Excerpt from an article by Erik D. Kennedy: Medium articles

I'm not putting this on Medium— it's an extra for those on the email list. In the spirit of the 7 Rules for Gorgeous UI, here's one more "Krav Maga"-style tip. It's the most important thing I forgot to write about in those beasts of articles.

Ready? Today we're talking about *alignment*.

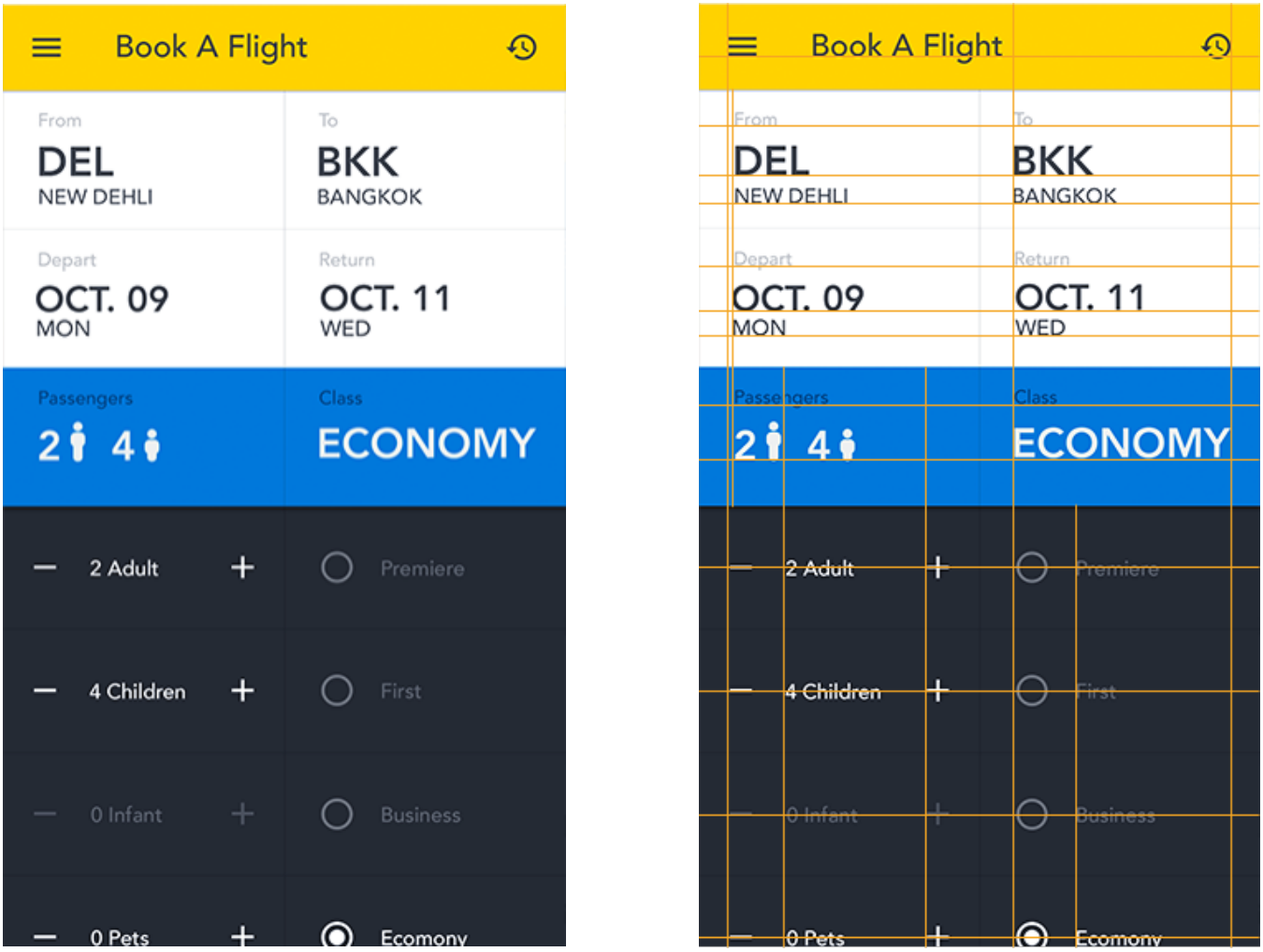
Rule 8: Just align everything

Ever notice that nature is beautiful? Nice, me too. But there's a weird thing about nature: there's really **not too many straight lines**.

In fact, with the questionable exception of the horizon, I don't see any.

Or parallel lines. And, question of the day, where can you find a right angle in a jungle?

The truth is, **lines and right angles are a sign of man-made stuff**. They signal human beings have put **care** into building this thing. Nature just doesn't seem to make them.



As designers, we want to take advantage of that. We want our things to look like human beings care about it— a lot. So, naturally, that means **we should use loads of lines and right angles**.

Mobile app for flights by Dash Ponce de Leon.

There's lots of lines and hard edges in these app screenshots— well over a dozen. Every single one of them is

either horizontal or vertical, meaning there's a bunch of right angles too.

Lines and right angles make stuff look *built*. They make stuff look ***designed***.

OK, now let's take it a step further. **The real trick is to *imply* lines, not just use them**.

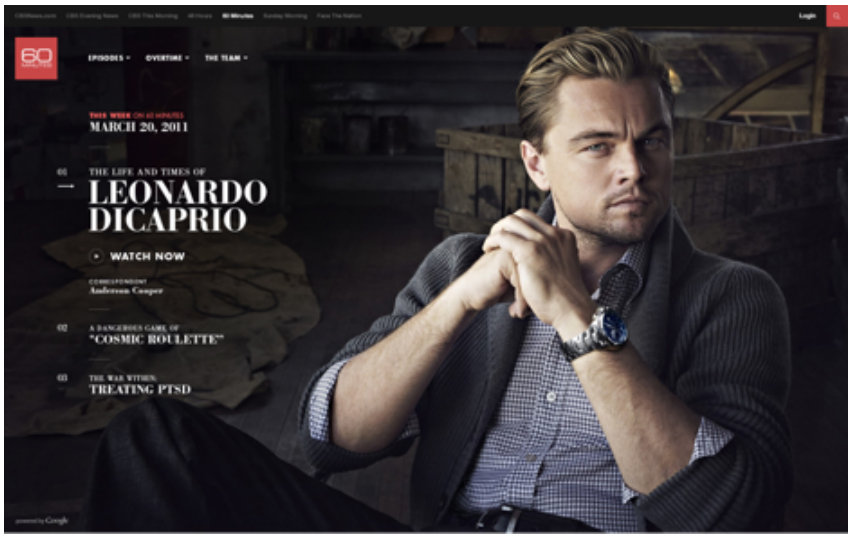
In other words, ***align*** things. Align *everything*.

Pop quiz: of the 42 elements on this page, how many share a bounding line with at least one other element? Answer: all of them, silly.

Every single element is bounded by an edge that some other element is *also* bounded by. **The sum effect is that everything appears very organized, neat, and clean**.

Alignment is so powerful, you can make something **look organized without a single actual line**.

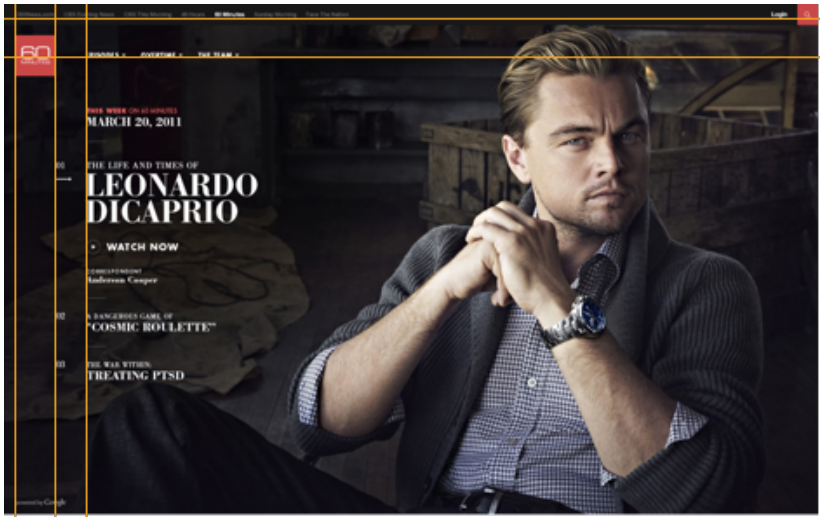
This is a design for the 60 minutes website by Brijan Powell. It looks really, really nice.



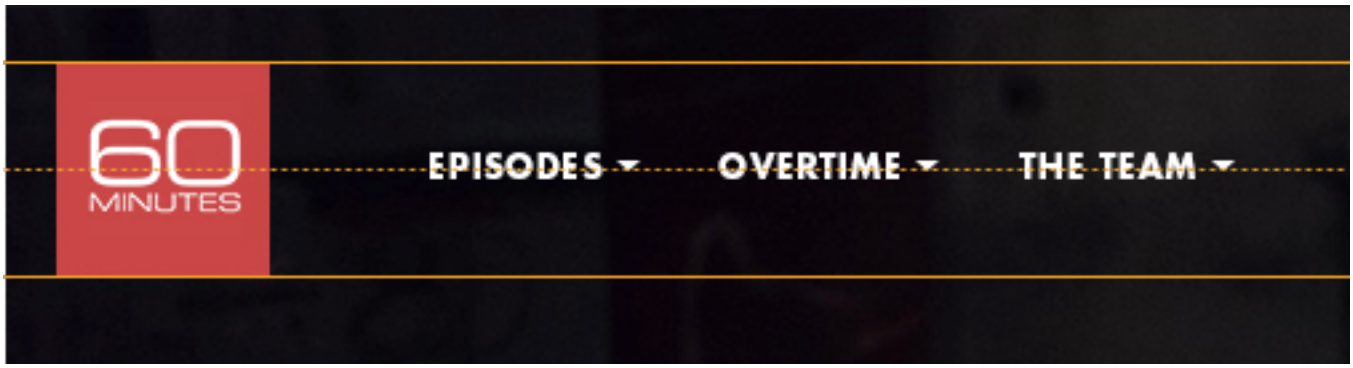
The special thing for us about this design is that there is basically *one* hard edge, and it's *hardly visible,* and it's allll the way at the top.

All the other lines are *implied*.

The text is all aligned, the numbers before each feature are all aligned, the menu items are aligned.



Even the menu items are vertically centered relative to the logo.



(Notice how the menu items don't *quite* appear vertically centered? It's because the text is in all caps, meaning we don't see descenders, and therefore the text appears a pixel or two too high. This could be fixed, but the point still stands– remember this, budding UI designers)

In fact, like the last example, *everything* is aligned with *something*. And yet, no lines.

You don't need lines for alignment.

Medium articles
Erik D. Kennedy