How to use master pages

When you start creating multi-page documents, keeping their appearance uniform from page to page can be difficult. If your pages are uniform, you not only produce a clean design but you also help readers navigate through your document because they know what to expect on each page.

Like other layout programs, Adobe InDesign CS6 provides a *master page* feature with which you can set common characteristics for each page, such as headings, footers, page numbers, and number of columns. Master pages maintain these common characteristics in one place (**Figure 1**). This means you can create new pages that are consistent with previous pages and also change common characteristics instantly by making changes to the master page.

With careful planning, master pages (or "masters") offer a quick way to make layout changes to multiple document pages. With very long documents, such as yearbooks, you can even create multiple masters for different types of pages, such as club pages, candid pages, and student pages.

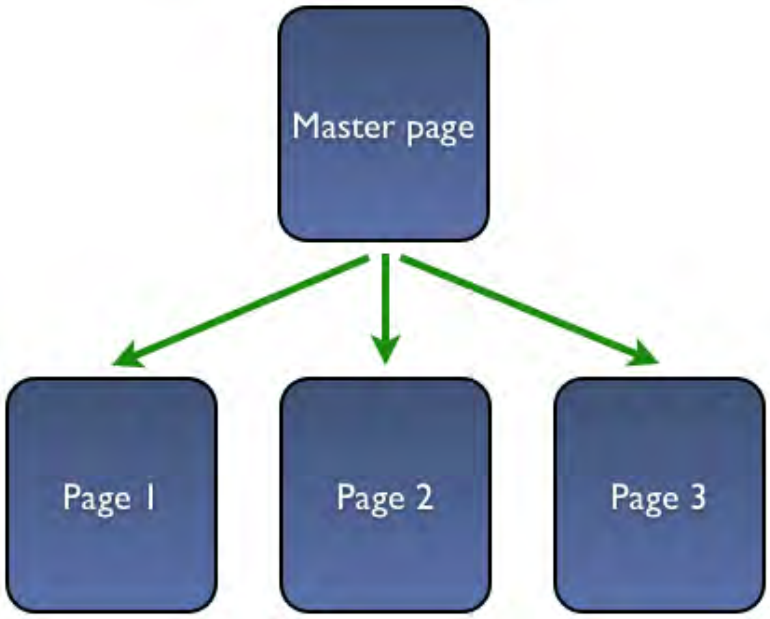

Figure 1 Master page linked to three pages

This guide covers the following topics:

- Creating master pages
- Creating new pages based on masters
- Modifying master pages
- Applying master pages

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Using the Pages panel

You manage master pages through the Pages panel (**Figure 2**). The Pages panel displays thumbnails of all pages in the document, along with the master pages applied to them.

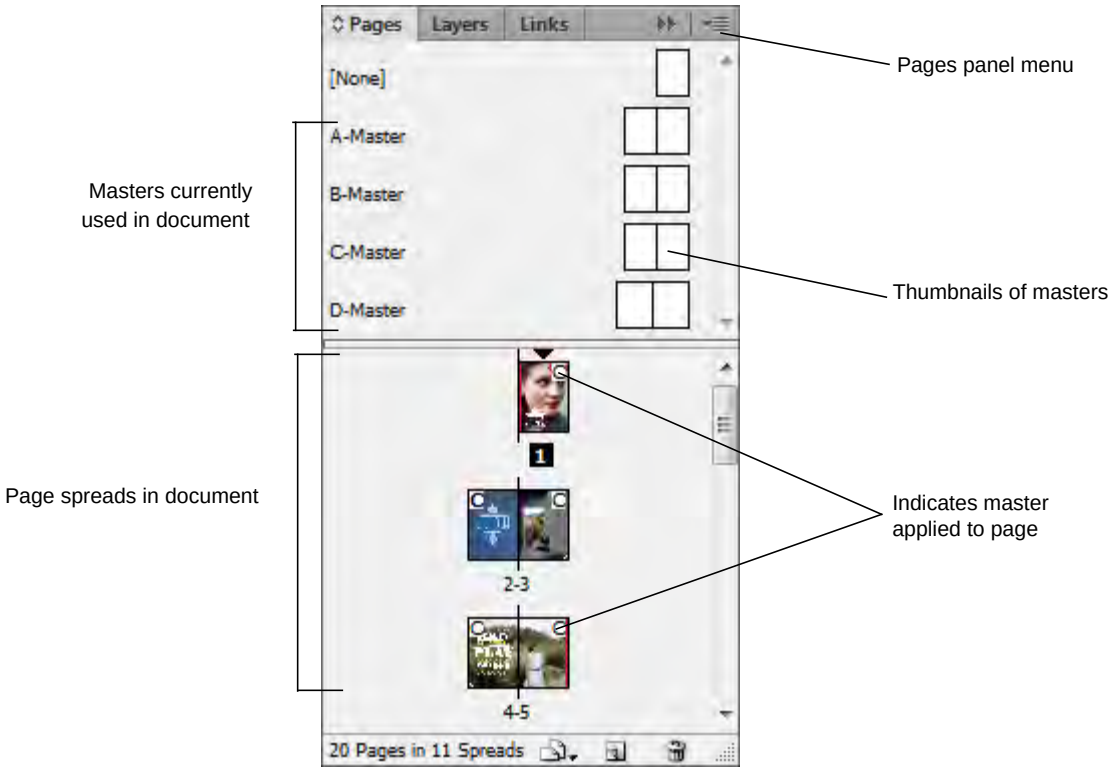

Figure 2 Pages panel

Creating master pages

You can create a new master from scratch or from an existing page or spread.

To create a new master page from scratch:

1. Open a file in InDesign.
2. Choose Window > Pages to display the Pages panel.
3. Choose New Master in the Pages panel menu.

   The New Master dialog box appears (**Figure 3**).

   By default, InDesign assigns a letter in sequence as a prefix for the master page. For example, if you have master pages with prefixes “A” and “B,” InDesign adds “C” to the next master you create.
4. You can also type a different prefix in the Prefix text box, using as many as four characters.
5. Enter a name for the master in the Name text box.
6. You can choose to base this master on an existing master page. In the example (**Figure 2**), A-, B-, C- and D-Master are available as bases.

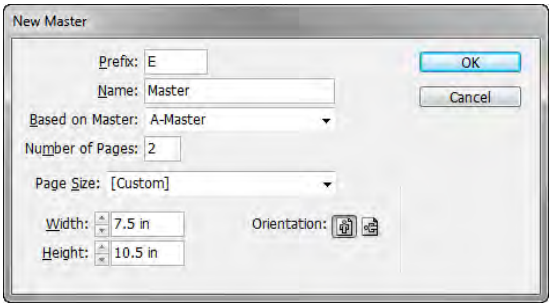

Figure 3 New Master dialog box

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7. Number Of Pages refers to the number of pages in a spread. For most documents, you will set up 2-page spreads, but you can enter up to 10 pages here.

   Note: To add multiple two-page spreads based on a single master, simply add multiple instances of the same master. If you enter 10 in the Number Of Pages text box, you will not produce five 2-page spreads; instead, you will produce one 10-page spread.

8. Click OK.

   The New Master dialog box closes and the new master appears in the Pages panel (**Figure 4**).

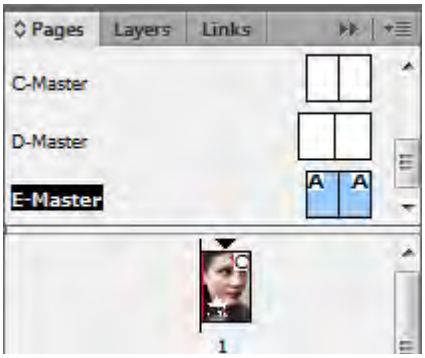

Figure 4 New Master in Pages panel

To create a master based on an existing spread:

You may have already created a layout spread and wish to convert it to a master.

1. Choose Window > Pages to display the Pages panel.
2. Do either of the following:
   - Drag an entire spread from the Pages section of the Pages panel to the Masters section (**Figure 5**).
   - Select a spread in the Pages panel and choose Save As Master from the Pages panel menu.

   Any objects on the original page or spread become part of the new master.

   Note: If you based the original page on a master, the new master is based on the original page's master.

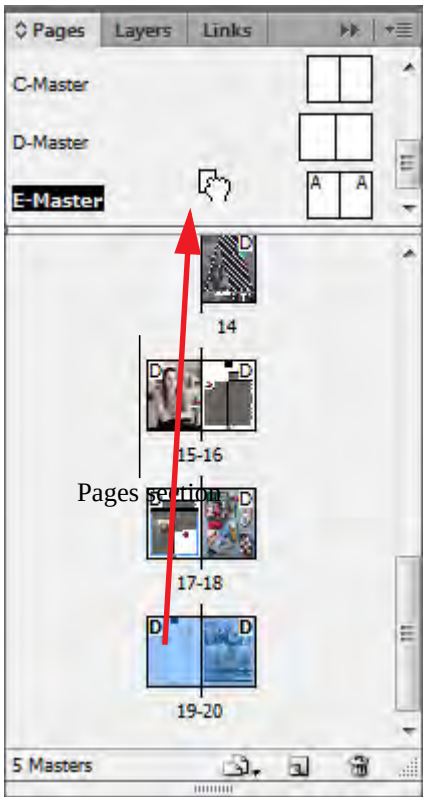

Figure 5 Dragging a spread to the Masters section in the Pages panel

Creating new pages based on masters

When you add new pages in InDesign, they are automatically linked to the current document's master.

You can also create pages based on a different master by using the Pages panel.

To create a page based on a master:

1. If the Pages panel is not already visible, choose Window > Pages to display it.
2. Drag one of the master pages from the top of the panel into the lower part of the panel, dragging it to the left or right of a spread (**Figure 6**).

   If you drag the master on top of an existing page, the master is applied to the page instead of creating a new page.
3. Release the mouse button.

   A new, empty page is added after the current page (**Figure 7**).

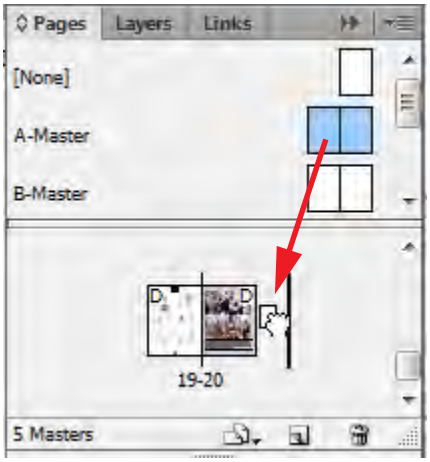

Figure 6 Dragging to create a new page

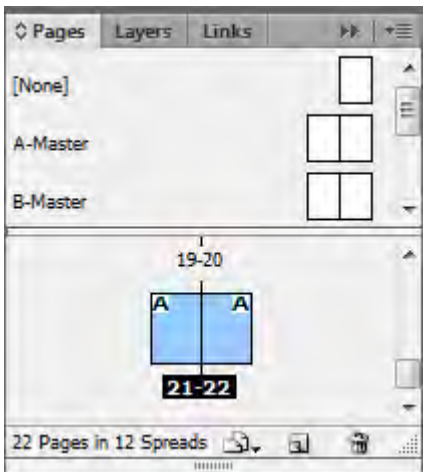

Figure 7 New page added

To apply a master page to an existing page:

1. If the Pages panel is not already visible, choose Window > Pages to display it.
2. Drag one of the master pages from the top of the panel into the lower part of the panel, dragging it on top of a current page.
3. Release the mouse button.

   The new master is applied to the page. In **Figure 8**, this is indicated by the letter B in the page thumbnail.

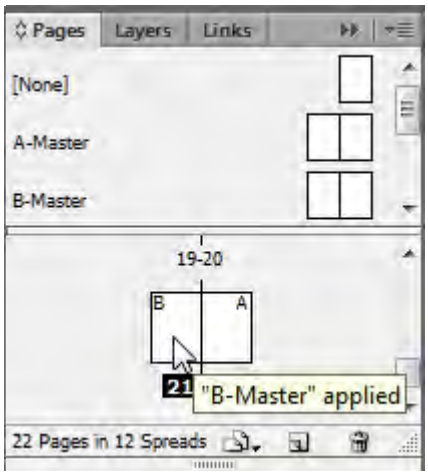

Figure 8 Master page applied

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