

Conventions of comics

Conventions are sets of **rules** for what is normally found within a product

Comics use a set of **conventions** (usually)

Your work should usually keep to these **conventions**

Conventions and creativity in the components are **limited** in their fitness for purpose.

Conventions and creativity are applied in the final product in a **limited** way.

Conventions and creativity in the components are **adequate** in their fitness for purpose.

Conventions and creativity are **adequately** applied in the final product.

Conventions and creativity in the components are **fully** fit for purpose.

Conventions and creativity are **effectively** applied in the final product.

Conventions of comics

One set of **conventions** apply to how **pages are usually laid out**

I've split this into 9 conventions for page layout

Conventions of comics

Convention 1: page orientation

Pages are almost always **portrait**. Even if they're designed to be read on a computer or a mobile device

The opposite to portrait is **landscape**. It is **very** rare to find anything other than portrait



Conventions of comics

DEATH ON THE MOOR

97

DEATH ON THE MOOR



Convention 2: page backgrounds

Page backgrounds are almost always **white** unless coloured paper is being used

Dark coloured backgrounds are sometimes used to give an impression of moodiness or horror, but this is rare

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Convention 3: page sizes

Almost all standard printed comic books are about the same size (170mm x 260mm)

There are exceptions:

- Manga comics are usually smaller (120mm x 180mm or 145mm x 210mm)
- French & Belgium comics are often a bit bigger (240mm x 320mm)

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Convention 4: reading order

Pages usually read from **top to bottom** and from **left to right**

On a double page, the left page is usually read before the right page is moved on to

Speech bubbles within a panel are also usually read from top to bottom and from left to right

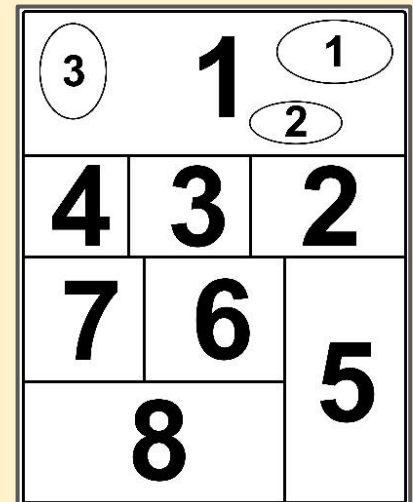
Published 2017...

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Convention 4b: reading order

But this is not true for **Manga**, which traditionally read from top to bottom and from **right to left** (but this is changing)

Speech bubbles will also be read from **right to left**



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Convention 5: margins

A **margin** is usually placed around the edge of the page.

Margins are usually between 7 and 10mm. Sometimes top and bottom margins are wider (if using titles, page numbers etc...)



This allows for **tolerance** errors when printing and cutting pages and ensures no action spills off the page



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Convention 5b: margins

Not every page has to have a margin (although it is normal)

Sometimes action does go all the way to the edge of the page deliberately

This is a **design choice**, but you would aim to avoid anything essential such as text being too close to the edge



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Convention 6: panels

Action is organised into **panels**. These are the individual frames on a page

Pages will usually have a number of panels on them, split into **horizontal** rows (typically 3 to 5 rows, but this varies)

Panels are often **rectangular or square**, but not always

Conventions of comics



Convention 7: borders

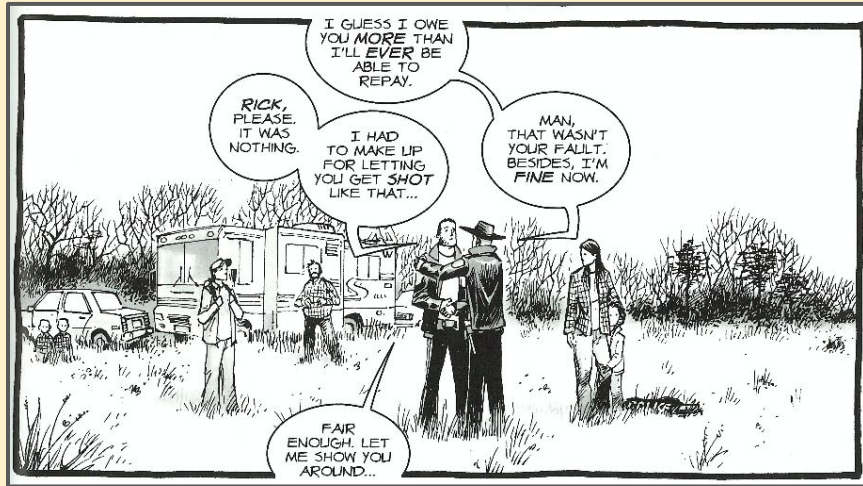
Panels often (but not always) have solid **borders** around them

Borders are usually black and thicker than normal lines

Borders are often straight lines (but not always - this is a design decision)

Sometimes a single panel on a page might be left without a border

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Convention 8: panels and content

Content is usually restricted to a single panel - it doesn't usually **overflow** from panel to panel

There are exceptions to this, usually with the aim of showing how action develops



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Convention 9: gutters

The gap between panels is called the **gutter**. This is usually left as white space

Gutters on a page are usually the same width, typically 2-3 mm wide

Sometimes pages don't use gutters, or only use them for some panels. This is a design choice



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Convention 9b: gutters

In **Manga**, gutters are often different sizes

Vertical (up/down) gutters are often thinner than **horizontal** (left/right) gutters in this style

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Key vocab:

- convention
- page orientation (portrait/landscape)
- reading order
- margin (tolerance)
- panel
- border
- gutter

Conventions of comics

Task:

Annotate at least one of the comic book extracts to show the main conventions

Make sure you include a definition of the conventions

Extension:

Add annotations to note content conventions (colours, dialogue, lettering, action etc...)

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Annotate means to **label** with **detail** to add **meaning**



Margin

This is **NOT** an annotation!
It's a label

Conventions of comics

Annotate means to **label** with **detail** to add **meaning**



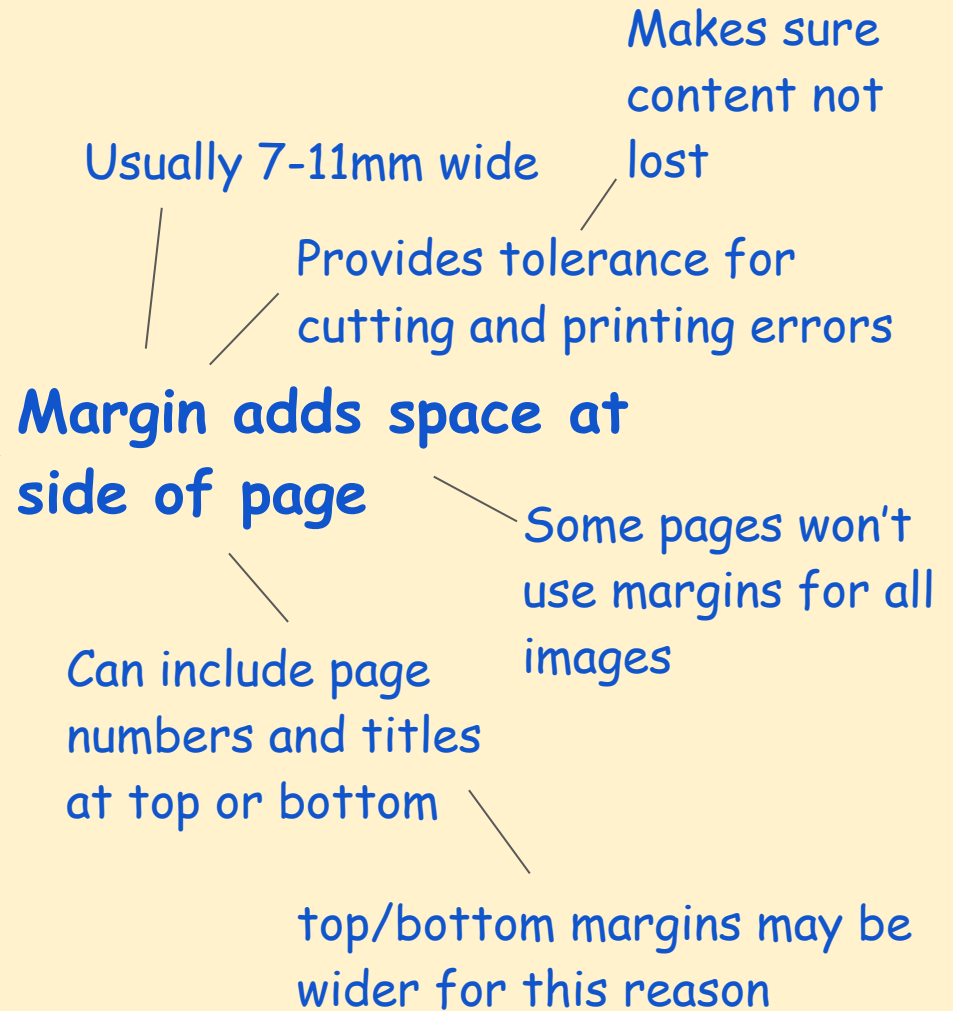
Provides tolerance for cutting and printing errors

Margin adds space at side of page

This is better. But...

Conventions of comics

Annotate means to **label** with **detail** to add **meaning**



Conventions of comics

Task:

Create a **glossary** of key terms about page layout

- convention
- page orientation (portrait/landscape)
- reading order
- margin (tolerance)
- panel
- border
- gutter

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The comic book extracts used in these slides have been used at smaller scales for educational purposes only

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