How to use character and paragraph styles

Whether you're working with long or short documents, styles can help you keep text formatting consistent. Styles are a collection of text attributes you can save and apply to new text.

A consistent design, especially in longer documents, helps readers navigate through your document and also helps maintain a clean, appealing style and design layout.

Adobe InDesign CS6 has two kinds of styles:

- *Character styles* collect information about the way textual characters appear: font size, font family, font style (bold, italic), tracking, and leading. You choose character styles by using the Character Styles panel (Window > Styles > Character Styles).
- *Paragraph styles* include everything in character styles and also information about text orientation (horizontal and vertical), tab stops, and other paragraph attributes. You can apply a paragraph style to one paragraph or a range of paragraphs. Paragraph styles are available through the Paragraph Styles panel (Window > Styles > Paragraph Styles).

Use character styles only when you know you will be applying styles to a few words rather than to the whole paragraph. Otherwise, paragraph styles are generally more versatile.

This guide covers the following topics:

- Creating paragraph styles based on existing formatting
- Creating paragraph styles from scratch
- Applying paragraph styles
- Editing styles
- Creating and applying character styles

Creating styles based on existing formatting

One of the easiest and fastest ways to create a style is to base it on text you have already formatted. This way, you can see how the text appears on the page before saving the text attributes as a style.

To create a style based on existing formatting:

1. Start InDesign, create a new document, and create a text frame by using the Type tool.
2. Add text to the text frame and apply formatting.

   The text in the example (**Figure 1**) has the following formatting:

   - Font family: Copperplate Gothic Bold
   - Font size: 36 points
   - Font color: Red
3. Select the text by using the Type tool.
4. Choose Window > Styles > Paragraph Styles to display the Paragraph Styles panel (**Figure 1**).

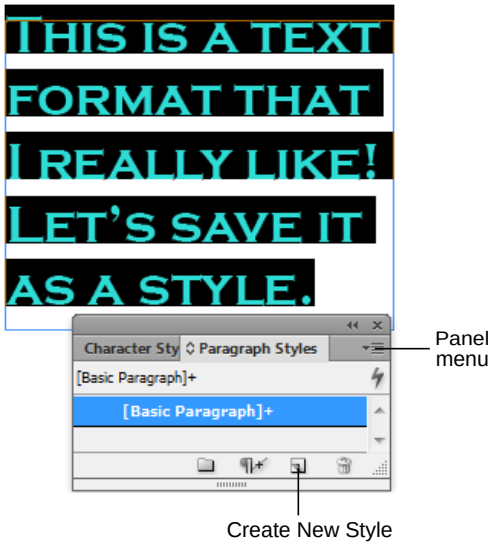

Figure 1 Paragraph Styles panel

5. With text still selected, click the Create New Style button at the bottom of the Paragraph Styles panel.

   The new style appears in the Paragraph Styles panel (**Figure 2**).

6. Select the style and choose Style Options from the Paragraph Styles panel menu (**Figure 3**).

   The Paragraph Style Options dialog box appears (**Figure 4**).

7. In the Style Name text box, enter a name for the style.

   You will later use this name to apply the style, so make the name as meaningful as possible.

   For example, you might name the style after its function (Second-Level Heading) or its appearance (Copperplate, 36pt, Red).

8. Click OK to close the Paragraph Style Options dialog box.

   The renamed style is now available in the Paragraph Styles panel (**Figure 5**).

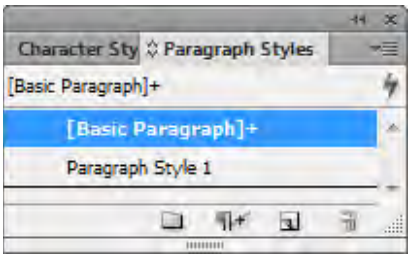

Figure 2 New style created in the Paragraph Styles panel

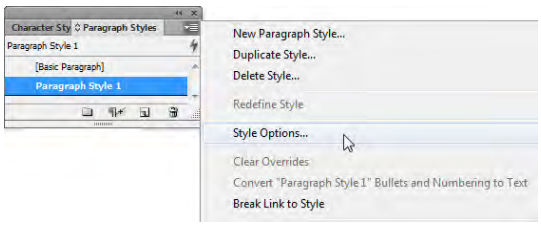

Figure 3 Paragraph Styles panel menu

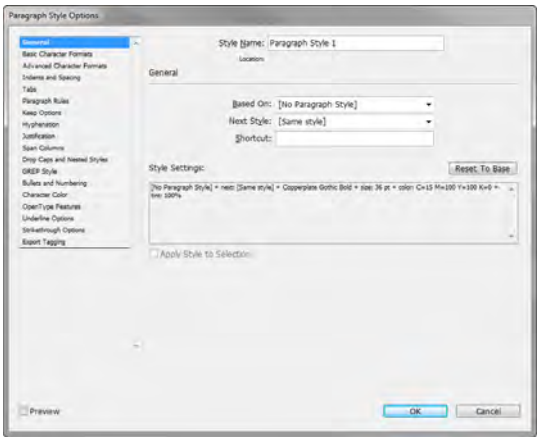

Figure 4 Paragraph Style Options dialog box

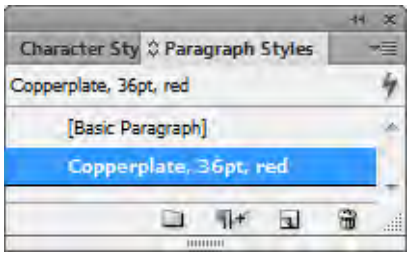

Figure 5 Style renamed

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Creating a style from scratch

There may be a specific look and feel for a character or paragraph style you want to achieve. If so, you can create a custom style.

To create a custom style:

1. If the Paragraph Styles panel is not open, choose Window > Styles > Paragraph Styles to display it.
2. Choose New Paragraph Style from the Paragraph Styles panel menu (**Figure 3**).

   The New Paragraph Style dialog box appears (**Figure 6**).
3. In the Style Name text box, enter a name for the style.

   You will later use this name to apply the style, so make the name as meaningful as possible.

   For example, you might name the style after its function (Second-Level Heading) or its appearance (Tahoma, 18pt, red).
4. In the General category of the New Paragraph Styles dialog box (which appears by default), you can set the following options:
   - In the Based On pop-up menu, choose a style on which to base the current style. If you base this style on an existing style, all changes made to the "base" style—known as the *parent style*—will affect the new style—known as the *child style*. For more information on parent and child styles, see InDesign Help.
   - In the Next Style pop-up menu, you can designate a style to follow the style you're defining. If you set this option, the next style will automatically be applied to the next paragraph after you press Enter (Windows) or Return (Mac OS) at the end of a paragraph to which the style has been applied. For example, many headings are followed by "normal" or "body text" styles. If you set a style called "body text" as the next style for a heading, body text will be applied automatically when you press Enter or Return (**Figure 7**).

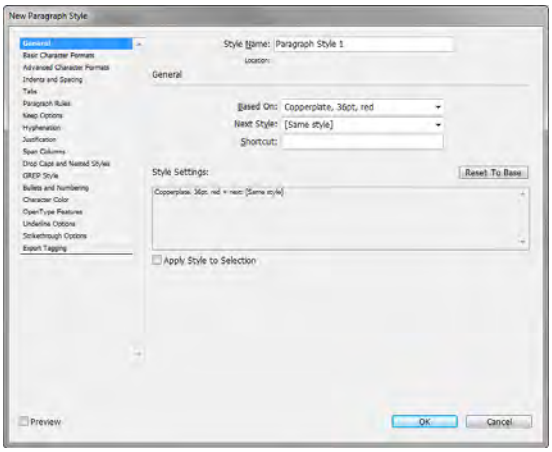

Figure 6 General category of New Paragraph Style dialog box

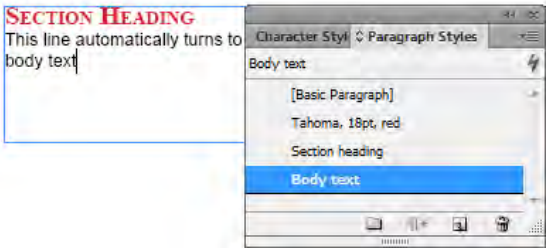

Figure 7 Next style

5. Click other categories on the left side of the New Paragraph Style dialog box to set attributes in other categories.

   For example, you might make changes in the following categories:

   - *Basic Character Formats:* Font family, font size, font style, kerning, leading, tracking, case, and so on.
   - *Advanced Character Formats:* Horizontal and vertical scale, baseline shift, and skew.
   - *Indents And Spacing:* Text indent, space after text, alignment, and so on. Use the Align To Grid option to align all text to the document grid.
   - *Character Color:* Sets character color from a list that includes any swatches you have created.

6. When you are satisfied with your changes, click OK to create the style.

   The New Paragraph Style dialog box closes and the new style is available in the Paragraph Styles panel.

Applying a style

Once you create a style by using any method, you can apply that style to new or existing text.

To apply a style:

1. Create a text frame by using the Type tool.
2. Add text to the text frame.
3. If the Paragraph Styles panel is not open, choose Window > Styles > Paragraph Styles to display it.
4. Select the text by using the Type tool (**Figure 8**).
5. In the Paragraph Styles panel, click a style to apply it.
6. Click anywhere to deselect the text.

   The style's formatting has been applied to the text (**Figure 9**).

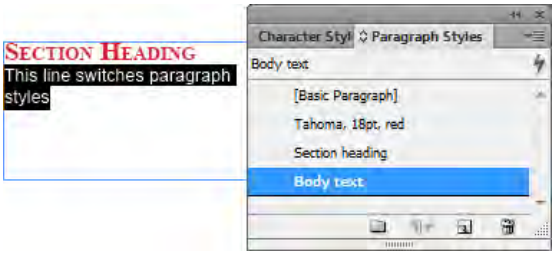

Figure 8 Selecting the text to apply a style

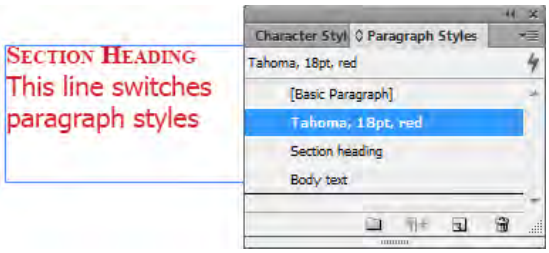

Figure 9 Style applied

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Editing a style

Even after you apply a style to text, you can make changes to the style. These changes are applied automatically to all text with that style applied.

To edit a style:

1. If the Paragraph Styles panel is not open, choose Window > Styles > Paragraph Styles to display it.
2. Click a style to select it.

   Ideally, this should be a style you have previously applied to text
3. Choose Style Options from the Paragraph Styles panel menu (**Figure 3**).

   The Paragraph Style Options dialog box appears (**Figure 10**).
4. On the left side of the Paragraph Style Options dialog box, click the Basic Character Formats option to expand the Basic Character Formats category.
5. Change some of the following attributes:
   - Font family
   - Font size
   - Case
   - Leading
6. Click OK to apply the changes.

   Any text with the style applied has changed.

   The text in the example (**Figure 11**) has been changed to the following:
   - Font family: Times New Roman
   - Font size: 18 points
   - Case: Small Caps

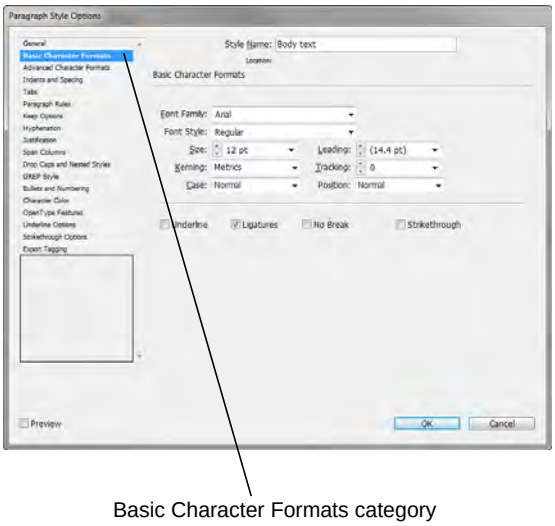

Figure 10 Paragraph Style Options dialog box

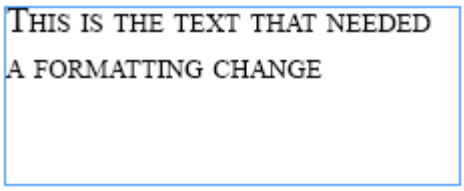

Figure 11 Style edits applied

Creating and applying character styles

Character styles can include only those attributes you can apply to characters. Character styles are useful when you want to apply special formatting to a word or phrase within a paragraph—even a paragraph that has a paragraph style applied to it. Character styles override paragraph styles.

To create a character style:

1. Choose Window > Styles > Character Styles to display the Character Styles panel (**Figure 12**).
2. Choose New Character Style from the Character Styles panel menu (**Figure 13**).

   The New Character Style dialog box appears (**Figure 14**).

   The set of options on the left side is more limited than in the New Paragraph Style dialog box.
3. In the Style Name text box, enter a name for the new character style.

   You will later use this name to apply the style, so make the name as meaningful as possible.

   For example, you might name the style after its function (Text Highlight) or its appearance (Tahoma 14 pt Red).
4. Click categories on the left side of the dialog box to set attributes in other categories.

   For example, you might make changes in the following categories:

   - *Basic Character Formats:* Font family, font size, font style, kerning, leading, tracking, case, and so on.
   - *Advanced Character Formats:* Horizontal and vertical scale, baseline shift, and skew.
   - *Character Color:* Sets character color from a list that includes any swatches you have created.
5. When you are satisfied with your changes, click OK to create the character style

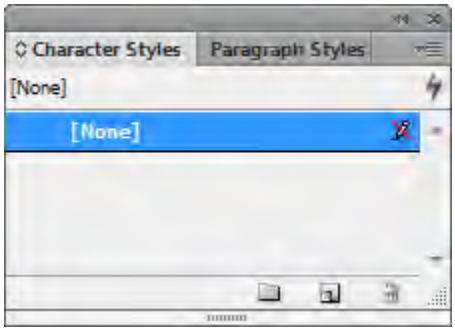

Figure 12 Character Styles panel

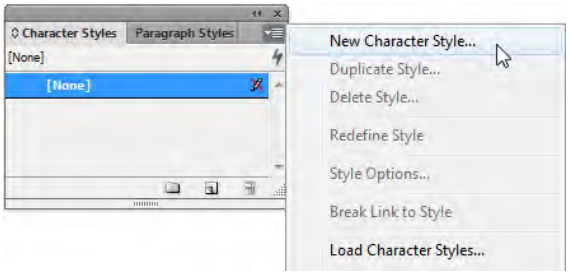

Figure 13 Character Styles panel menu

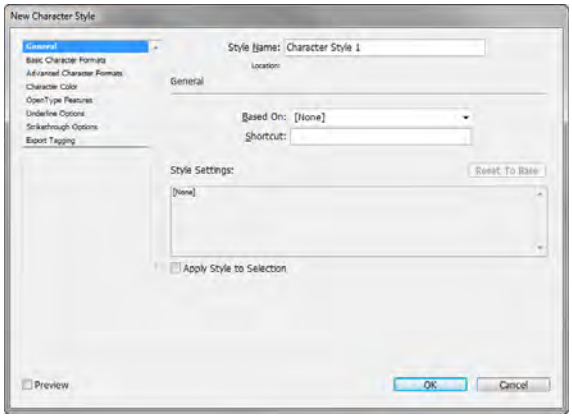

Figure 14 New Character Style dialog box

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To apply a character style:

1. Create a text frame by using the Type tool.
2. Add text to the text frame.
3. If the Character Styles panel is not open, choose Window > Styles > Character Styles to display it.
4. Select one or two words of the text by using the Type tool (**Figure 15**).
5. In the Character Styles panel, click the style to apply it.
6. Click anywhere to deselect the text.

   The style's formatting has been applied to the selected text (**Figure 16**).

   The style is not automatically applied to the entire paragraph as it is when you apply a paragraph style.

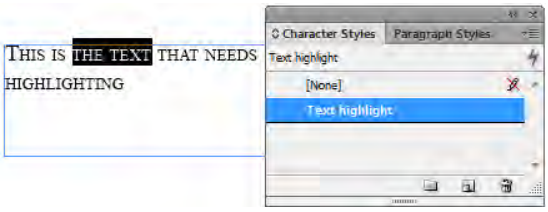

Figure 15 Applying a character style

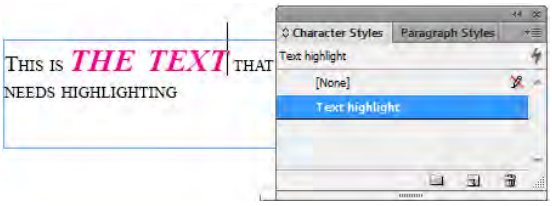

Figure 16 Character style applied