

A person wearing a grey and black horizontally striped zip-up hoodie stands behind an open photo book. The book is lying flat on a light-colored surface, and its pages are filled with various photographs. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting, possibly a beach or a paved area. The overall image has a muted, monochromatic color palette with a slight red tint.

PHOTO BOOKS TRANSFORM
YOUR LIFE INTO A NARRATIVE
YOU CAN HOLD IN YOUR HAND.



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Hi! I'm Stacey, owner and creative director of Book This Project!

I love my family.
I love photographing my family.
I love books.
I love designing books.
I love designing photo books of my family photographs.

And I want you to love family photo books too!

It's that simple! I started this company to inspire you to take and print and share your family photographs.

Whether you want to design your own photo book - or - you want me to design a sophisticated, modern photo book for you, my goal is to inspire your photographs and to see how truly amazing photo books are.

I put this simple guide together for anyone who is ready to get started with designing their own photo book. The guide has been specifically written for Blurb's BookSmart free program but is easily adaptable into most programs. Enjoy!



10 Steps to a Great Photo Book

1. Take the photos for your book.
2. Determine your book project.
3. Determine your book program.
4. Create standard page layouts.
5. Create standard text styles.
6. Utilize the align tools.
7. Add page numbers.
8. Learn about the lock tool.
9. Order your book.
10. Share your book.



TAKE THE PHOTOS FOR YOUR BOOK.

The first step of photo book design is to take your photographs. For ideas on what photos to take throughout the year, keep this handy checklist in mind. This inclusive list is to keep you shooting and to provide ideas of what types of pages to include in your photo book.

holidays	family	activities	themes	favorites
1. New Year's Day	1. kid(s) portrait	1. playing at the park	1. birthday(s)	1. toy
2. Valentine's Day	2. kid(s) hands/feet	2. coloring/painting	2. winter (snow)	2. bath toy
3. St. Patrick's Day	3. self-portrait	3. baking cookies	3. spring (flowers)	3. stuffed animal
4. Passover/Easter	4. immediate family portrait	4. making dinner	4. summer (pool)	4. game
5. Memorial Day	5. family pet(s)	5. reading	5. fall (farm)	5. book
6. Fourth of July	6. grandparents (paternal)	6. playing on the bed	6. on a picnic	6. food
7. Labor Day	7. grandparents (maternal)	7. sleeping	7. in the garden	7. dessert
8. Halloween	8. uncles/aunts	8. singing	8. at the park	8. clothing/outfit
9. Thanksgiving	9. cousins	9. laughing	9. at the zoo	9. tv show/movie
10. Hanukkah/Christmas	10. close family friends	10. crying	10. on vacation	10. friend



DETERMINE YOUR BOOK PROJECT.

The next step to designing a photo book is to determine what type of book you are going to design.

There are endless types of books you could design, but developing a focus early on is crucial. Do you want to put a time frame to it - for instance, document a year, a vacation, or an event? Or do you want it to be a more thematic book? Here are some suggestions:

- your family life, over the course of a year
- your recent vacation
- your kids' art projects
- your baby's first year

If you have taken photos throughout the year for a particular photography project, like a Project 52, 365, or How I view..., design a book that compiles all of your photos from this project. **Here is a great example** of a Project 52 book I designed for someone.

Once you know the type of book project, it is time to select the photos for your book. This is a process in and of itself, but you want to select photos that go with the book project you've established. For some of my photo selection recommendations, **check out this blog post.**





DETERMINE YOUR BOOK PROGRAM.

To decide what photo book company and program to use, here are some helpful questions to ask yourself.

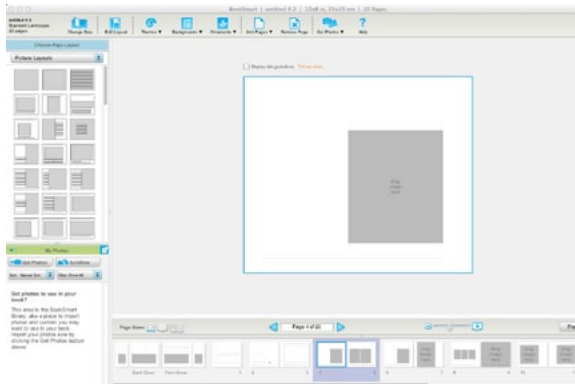
Are you looking for a no-fuss process? Do you want the fastest way to design a book? Are you looking for some creative choices but don't want to be overwhelmed? Do you love having complete control?

Do you want a lot of photos in a grid layout? Do you want fewer photographs in a more specific layout?

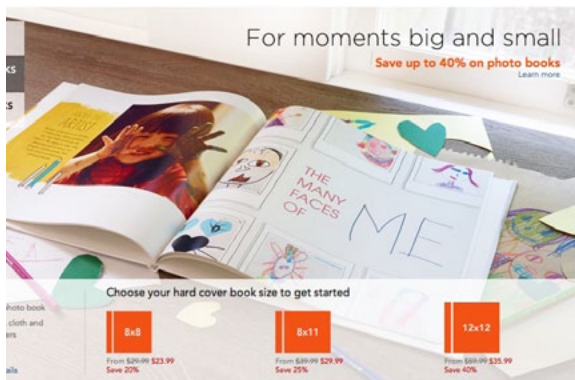
Do you want to start with a clean / blank layout (think black or white backgrounds) or do you want a bit of design?

Every single one of these questions influences which company, process and program you should use.

The best single piece of advice I can offer: Spend a little time right now to decide what you want before you download a program. You're more likely to get the results you want in the end, if you start with an intelligent choice in the beginning. For more advice on selecting which program, [check out this post on my blog.](#)



Blurb



Shutterfly

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CREATE STANDARD PAGE LAYOUTS.

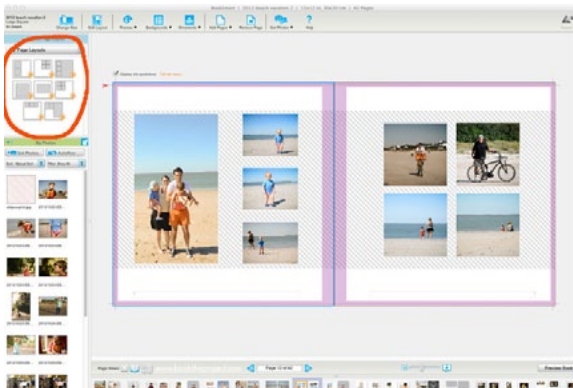
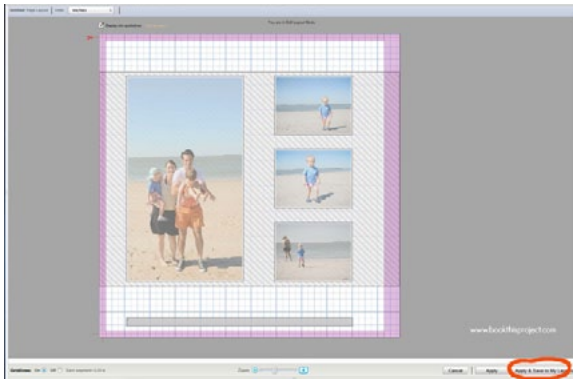
Now you are ready to start designing your book.

Blurb's BookSmart offers over 70 different page layouts you can choose from when designing your photo book. That's great, but that's also a lot. You shouldn't be using all of those spreads. It takes way too long to figure out which one of the 70 you should use. Plus, the more layouts you use, the more haphazard your design appears.

Streamline your options by designing your favorite 10-12 layouts and save them to your "My Pages" tab.

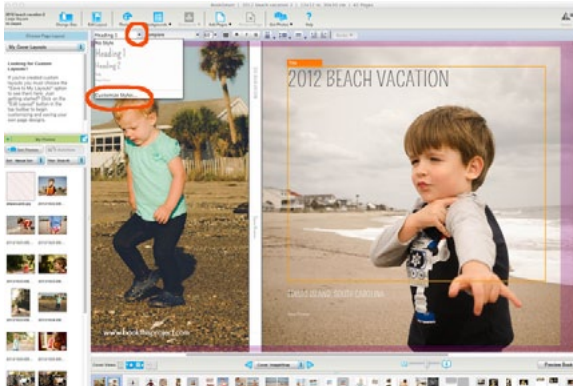
When you have adjusted a particular layout to fit your style, click "Apply & Save to My Layouts." Provide a custom name. Typically, I include the number of photo boxes in the layout name.

Then when selecting layouts for your book, use the pull down menu to only reveal the "My Pages" you have saved.





CREATE STANDARD TEXT STYLES.



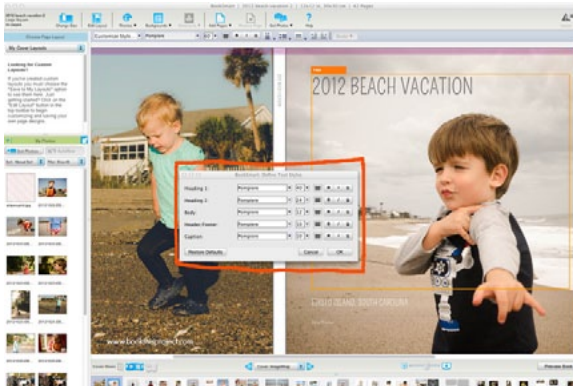
If you want to provide a title, captions, date, or page number to your layouts, I recommend you utilize the text style feature. It will keep you organized and save you time. Two very good things!

Select your favorite font(s) and define the text styles. Blurb's BookSmart allows up to 5 text styles.

Select "Customize Styles" from the pull down menu when the text box is highlighted.

Define the font style, size, color, and any Bold/Italics/Underline you may want.

Once these are defined, all you have to do is select "Body" - or whatever style you want - when adding text. Super easy!





UTILIZE THE ALIGN TOOLS.

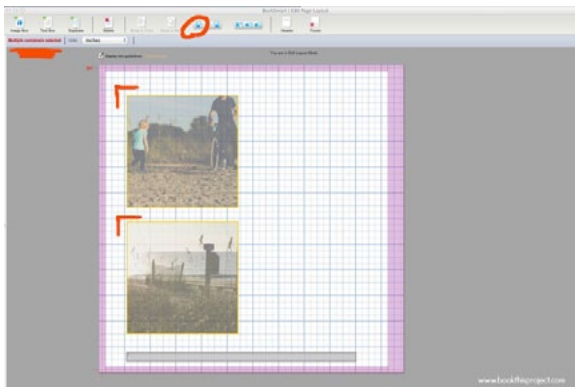
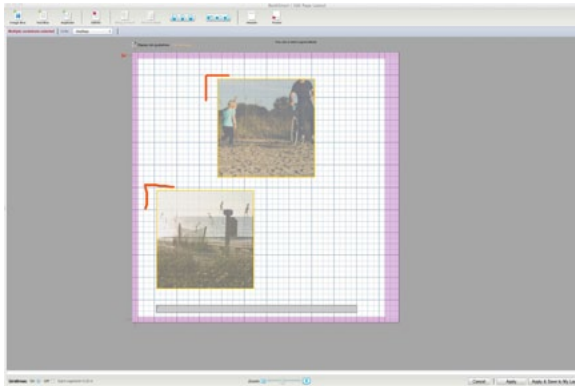
If you create your own layouts with multiple image and text boxes, the align tool becomes your best friend.

The software does provide a grid, but to make sure you have clean lines to your layouts and all boxes align appropriately, use this handy dandy tool.

There are alignment buttons for left, center and right. This includes both horizontally and vertically. The one thing to keep in mind, it does not factor in the spacing within groups of photos. So if you select three photos and hit "center align" it will put all three in the center, overlapping.

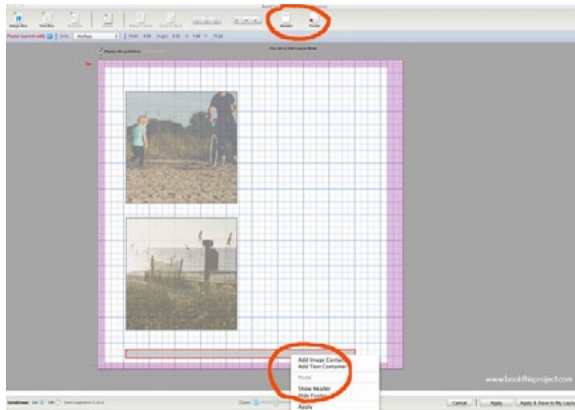
My trick is to get the photos close and then select them all and align by the top edge (horizontal row) or left edge (vertical row). If you have three photos where one is the center, horizontally and vertically center that photo and then align the other photos off of your center one.

Your eyes will definitely thank you for using this tool!



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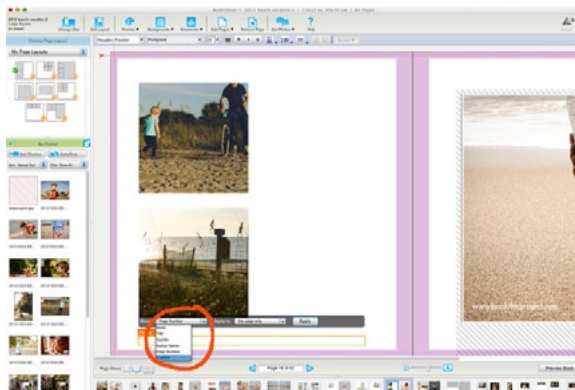
ADD PAGE NUMBERS.



Not necessary for every page, but page numbers can provide a handy reference for you, especially if you are designing a large, and organized, book. It sounds like it will be very time consuming to add them but it is really quite simple.

If your particular layout does not have a footer, you can add one by selecting the "Footer" button in the upper right corner in Edit Layout mode. If you don't want page numbers or footer in your layout, select, right click and press "hide footer."

You also have the option to show the footer on all pages, even pages or odd pages.



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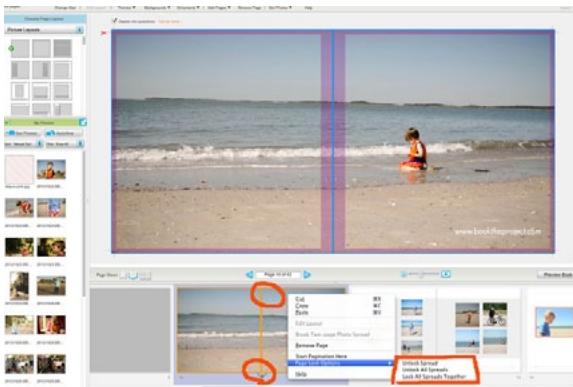
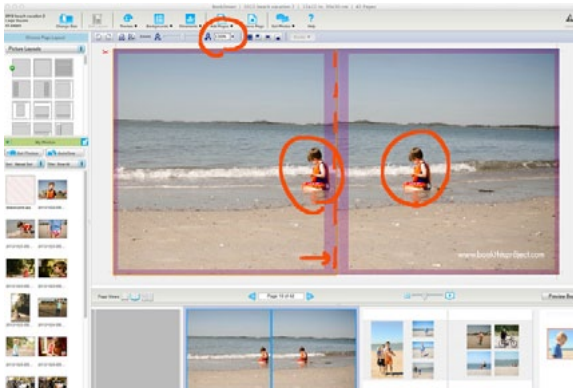
LEARN ABOUT THE LOCK TOOL.

Do you love the look of full spread bleeds but not sure how to achieve the layout with the free program?

It's not a perfect science with the free programs, but it can be done. Create two full photo page layouts next to each other. Insert the same photo on each side. Scale exactly the same percentage for each photo and then line up each photo with the center along the spine.

You want to match up the center line as close as possible. As I said, it will not be perfect, but you want it close. In the example on the left, I used the horizon line to make sure the two images were aligned. Keep in mind, binding will occur in the center so you won't notice if it is slightly off...but still get it close!

Finally lock the spread! Right click on the pages in the thumbnail and select to lock the pages. This will ensure these pages stay together as a pair. This is great if you want to add, delete or move pages. You are establishing that these two pages must always stay together.





ORDER YOUR BOOK.

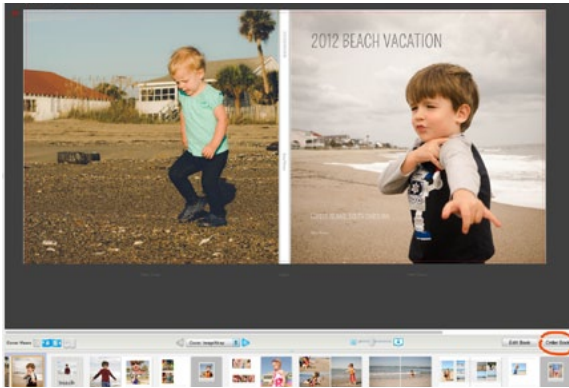
After you have laid out all of your photos and are happy with how everything looks, you are ready to order your book.

Hooray!!!

But before you press order, there are a couple of steps you should take to make sure your order is the best it can possibly be. A more thorough explanation of the ordering process, can be found on [this blog post](#).

1. Fix your warnings, like text over-runs or image resolution warnings.
2. Ensure photos extend to edge of photo boxes and all photo boxes extend to bleed edges (if you want them to go off the page).
3. Review for your consistent elements (text, borders, page numbers).
4. Read through all of your captions and narratives.
5. Spell Check.
6. Print an actual proof copy to review.
7. One final check in the preview screen.

Don't forget, Blurb now offers the option to publish your book as an ebook for your tablet or phone.





SHARE YOUR BOOK.

I simply can not publish my favorite ten steps to making your photo book without sharing my favorite tip: SHARING!

In a couple of weeks, you will receive your glorious book. It will feel fantastic. Be prepared, you may notice a couple of things to correct..that is to be expected... you'll get them on your second book. Because you will make a second book!

Holding the book in your hand, makes everything worth it. The selecting photos, the designing pages, the thorough checking. You now have it in your hands and get to share it with the world. Show your best friend, your parents, your kids. Share with family and friends at the end of the year. Read it with your kids once a month.

Blurb has a facebook and twitter option to immediately share with your followers. If you have a blog, you can embed a version of your book on your blog. When you finish your book, I would love for you to share your book with me. Tag Book This Project in your facebook post or email a link to stacey@bookthisproject.com.

I hope these tips were helpful as you design your photo book! I can't wait to see what you design! -stacey

