How to work with text frames

In Adobe InDesign CS6, you locate all text within frames. You can change the margins, number of columns, color, and other settings for these text frames.

This guide covers the following topics:

- Changing text frame settings
- Changing the shape of text frames
- Changing the fill of a text frame
- Applying a stroke to a text frame

Changing text frame settings

Text frame settings determine the number of columns in the text frame; the inset, or margin, of the text frame; and the vertical orientation—top, middle, or bottom—of the text in the frame.

By default, InDesign measures in increments of picas. *Pica* is a print term; one pica measures 1/6 of an inch. You may prefer to change the measurement unit to inches.

To change the unit of measurement:

1. Choose Edit > Preferences > Units & Increments (Windows) or InDesign > Preferences > Units & Increments (Mac OS).

   The Units & Increments category of the Preferences dialog box appears (**Figure 1**).

2. Select a unit of measurement, such as Inches, in both the Horizontal and Vertical pop-up menus.

3. Click OK.

   Now, when you set text frame settings, measurements will appear in inches, for example, instead of picas.

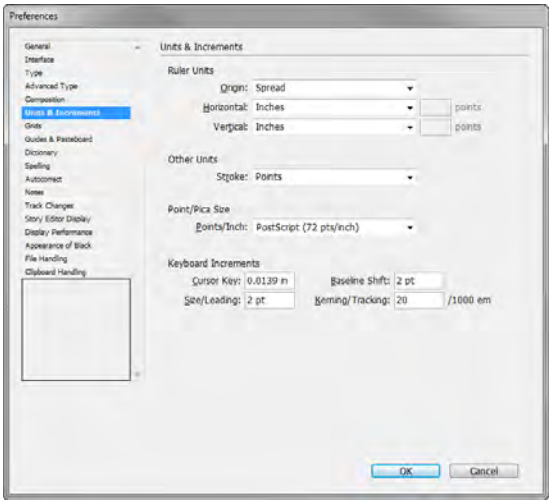

Figure 1 Units & Increments category of the Preferences dialog box

To change general text frame settings:

1. In InDesign, create a new document.
2. Click the Type tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 2**).
3. Drag the pointer to create a text frame.
4. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel.

   Make sure the text frame is selected and selection handles appear around its edges. If you do not see selection handles, click the edge of the text frame.
5. Choose Object > Text Frame Options.

   The Text Frame Options dialog box appears (**Figure 3**).
6. Change the following settings in the Text Frame Options dialog box:
   - Under Columns, enter **2** in the Number box.
   - Under Columns, enter **.25 in** in the Gutter box.
   - Under Inset Spacing, enter **.25 in** in the Top box. *Inset spacing* refers to the distance between the edge of the text frame and the text; you can think of inset spacing as the text frame's "margins."

     Make sure the Make All Settings The Same icon looks like a solid chain. This makes spacing the same on all sides.
   - Under Vertical Justification, choose Center from the Align pop-up menu.
7. Click OK to close the Text Frame Options dialog box.

   The text frame options have been applied (**Figure 4**). While the text frame is still selected, you will be able to see where the text frame's inset spacing appears—the text frame's margins. Columns are indicated by lines in the middle.
8. With the text frame still selected, choose Type > Fill With Placeholder Text.

   The placeholder text appears within the columns (**Figure 5**).

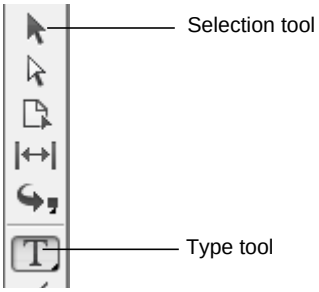

Figure 2 Tools panel

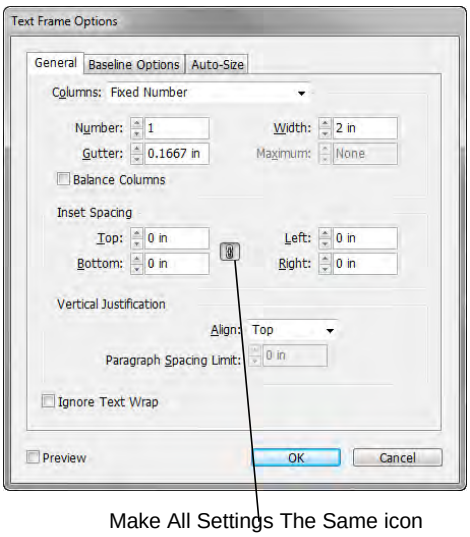

Figure 3 Text Frame Options dialog box

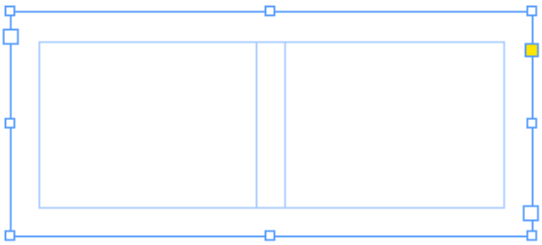

Figure 4 Text frame options applied

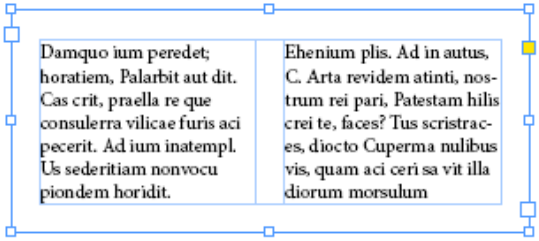

Figure 5 Text frame filled with placeholder text

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Creating a nonrectangular text frame

When you use the Type tool to create text frames, they are rectangular by default. To create nonrectangular text frames, such as ellipses or polygons, use the Ellipse Frame tool or the Polygon Frame tool and then set the frame's contents to text.

To create an elliptical text frame:

1. In InDesign, create a new document. Click the Rectangle Frame tool in the Tools panel, hold down the mouse button, and then select the Ellipse Frame tool (**Figure 6**).
2. Drag the pointer to create an elliptical frame (**Figure 7**).

   The frame has a crossbar through it, indicating that this frame is currently a graphics frame.

   Make sure the elliptical frame is still selected and selection handles appear around its edges. If you do not see selection handles, click the Selection tool and then click the edge of the elliptical frame.
3. Choose Object > Content > Text to change the frame from a graphics frame to a text frame.

   The crossbar disappears.
4. With the text frame still selected, choose Type > Fill With Placeholder Text.

   The placeholder text conforms to the elliptical shape of the frame (**Figure 8**).

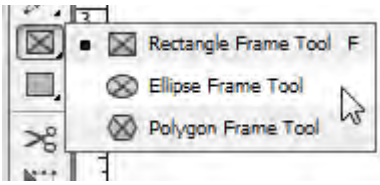

Figure 6 Ellipse Frame tool

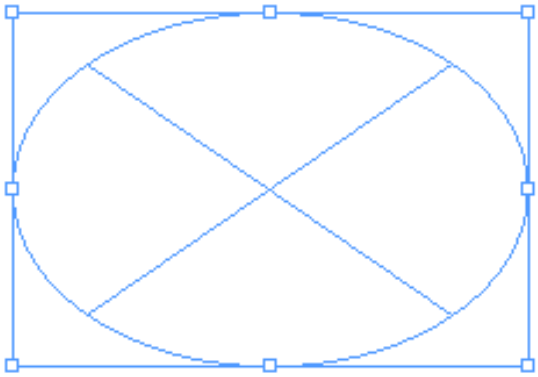

Figure 7 Elliptical frame

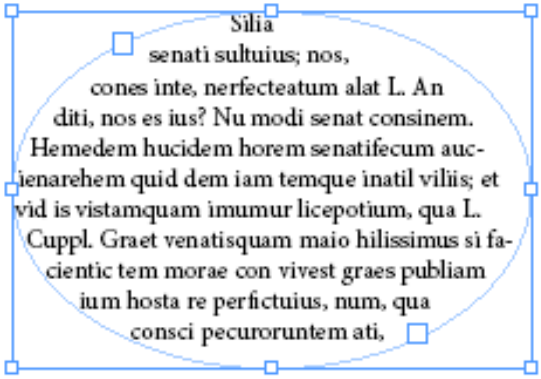

Figure 8 Elliptical text frame filled with placeholder text

Changing the text frame fill color

When you change the fill color for a text frame, you change the background against which the text appears. Using text frames with different fills can help you add interest to pages and divide them into differently colored sections.

To change the text frame fill color:

1. In InDesign, open a document that contains a text frame.
2. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel.
3. Click the edge of a text frame to select it.

   If you do not have a text frame created, create one by using the Type tool.
4. Double-click the Fill box in the Tools panel (**Figure 9**).

   The Color Picker appears (**Figure 10**).
5. Choose a color in the Color Picker by clicking somewhere in the square on the left side.
6. Click OK to close the Color Picker.

   The text frame is now filled with the color you chose in the Color Picker (**Figure 11**).

   Note: In **Figure 11**, the text frame's inset spacing forms a margin around the text. The actual text frame is bordered by the outside line.

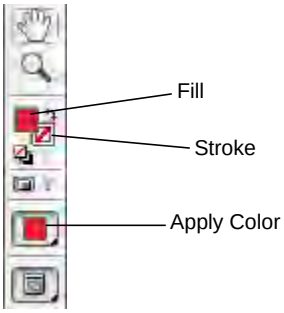

Figure 9 Tools panel

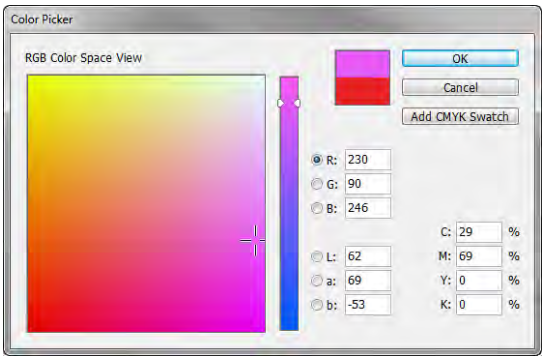

Figure 10 Color Picker

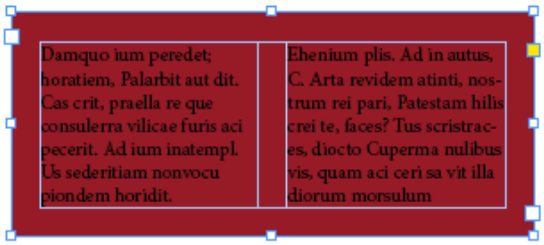

Figure 11 Fill applied to text frame

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Adding a stroke to the text frame

You can add a stroke to a text frame to create a border around your text. You can use strokes to distinguish one text frame from another and to add visual interest.

To add a stroke to the text frame:

1. Continuing from the previous exercise, click the Selection tool in the Tools panel.
2. Click the edge of a text frame to select it.

   If you do not have a text frame created, create one by using the Type tool.
3. Choose Window > Stroke to display the Stroke panel (**Figure 12**).

   Note: You can display the Stroke panel with either limited options or expanded options (as is shown in **Figure 12**). To hide or expand the options, choose Hide Options or Show Options from the Stroke panel menu.
4. Enter **5** in the Weight pop-up menu.

   The stroke of the text frame is more visible because it is now 5 points wide.
5. With the text frame still selected, double-click the Stroke box in the Tools panel (**Figure 9**).

   The Color Picker appears (**Figure 10**).
6. Choose a color in the Color Picker by clicking somewhere in the square on the left side.
7. Click OK to close the Color Picker.

   The stroke is now the color you chose in the Color Picker (**Figure 13**).

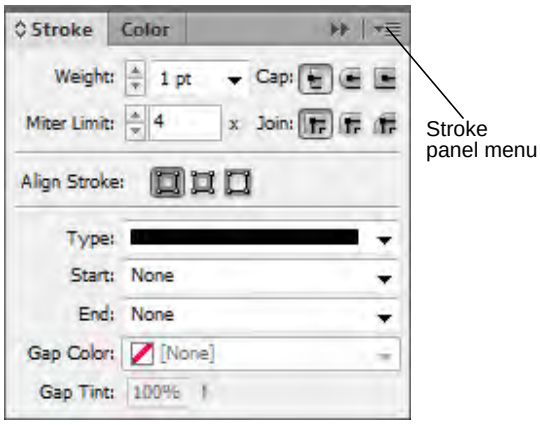

Figure 12 Stroke panel

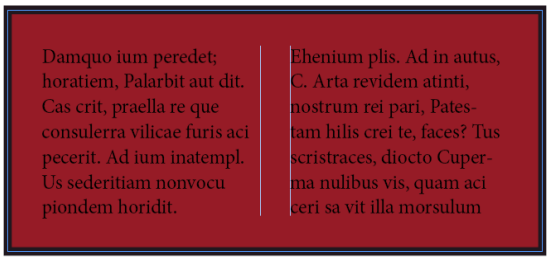

Figure 13 Stroke applied to text frame

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