 3



# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE CONSULTING WITH GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

1. What is the main purpose of this post?  
(promote, educate, announce, inspire)
2. What action do I want viewers to take?  
(click, save, comment, buy)
3. Are there brand colors, fonts, or imagery styles that must be used?
4. Does this post or design follow existing brand guidelines?
5. Does the contrast between text and imagery make sense and feel effective?
6. Does size clearly show what to read first, second, and third? (Hierarchy)
7. Does the post stay within the margins and align with the existing grid?

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Color:

[Adobe Color Contrast Checker](#)

[Adobe Color Explore](#)

## Illustrations:

[Freepik](#)

[Canva](#)

## Inspo:

[Pinterest](#)

[Dribbble](#)

## Imagery:

[Unsplash](#)

[Pexels](#)

[Adobe Stock \(use UVU.EDU sign in\)](#)

## Branding Assets:

[CSS Peeper: Web plugin to grab branding assets](#)

[Brand Bay](#)