How to manage text flow between frames

In Adobe InDesign CS6, you've probably noticed that sometimes a red plus sign appears in a text frame when you fill it with more text than fits. This sign indicates the text is overset. *Overset* text is text that does not fit in the text frame.

You could solve the problem of overset text by making the text frame bigger, but often you will want to continue the text in another text frame, either on the same page or on another page. This is called text flow. *Flow* means the overset text continues in another text frame. Newsletters and newspapers use text flow when they begin a story on one page and continue it on a later page (often marked with "Continues on page 11"). You can also use text flow to continue text between two different text frames on the same page.

In the example (**Figure 1**), the left text frame is overset and needs to flow to the right text frame.

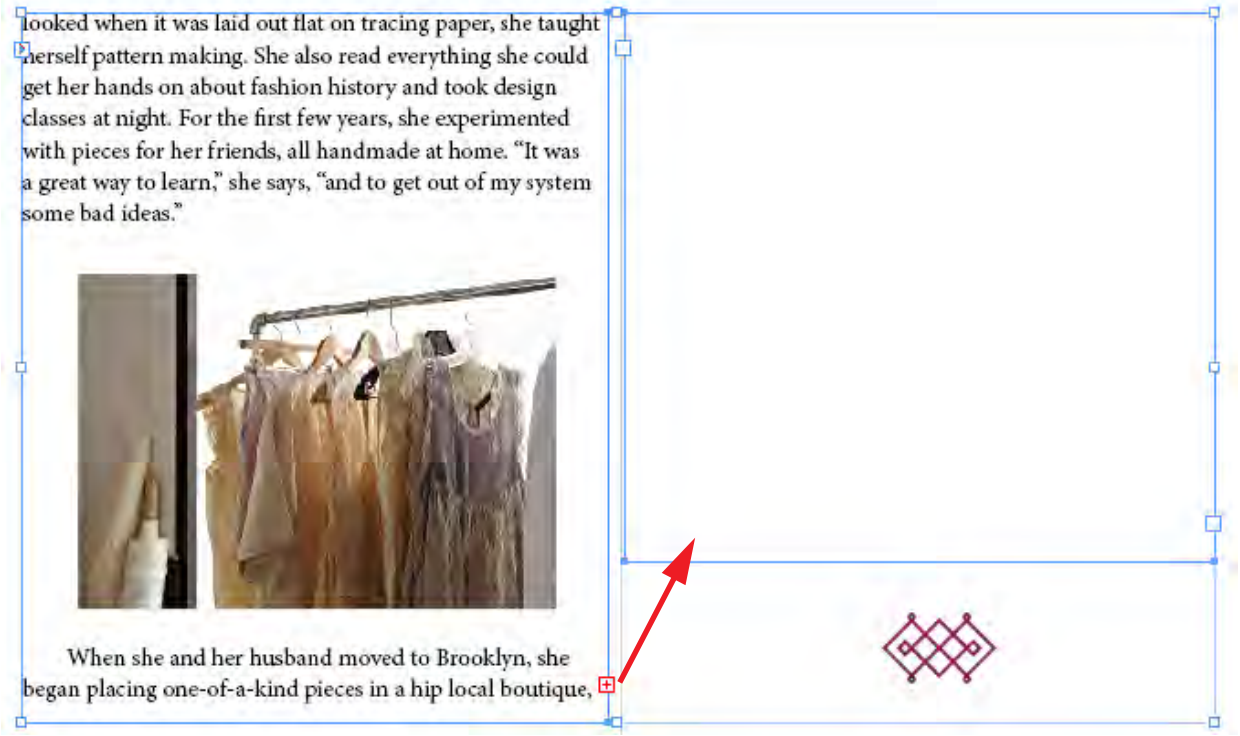

Figure 1 Overset text frame

Text flow relates to text frame ports. Each text frame has an *in port* and an *out port*. When the text is overset, a red plus sign appears in the out port.

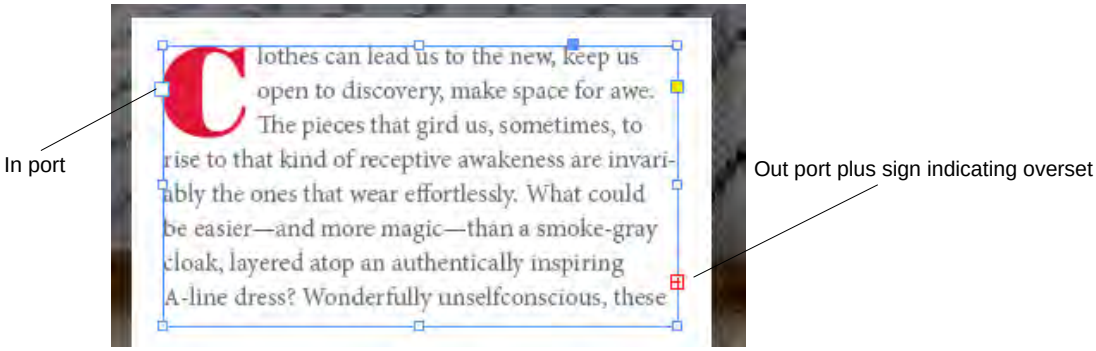

Figure 2 Text frame with ports

To flow text to another text frame, click the out port (**Figure 2**). When you do, the pointer becomes a loaded text icon, which looks like a small arrow with the first few lines of your text attached. When you move the loaded text icon over a text frame, a pair of chain links appears in the icon, indicating that clicking in that text frame will link it to the overset text frame to continue the text flow.

Depending on where you place the loaded text icon, it changes appearance. When you move the loaded text icon over a text frame, the icon is enclosed in parentheses. When you move the loaded text icon next to a guide or grid snapping point, the black pointer becomes white.

Flowing text from one text frame to another

The text in a frame can be independent of other frames, or it can flow between connected frames.

To flow text from one text frame to another:

1. Start InDesign and open a document.
2. Select the Type tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 3**).
3. Drag the Type tool on the page to create a text frame, and repeat the process to create another text frame (**Figure 4**).
4. Type, paste, or place enough text in one text frame so the text is overset (**Figure 2**).
5. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 3**).
6. Click the out port on the overset text frame (**Figure 5**).

   The pointer changes to a loaded text icon.

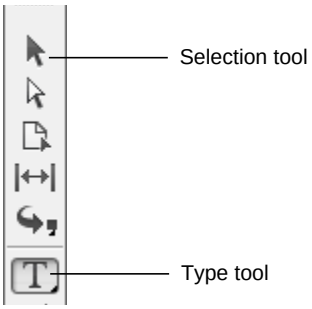

Figure 3 Tools panel

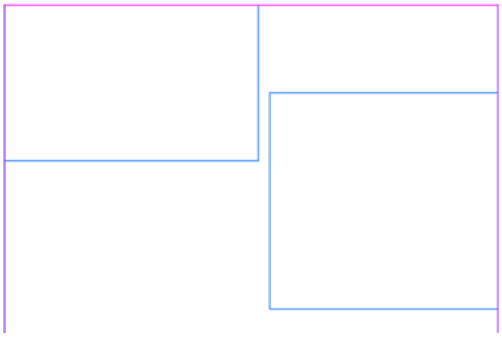

Figure 4 Two text frames

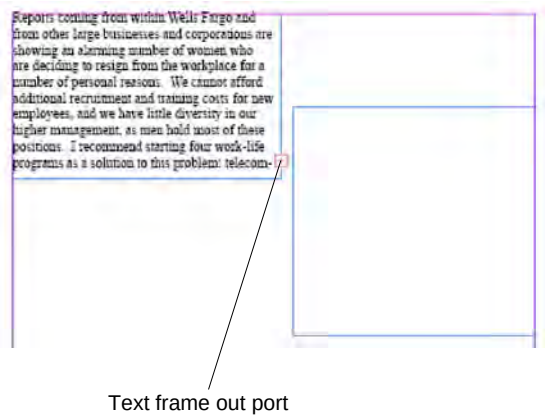

Figure 5 Overset text added to one frame

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7. Move the pointer over the second text frame.

   The pointer changes to a loaded text icon enclosed in parentheses.

8. Click in the second text frame.

   The overset text flows into the second text frame (**Figure 6**).

9. Try adding some text to the first text frame.

   As you do so, some text shifts into the second text frame.

10. Choose Edit > Select All.

    The text in both frames is selected (**Figure 7**).

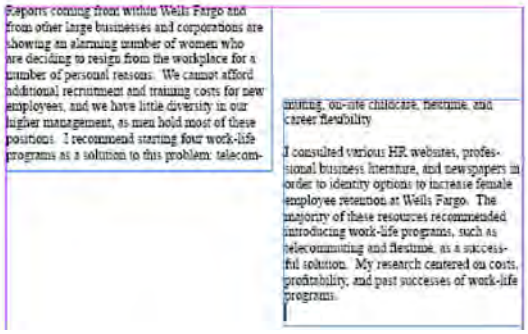

Figure 6 Text flows between frames

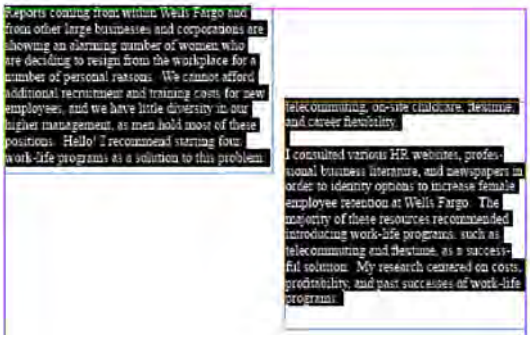

Figure 7 All text selected in both frames

Using autoflow options

The previous section describes how to flow text manually. With manual text flow, each time you want to flow text to another text frame, you have to click in one text frame's out port and click in another text frame with the loaded text icon. However, InDesign also gives you ways to flow text automatically, so that, for example, the loaded text icon automatically appears when text is overset. These options are known as *autoflow* options. You use autoflow by using the key combinations in the following table while you click with the loaded text icon.

The table describes autoflow options.

Key held down	What it does
Alt (Windows) or Option (Mac OS)	*Semi-autoflow:* Works like manual text flow except that the pointer becomes a loaded text icon each time the end of a frame is reached until all text is flowed into your document. When you use semi-autoflow, it's as if the out port is clicked automatically each time you finish flowing text into a text frame if the text is overset.

Key held down	What it does
Shift	*Autoflow:* With this option, InDesign adds pages and frames until all text is flowed into your document. Each frame takes up an entire page. If you added columns to pages in the New Document dialog box, InDesign adds text in columns. For example, if your pages have two columns, and you hold down the Shift key while clicking with the loaded text icon, InDesign adds two-column pages filled with text until all text has been added. **Note:** In order for InDesign to add pages with columns, you need to have added columns to the document at the time you created it in the New Document dialog box. Alternately, you can create a master page with two columns. When you use Autoflow on a page created with a master page, InDesign adds more pages using the format of the master page. For more information on master pages, please see InDesign help.
Shift+Alt (Windows) or Shift+Option (Mac OS)	*Fixed-page autoflow:* Flows all text into the document without adding frames or pages. With this option, InDesign creates one text frame on the current page, without adding additional pages.

The following steps guide you through using the semi-autoflow option described previously. Again, the initial steps described in this guide had you flowing text manually by clicking a text frame's out port each time you wanted to resolve overset text. Semi-autoflow is similar to manual text flow except the loaded icon automatically appears when flow is complete if text is overset. Fixed-page autoflow works like autoflow, except InDesign does not add additional pages. Any remaining text is overset.

To use semi-autoflow:

1. Open a document with one or more text frames.
2. Type, paste, or place enough text that the text will be overset not just past the frame, but past the page.

   For example, you might paste or place two or more single-spaced pages of 12-point text.
3. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel.
4. Hold down the Shift key and click the out port on the overset text frame (**Figure 4**).

   The pointer changes to a loaded text icon with the autoflow option (**Figure 8**).
5. Move the pointer somewhere in the page and click.
6. InDesign automatically adds pages and frames to accommodate the text flow (**Figure 9**).

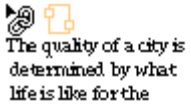

Figure 8 Autoflow icon

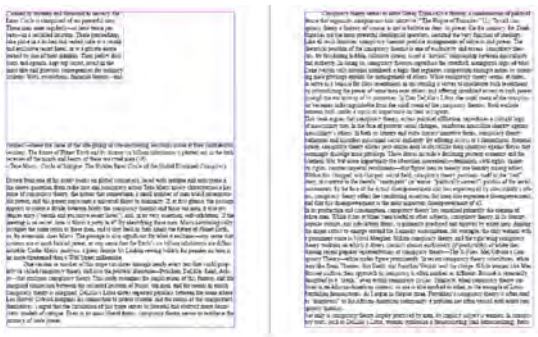

Figure 9 Result of autoflow

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