How to use text

Because Adobe InDesign CS6 is a page layout tool, working with text is an important skill. With InDesign, you add all text (and all content) into frames. *Frames* are shapes (called paths) that hold content on a page. You can't add text without adding a text frame, and that's a good thing, because frames offer you a wide range of possibilities for formatting and positioning text and for controlling text *flow*—how text continues from frame to frame.

In this guide, you'll learn to add text frames and to apply basic formatting—such as font family, font size, and text color—and advanced text formatting—such as leading, kerning, tracking, and shifting the baseline. Advanced text composition options give you greater control over how paragraphs appear in the final document.

Adding a text frame

In InDesign, you place all text within text frames. The easiest way to create a text frame is with the Type tool.

Note: You can also create text frames with the frame tools. Using the Ellipse Frame tool and Polygon Frame tool, you can create text frames that are nonrectangular, such as a circle, hexagon, or star.

To create a text frame with the Type tool:

1. Start InDesign and create a new document.
2. Select the Type tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 1**).

   The pointer changes to the Type tool pointer (a text insertion icon bordered by a dotted line).
3. Drag the Type tool across the page to create a Text frame (**Figure 2**).

   To help you position the frame, you may find it useful to show the Document grid (View > Grids & Guides > Show Document Grid).

   As you drag, a blue box appears (**Figure 2**), with an indicator for width and height.
4. Release the mouse button to create the text frame.

   Observe that a blinking text-insertion point appears in the text frame.
5. Type some text, such as your name.

   The text appears in whatever font family, font size, and other text settings were previously set in the Type Control panel.

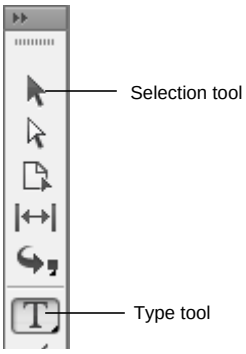

Figure 1 Tools panel

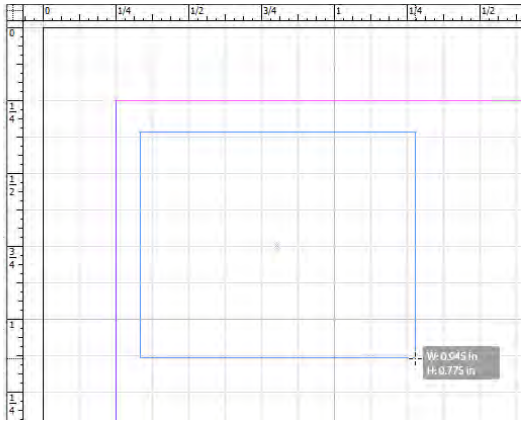

Figure 2 Dragging to create a text frame

6. Without moving the insertion point, click the Selection tool at the top of the Tools panel (**Figure 3**).

   Frame handles appear at the edges of the text frame (**Figure 2**). You can drag these handles to resize the text frame.

   You can recognize text frames by the *text ports*—empty squares that are larger than frame handles—on their left and right sides. You use text ports to make connections between text frames.

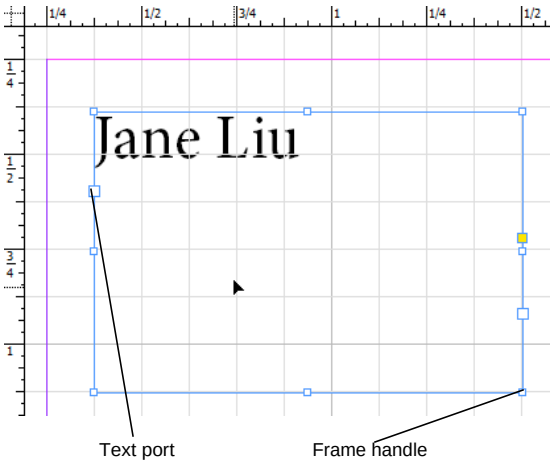

Figure 3 Frame handles on text frame

Formatting text

In layout, the appearance of text is an art in itself. Although much of your text's impact will derive from its typography (the font you choose for your text), you can fine-tune its appearance by adjusting a number of additional factors. Such fine-tuning is especially important for titles and other large-set text, because you want this text to stand out to create interest, and readers will notice subtle adjustments to large-set text more than to text set in smaller sizes.

You format text by using the Control panel (**Figure 4**).

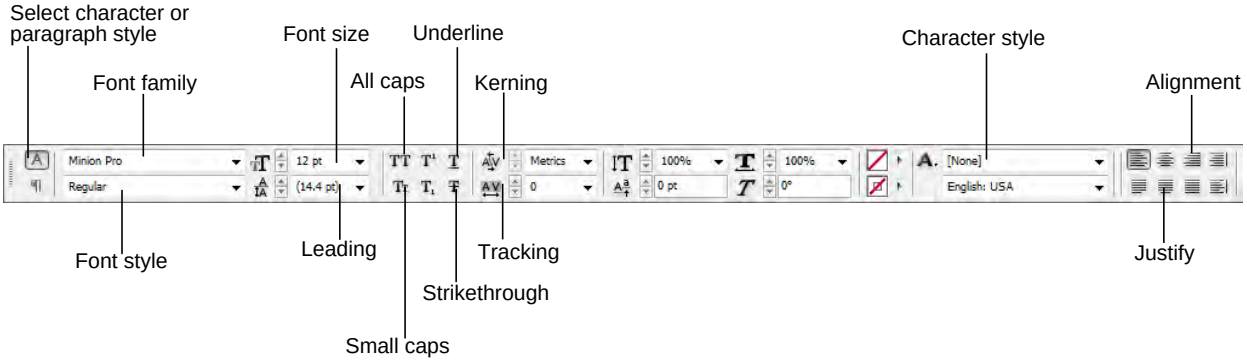

Figure 4 Type Control panel

Selecting text and applying basic formatting to text

To change the color of text, you first need to select it. (Text will not change if you change settings with only the text frame selected.) You can use the Control panel and Tools panel to modify the font, color, and stroke of text. *Fill* refers to the color inside the outline of a character. *Stroke* refers to the outline itself. By default, characters do not have a stroke applied.

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To select text:

1. Choose the Type tool.
2. Click in a text frame with text.
3. Drag the pointer over the text to select it (**Figure 5**).

   The text is highlighted.
4. Choose a different font family in the Font Family pop-up menu, such as Franklin Gothic Medium.
5. Choose a different font size in the Font Size pop-up menu, such as 18 pt.
6. Click the Small Caps button.

   With Small Caps, all lowercase letters appear as small uppercase letters.
7. Double-click the Fill box in the Tools panel (**Figure 6**).

   The Color Picker opens (**Figure 7**).

   When you have text selected, the Fill box appears with a small "T."
8. Select a color for the text fill in the Color Picker.
9. Click OK.

   The text changes fill color.
10. Double-click the Stroke box in the Tools panel.

    The Color Picker appears.
11. Select a color for the text stroke in the Color Picker.
12. Click OK.

    The text changes stroke color.
13. Click away from the text to deselect it and observe your results (**Figure 8**).

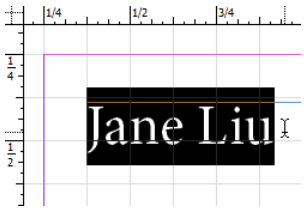

Figure 5 Text selected

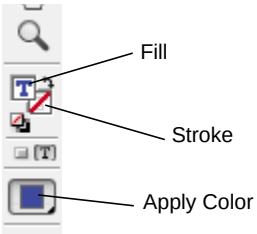

Figure 6 Fill and Stroke tools in the Tools panel

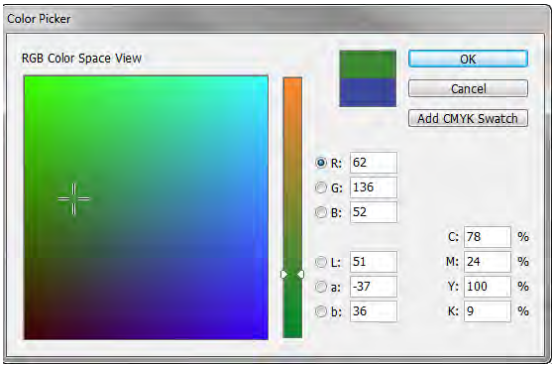

Figure 7 Color Picker

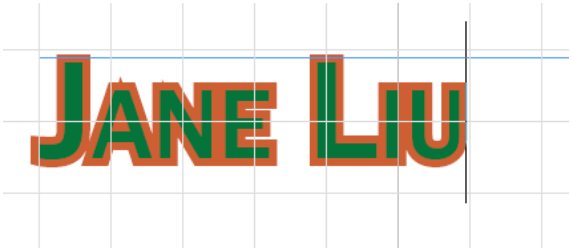

Figure 8 Basic text formatting applied

Adjusting text spacing and applying baseline shift

To improve readability and meet design goals, you can also adjust the spacing between lines and characters—leading, tracking, and kerning—and change the vertical location of some characters—baseline shift.

Adjusting leading

Leading refers to the space between lines. You're probably used to differentiating between single-spaced and double-spaced text. By adjusting leading, you can fine-tune the space between lines.

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To adjust leading:

1. With the Text tool, select some text.
2. Choose a value in the Leading pop-up menu (**Figure 9**).

   You can also enter a numeric value in the Leading menu's text box.

   For example, 24-point leading was applied to the 12-point text in **Figure 10**.

Figure 9 Leading menu in the Control panel

Figure 10 Leading applied to text

Adjusting tracking

Tracking refers to the space between characters across a line of text. When you adjust tracking, you can space the letters further apart. (You will usually not want to reduce tracking unless you've already increased it.)

Tracking is measured in 1/1000 *em*. *Em* is relative to the current type size. In a 12-point font, 1 em equals 12 points; in a 10-point font, 1 em equals 10 points. To give characters dramatic spacing, you need to enter fairly high numbers in the Tracking box—at least 300.

To adjust tracking:

1. Select some text.
2. Choose a value in the Tracking pop-up menu (**Figure 11**).

   You can also enter a numeric value in the Tracking pop-up menu's text box.

   For example, tracking of 500 was applied to the 18-point text in **Figure 12**.

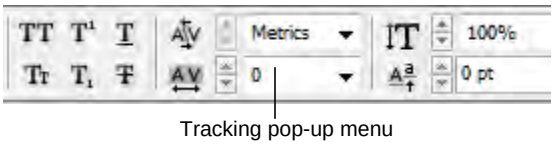

Figure 11 Tracking menu in the Control panel

Figure 12 Tracking applied to text

Adjusting kerning

Kerning refers to the space between any two characters. By default, InDesign applies metrics kerning to your text. *Metrics kerning* automatically adjusts the space between letters so letter pairs that produce gaps—such as LA, Pa, Ta,

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We, and Yo—have spacing consistent with letter pairs that do not produce gaps. These letter pairs are called *kerning pairs* and are included with most fonts.

For fonts that do not include such pairs (which is rare), you can use another kind of automatic kerning called *optical kerning*. *Optical kerning* adjusts the space between letters, based on their shapes. Optical kerning is also useful when you use two different typefaces or sizes in one or more words on a line.

You may also want to adjust kerning manually. Usually, you only need to adjust it for large font sizes or when you want the letters to look very close together. To adjust kerning between letters, click between them and change settings in the Kerning pop-up menu in the Control panel (**Figure 13**).

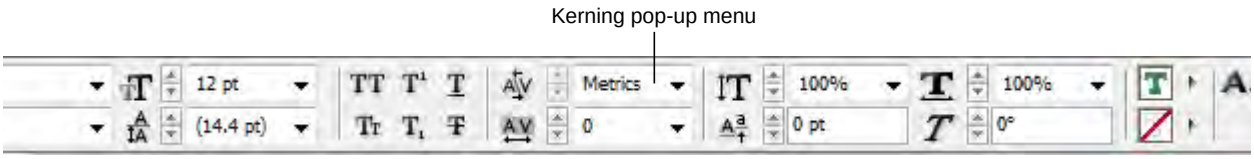

Figure 13 Kerning menu in the Control panel

Applying baseline shift

A font's *baseline* is the lowest point of letters that do not extend below the baseline the way *y* and *g* do. You can use baseline shift to adjust the baseline for one or more characters.

- If you enter a positive number in the Baseline Shift pop-up menu, the text moves up from the baseline.
- If you enter a negative number in the Baseline Shift pop-up menu, the text moves down from the baseline.

To apply baseline shift:

1. Select the character to which you wish to apply baseline shift.
2. Click in the Baseline Shift pop-up menu, and then press the Up or Down Arrow key to adjust the character's baseline (**Figure 14**).

   For example, in **Figure 15**, the baseline for the J and L has been adjusted negatively.

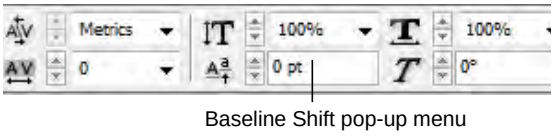

Figure 14 Baseline Shift menu in the Control panel

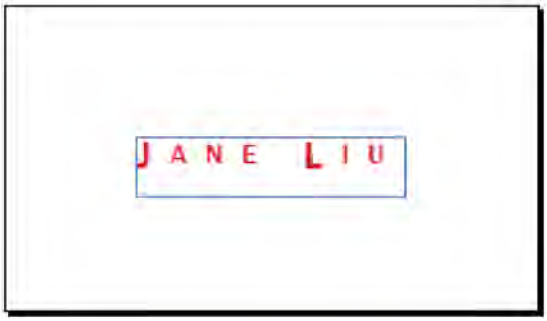

Figure 15 Baseline shift applied to text.

Managing overset text

As you make formatting changes—especially changes that increase the total amount of space occupied by text—you may create overset text. *Overset* text refers to text that does not fit in the text frame. When text is overset, a red plus (+) will appear in the right text port (**Figure 16**).

Figure 16 Frame with overset text

In these cases, you can take one of three actions:

- Reduce font size, leading, or tracking so that the text fits into the frame.
- Increase the size of the text frame.
- Flow excess text into another text frame. (For more information on this option, see InDesign Help and the "How to manage text flow between frames" guide.)

Advanced text composition

The appearance of text on your page depends on a complex interaction of processes called *composition*. Using the word spacing, letterspacing, glyph scaling, and hyphenation options you've selected, InDesign composes your type in a way that best supports the specified parameters.

InDesign offers two composition methods: Adobe Paragraph Composer (the default) and Adobe Single-line Composer. You can select which composer to use from the Paragraph panel menu, the Justification dialog box, or the Control panel menu at the right end of the Control panel.

The *Paragraph Composer* considers where to place line breaks and can respace earlier lines in the paragraph (based on such principles as evenness of letterspacing, word spacing, and hyphenation) in order to eliminate unattractive breaks later in the paragraph. The result is paragraphs with even spacing and fewer hyphens.

The *Single Line Composer* offers a traditional approach to composing text one line at a time. This option is useful if you want to deal with paragraph composition in the last stages of your document production.

Suppose you want to precisely control word spacing and letterspacing, as well as the width of characters in a set of justified paragraphs. You can use the Paragraph Composer to do this.

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To set a composition method for a paragraph:

1. Select some text that contains multiple paragraphs.
2. Choose Type > Paragraph.

   The Paragraph panel opens (**Figure 17**).
3. Choose Justification from the Paragraph panel menu.

   The Justification dialog box opens (**Figure 18**)
4. Change the default values to the following values in the Justification dialog box:
   - *Word Spacing* Minimum **60%**, Maximum **150%**
   - *Letter Spacing* Minimum **-50%**, Maximum **150%**
   - *Glyph Scaling* Minimum **80%**, Maximum **120%**
   - *Auto Leading* **140%**

   The Minimum and Maximum values define a range of acceptable spacing for justified paragraphs only. The Desired value defines the desired spacing for both justified and unjustified paragraphs:

   Word Spacing The space between words that results from pressing the spacebar. Word Spacing values can range from 0% to 1000%; at 100%, no additional space is added between words.

   Letter Spacing The distance between letters, including kerning or tracking values. Letter Spacing values can range from -100% to 500%: at 0%, no space is added between letters; at 100%, an entire space width is added between letters.

   Glyph Scaling The width of characters (a glyph is any font character). Glyph Scaling values can range from 50% to 200%.
5. Set the Single Word Justification option to specify how you want to justify single-word text lines.

   Note: In narrow columns, a single word can occasionally appear by itself on a line. If the paragraph is set to full justification, a single word on a line may appear to be too stretched out. Instead of leaving such words fully justified, you can center them or align them to the left or right margins.
6. Click OK.

   The Adobe Paragraph Composer lays out the paragraph text (**Figure 19**). Observe how the text is justified according to the settings you entered in step 4.

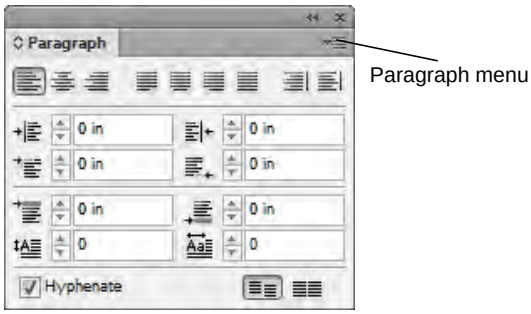

Figure 17 Paragraph panel

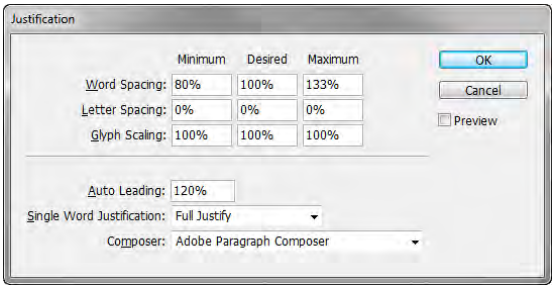

Figure 18 Justification dialog box

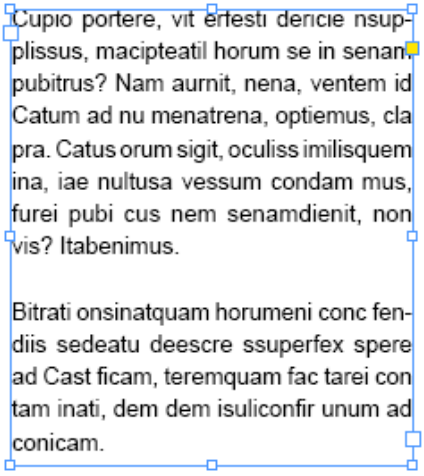

Figure 19 Paragraph text justified with last line aligned left