



Rekifune River

歴舟川

Canoeing Map


1:25000






2-3 days

Time




35km

Distance




6/10

Difficulty




3/5

Remoteness



5/5

Water clarity



Jun-Oct

Best season

The Rekifune River (歴船川) is a pristine, relatively untouched river flowing from high up in the eastern Hidaka Ranges to the Pacific Ocean. The upper gorge section has some challenging whitewater rapids, cloaked on both sides by beautiful cliffs. The lower braided section of the river makes for one of the best riverbed camping of any river in Hokkaido. Here, we outline a classic two-night route, starting from the only weir on the river. It's a trip that will keep experts entertained, and challenge intermediate paddlers keen to test their canoe camping (and loaded paddling) skills.

**LOCATION**  
This route is on the Rekifune River at the far southeast end of the Hidaka Range in southern-central Hokkaido, on the Pacific Ocean coast south of Obihiro City.

**Put-in location:** The upper-most put in for the Rekifune River is usually just below the Sakashita Dam (坂下砂防ダム). There's a parking area just above the river, here, large enough for about 10-15 cars, accessed by a short gravel road. If you'd prefer to skip the more challenging gorge section of the route, then put in at the lower end of the Kamui Kotan Campground, here.

**Take-out location:** For the takeout for this full down-river route, paddlers can take out about 500m as the crow flies

from the river mouth, here. The river here is accessed via a basic double-track gravel road which turns into a large sandy area. Those with a 4WD vehicle will be able to drive right onto the gravel river bed, to about 500m from the river mouth, around here. This depends greatly on the level of the river at the time – don't leave cars unattended on the riverbed..

**GENERAL NOTES**  
The Rekifune River is a crystal clear, wild and free braided river, with a beautiful gorge in the upper section. Rare for a Hokkaido river, there's very rarely any strainers. What really puts it on the map for paddling, however, is the perfectly located Kamui Kotan Campground, about 25km upstream from the coast, and 10km downstream from Sakashita Dam. For the dedicated paddler with a few days up their sleeves, this makes for a perfect base camp from which to explore the upper Rekifune, Nubinaï, and Naka-no-kawa Rivers.

For those intending to paddle the length of the Rekifune River, it makes sense to run the upper section of the river from the Sakashita Dam to the campground unloaded. That is 1) set up camp at the Kamui Kotan Campground, 2) drop the canoes off at the Sakashita Dam, 3) drop the car off at the river mouth, and 4) shuttle yourself back to the Sakashita Dam put in. While it's not impossible to run the upper section of the river loaded, it is a fairly technical section of river. Plus, you'll be driving past

the campground to get to the put in anyway.

**ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES**  
This 35km downriver route flows at a consistent gradient all the way to the sea, so progress is quite fast for the entirety of the route. The lower section from Kamui Kotan Campground to the Pacific Ocean could easily be done in one day, but the gravel bars along the way are perfect for camping, so it's worth taking one's time. The upper gorge section may require some scouting of rapids, so may take more time than expected.

**DAY 1 – Sakashita Dam (坂下ダム) to Kamui Kotan Campground (カムイコタンキャンプ場) | 11km, 5.9mpk**  
I Fairly soon after putting in below the Sakashita Dam, paddlers will have all hands on deck navigating the small but continuous rapids as this pristine river wends its way through a high-walled gorge. Rapids in this section are relatively well-behaved though, so a keen low brace will keep most paddlers on course and mostly dry. They're certainly a no-brainer in a packraft. Beyond the short 1.5km long gorge, the river widens considerably, but there are a number of small rocky drops to keep things interesting. The typhoons of 2016 and 2017 have formed a couple of new head-scratcher rapids, one in particular around the 7km point that would be best to scout when water levels are low - it's a narrow slot in bedrock which may be difficult to navigate in a double Canadian canoe. Beyond that there's just one last short Class 2 rapid upstream of Oda-bashi Bridge, and then you're at the campground..

**DAY 2 – Kamui Kotan Campground (カムイコタンキャンプ場) to the Gravel Bar Bivvy | 15km, 5.2mpk**  
The highlight of the second day on the river is the multiple sandstone cliffs along the way. The first one has spring water continuously flowing down the cliff face - a really beautiful sight. Over all, today's paddling is relatively

straight forward, with regular Class 2 rapids. Along the way you'll pass through the small town of Taiki (大樹町). Take out on the river right just after the bridge for a 10 minute walk to a convenience store. Beyond Taiki there is one concern before arriving at the campspot. One is the Tetra-no-se Rapids (テトラの瀬). In normal water levels (about 102.4m at the Oda gauge), water will only be flowing on the hard left of the river. There are two large concrete tetra blocks in the middle of the channel, washed downstream to this point in the past. Take care and scout first. If the weather forecast is clear, there are a number of good gravel bar camping spots to choose from. This spot on river left 4km from Taiki is nice, as is the slightly higher spot on the river right. Where ever you choose to camp, however, do so with extreme caution. The Rekifune River rises fast with heavy rain.

**DAY 3 - Gravel Bar Bivvy to the Pacific Ocean (太平洋) | 10km, 4.5mpk**  
The Rekifune is a rarity in Hokkaido in that it flows at a decent clip right to the ocean. Even less than 500m to the coast, you're paddling fast-moving swifts. Accordingly, this last day is over before you know it. But only if you choose the right branch in the expansive multi-branched braided section upstream of the Rekifune-bashi Bridge. The deepest-looking branch doesn't always stay that way, and you may find yourself quickly running out of water as the river gradually fans out - you may need to walk your canoe or packraft in shallows for 500m or so. In general it may be best to keep taking left branches, despite initial shallow entries. The river is a changing thing, however, so each paddler's mileage will vary. The safest place to park a car is about 500m upstream from the coast, here. It's definitely worth paddling all the way to the river mouth, however. The gravel coast there is expansive and beautiful.

TRANSPORT

**By car** I The upper-most put in for the Reki-fune River is usually just below the Sakashita Dam (坂下砂防ダム). There's a parking area just above the river large enough for about 10 cars, accessed by a short gravel road. For this full down-river route, paddlers can take out about 500m as the crow flies from the river mouth. The river here is accessed via a basic double-track gravel road which turns into a large sandy area. Those with a 4WD vehicle will be able to drive right onto the gravel river bed. A taxi from the last farm on the road next to the coast to the put in will likely cost just over 12,000yen. Alternatively, it's a very nice 30km bicycle ride from the coast to the put in, cycling along quiet countryside roads.  
**Public transport** I To get to Taiki town (大樹町), there's a regular bus running from Obihiro JR Station, bound for Hiroo (広尾町). Catch the bus from Terminal 11 at Obihiro Station. Buses run about one per hour, and the trip takes about 1.5 hours. See the timetable link on the online route overview. Get off at Taiki Cosmo-ru-mae (大樹コスモール前) in Taiki for easy access to taxis, a *michi-no-eki* and a super-market. The bus fare is about 1,500yen one-way. A taxi from here to the put in will likely cost about 8,000yen.

**SAFETY NOTES**  
Take care in the upper gorge section - access to the river is limited. With three rivers feeding into the Rekifune at the Kamui Kotan Camp-ground, the river can rise very quickly with rain high up in the Hidaka mountains. Always check the weather before putting in. This applies to both the difficult-to-access gorge section and considerations regarding camping on gravel bars lower down on the river. When choosing a river-bed campspot, choose well raised up areas.

Japanese Map Glossary		
Romaji	Kanji	English
bunki	分岐	junction
cho	町	town
dake/mine	岳/峯	peak
eki	駅	station
goya/koya	小屋	hut
hinangoya	避難小屋	shelter
ike	池	pond
kawa/gawa	川	river
kako	火口	crater
ko/mizumi	湖	lake
kyo	峡	gorge
numa	沼	pond
onsen	温泉	hot spring
sawa	沢	stream
taira/daira	平	plateau
tani/dani	谷	valley
taki	滝	waterfall
toge	峠	pass
yama/san/zan	山	mountain

RIVER DETAILS


This route is on Rekifune River (歴舟川), or Pe-rupne-i in the Ainu indigenous language. The river is a Class A (一級河川) river, 64.7km in total length. This section of the river is between 10m and 40m wide, with a normal flow rate of around 1m/s to 3m/s. The gradient for this section of river is 5.4 mpk (28.51 FPM).

**Water level notes:** We met a number of local paddlers on the river who mentioned that the river level (102.87m at the Rekifune Oda Gauge) on the particular weekend we were there was 'the ideal best level'. We'd agree – the rapids were manageable, and there was very little scraping on the riverbed. In the summer months of July and August, the Rekifune can suffer from very low water levels. If the Rekifune-gawa Oda Gauge is showing less than 102.3m, you may be in for a boney ride.

**ONSEN NEARBY**  
This eastern side of the Hidaka foothills is a little scant on natural hotsprings. If you're keen for a bath as soon as humanly possible after (or during) your paddle down the river, there's a traditional public bath in Taiki Town (大樹町大樹公衆浴場, 200yen). It's a short walk from the Taiki-hashî Bridge in Taiki Town. Bansei Onsen (晩成温泉, 500yen) is also a nice option if you've got the time and transport to get there - it's right on the coast, about 20km north of the take-out at the river mouth. The closest onsen to the Kamui Kotan Campground (20km away) is the Sarabetsu Village Fukushi-no-sa-to Onsen (福祉の里温泉, 420yen), with large outdoor hot pools and sauna. ■

ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

Please visit the full route guides for GPS files, interactive maps, and extra safety notes: <http://hokw.jp/rekifune>




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**MAP, TEXT, PHOTOS** | Rob Thomson

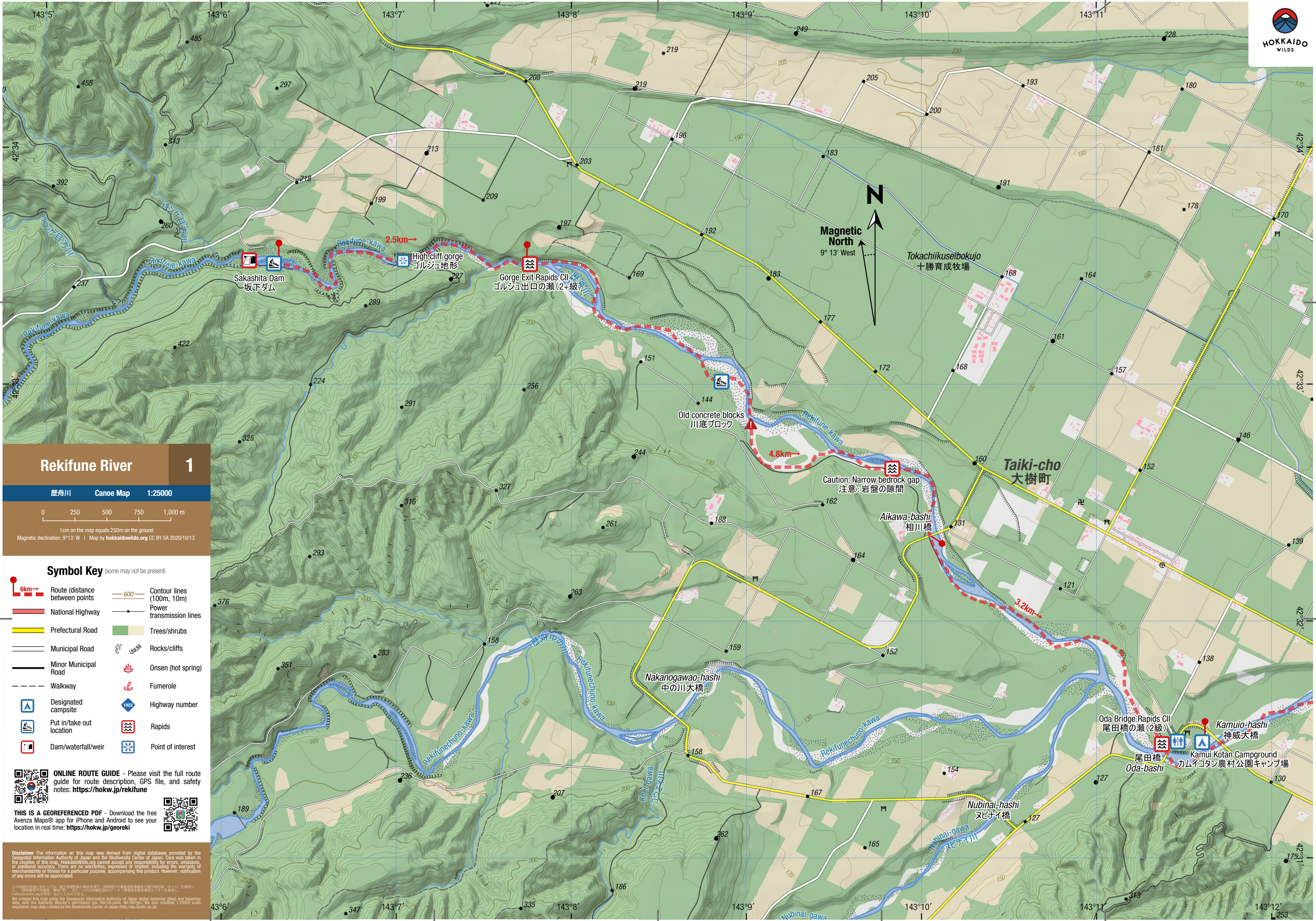
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MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan

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# Rekifune River

## 1

歴舟川

Canoe Map

1:25000

0

250

500

750

1,000 m

1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground

Magnetic declination: 9°13' W | Map by [hokkaidowilds.org](https://hokkaidowilds.org) CC BY SA 2020/10/13

- ### Symbol Key

(some may not be present)
- 6km→

Route (distance between points)
- National Highway
- Prefectural Road
- Municipal Road
- Minor Municipal Road
- Walkway
- Designated campsite
- Put in/take out location
- Dam/waterfall/weir
- Contour lines (100m, 10m)
- Power transmission lines
- Trees/shrubs
- Rocks/cliffs
- Onsen (hot spring)
- Fumerole
- Highway number
- Rapids
- Point of interest

**ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE** - Please visit the full route guide for route description, GPS file, and safety notes: <https://hokw.jp/rekifune>

**THIS IS A GEOREFERENCED PDF** - Download the free Avenza Maps® app for iPhone and Android to see your location in real time: <https://hokw.jp/georeki>

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Rekifune River

3

歴舟川

Canoe Map

1:25000

0

250

500

750

1,000 m

1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground

Magnetic declination: 9°13' W | Map by [hokkaidowilds.org](https://hokkaidowilds.org) CC BY SA 2020/10/13

- 6km→

Route (distance between points)

National Highway

Prefectural Road

Municipal Road

Minor Municipal Road

Walkway

Designated campsite

Put in/take out location

Dam/waterfall/weir

600

Contour lines (100m, 10m)

Power transmission lines

Trees/shrubs

Rocks/cliffs



Onsen (hot spring)

Fumerole

1022

Highway number

Rapids

Point of interest
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## PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Load your printer with A3 printer paper (297mm x 420mm). If you've only got Tabloid or Ledger size (279mm x 432 mm), just follow the instructions below. You'll achieve an accurate scale, but the map will be clipped a little at the top and bottom.

### STEP 2

Open the print window by clicking on File > Print (or hitting Ctrl + P on your keyboard).

### STEP 3

Make sure "Actual Size" is selected.

### STEP 4

For double-sided printing, select "Print on both sides of paper".

### STEP 5

For best results, select the highest quality print option available on your printer (settings will vary).

### STEP 6

You won't need this instructions page, so just select the pages that don't include this instruction sheet.

### STEP 7

Click "Print".

## PLEASE PRINT AT 'ACTUAL SIZE' (NO SCALING)

The 1:25,000 scale used in the map is accurate if the PDF is printed without scaling (i.e., ACTUAL SIZE). Follow the instructions on this page to ensure an accurate rendering of the scale.



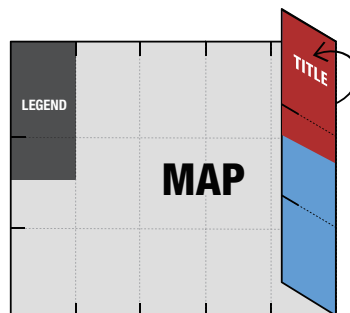
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

## ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

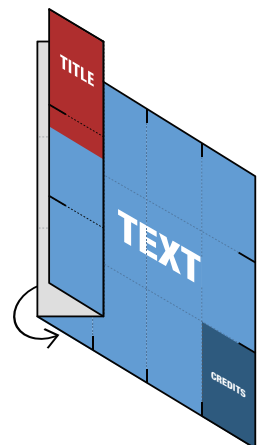
1



2



3



4



5



6



7

