

## How to manage colors

Adobe InDesign provides a variety of ways for you to manage colors: from selecting and applying color; to using swatches and swatch libraries; to applying tints and transparencies (**Figure 1**).



*Figure 1 Apply fill and stroke color to text by using the Swatches panel*

### Apply color

Adobe InDesign provides a wide variety of tools for selecting and applying color. In this section, you'll get an overview of how to apply color and specific tips on using the Color Picker, applying by dragging and dropping, and using the Eyedropper tool.

When you apply a color, you can specify whether the color applies to the stroke or fill of an object. A *stroke* is the border or frame, of an object, and the *fill* is the background color of an object. When you apply a color to a text frame, you can specify whether the color change affects the text frame or the text inside the frame.

## How to apply color:

1. Select the object you want to color by doing one of the following:
  - For a path or frame, use the Selection tool or the Direct Selection tool.
  - For a grayscale or monochrome (1-bit) image, click the Content Grabber or use the Direct Selection tool. You can apply only two colors to a grayscale or monochrome image.
  - For text characters, use the Type tool to change the text color of a single word or the entire text within a frame (**Figure 2**).
2. In the Tools panel, select the Formatting Affects Text or Formatting Affects Container to determine whether color is applied to the text or the text frame (**Figure 3**).
3. In the Tools panel, select the Fill box or the Stroke box to specify the fill or stroke of the object. (If you selected an image, the Stroke box has no effect.)
4. Double-click either the Fill or Stroke box in the Tools panel or the **Color** panel to open the **Color Picker** (**Figure 4**).
5. To define a color, do one of the following:
  - Click or drag inside the color field. Cross-hairs indicate the color's position in the color field.
  - Drag the color slider triangles along the color spectrum or click inside the color spectrum.
  - Enter values in any of the text boxes.
6. To save the color as a swatch, click the **Add CMYK Swatch** button.  
  
InDesign adds the color to the Swatches panel, using the color values as the swatch's name.
7. Click OK to close the **Color Picker**.  
  
The selected object fill and stroke colors are updated (**Figure 5**).



Figure 2 Selected text object

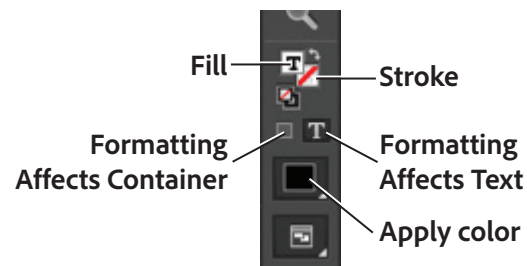


Figure 3 Specify how color is applied in Tools panel

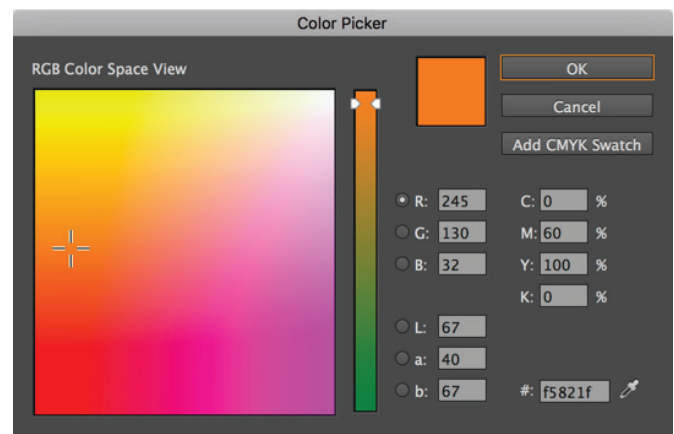


Figure 4 Color Picker

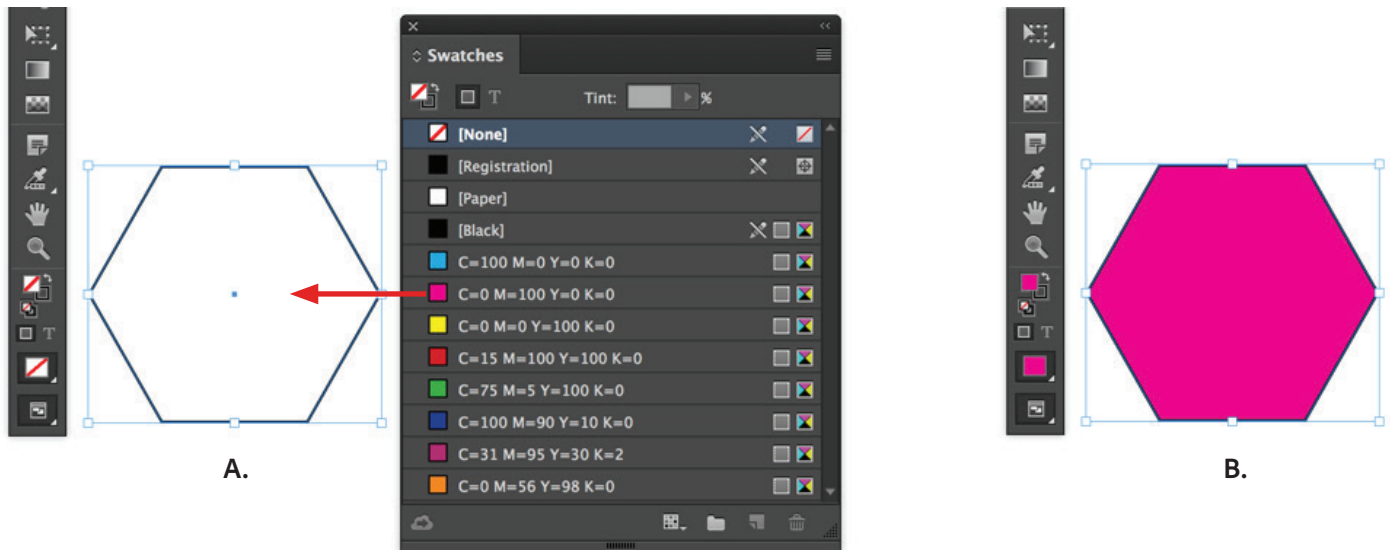


Figure 5 Text object with fill and stroke applied

## Applying colors by dragging and dropping

An easy way to apply colors or gradients is to drag them from a color source to an object or panel. By dragging and dropping, you can apply colors or gradients to objects without first selecting the objects. You can drag the following:

- The Fill or Stroke box in the Tools panel or a panel
- The Gradient box in the Gradient panel
- Swatches from the Swatches panel (**Figure 6**)
- The last-used, in-gamut color swatch located next to the out-of-gamut icon in a panel



*Figure 6 A. Dragging a swatch from the swatch panel and B. the applied color on an object*

You can drop colors or gradients on the following objects and panels:

- The fill or stroke of a path. To drop color on a fill or stroke, position the center of the drag icon precisely over the path's fill or stroke while you drag a color, and then release the mouse button.
- The Swatches panel.

You can share swatches across InDesign documents by dragging one or more swatches into another document window; this adds the color swatch(es) to the other document's Swatches panel.

## Apply by colors using the Eyedropper tool

Use the Eyedropper tool to copy fill and stroke attributes, such as color, from any object in an InDesign file, including an imported graphic. By default, the Eyedropper tool loads all available fill and stroke attributes of an object and sets the default fill and stroke attributes of any new objects you draw. You can use the Eyedropper Options dialog box to change the attributes the Eyedropper tool copies. You can also use the Eyedropper tool to copy type and transparency attributes.

**Note:** If an attribute is not listed in the Eyedropper Options dialog box, it can't be copied with the Eyedropper tool.

## How to use the Eyedropper tool:

1. Use the Selection tool to select one or more objects that have the fill and stroke attributes you want to change (Figure 7).
2. Select the Eyedropper tool (Figure 8).

The empty Eyedropper tool icon is available (Figure 9, left)

3. Click any object that has the fill and stroke attributes you want to sample.

A loaded eyedropper appears (Figure 9, right), and the selected objects are automatically updated with the fill and stroke attributes of the object you clicked (Figure 10).

4. To change other objects to the same attributes, click the objects with the loaded eyedropper. If an object is stroked and not filled, be sure to click the object's outline.

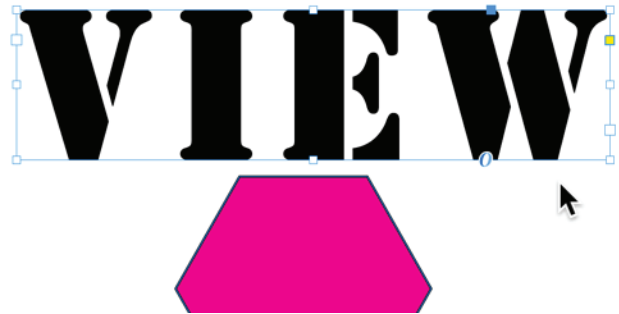


Figure 7 Selected text object

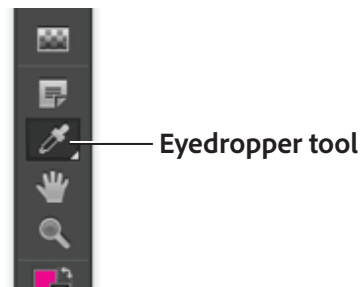


Figure 8 Tools panel

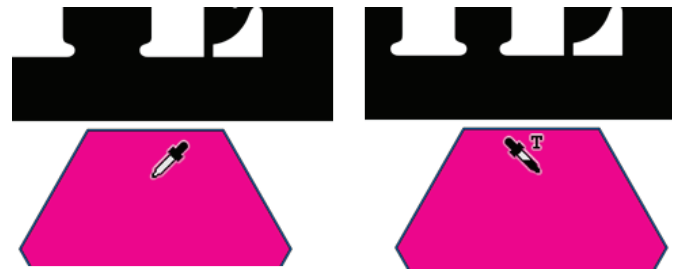


Figure 9 Empty Eyedropper tool (left) and loaded Eyedropper tool (right)

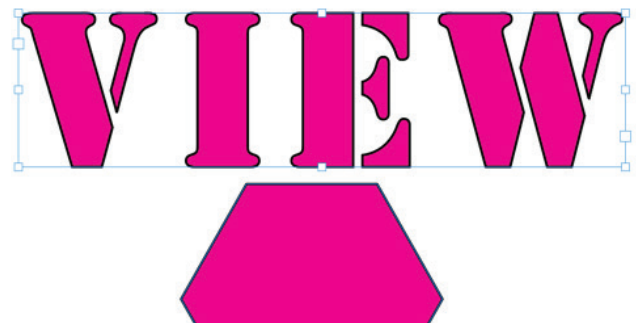
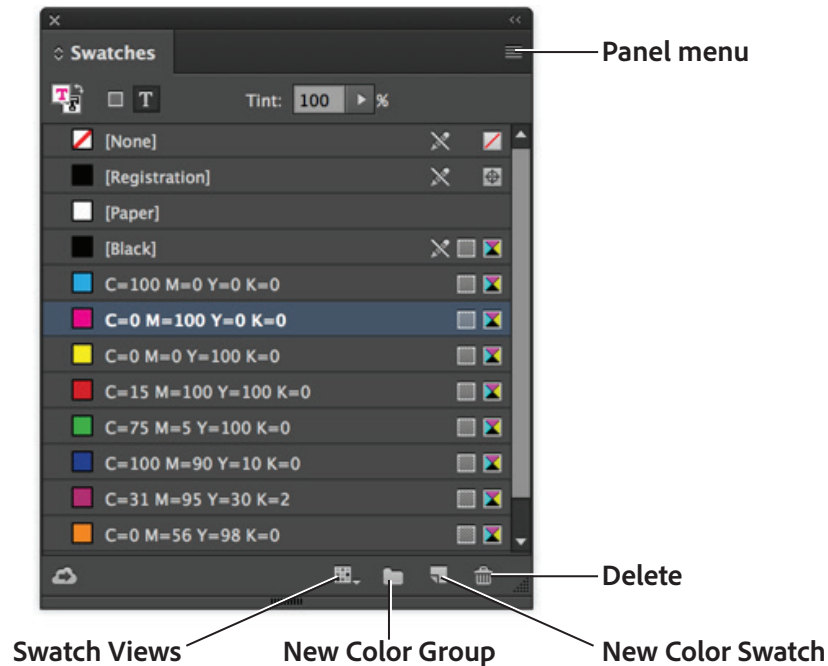


Figure 10 Text object with fill applied

## Swatches panel overview

In the Swatches panel, you can create and name colors, gradients, or tints, and quickly apply them to your document (**Figure 11**). Swatches are similar to paragraph and character styles; any change you make to a swatch affects all objects to which the swatch is applied. Swatches make it easier to modify color schemes without having to locate and adjust each individual object.



*Figure 11 Swatches panel*

When the fill or stroke of selected text or an object contains a color or gradient applied from the Swatches panel, the applied swatch is highlighted in the Swatches panel. Swatches you create are associated only with the current document. Each document can have a different set of swatches stored in its Swatches panel.

Six CMYK-defined colors appear in the default Swatches panel: cyan, magenta, yellow, red, green, and blue.

### Swatch types

The Swatches panel stores the following types of swatches:

- *Colors Icons* in the Swatches panel identify the spot and process color types, and LAB, RGB, CMYK, and Mixed Ink color modes.
- *Tints* A percentage value next to a swatch in the Swatches panel indicates a tint of a spot or process color.
- *Gradients* An icon in the Swatches panel indicates whether a gradient is radial or linear.
- *None* The None swatch removes the stroke or fill from an object. You can't edit or remove this swatch.
- *Paper* Paper is a built-in swatch that simulates the paper color on which you're printing. Objects behind a paper-colored object won't print where the paper-colored object overlaps them. Instead, the color of the paper on which you print shows through. You can edit the Paper color to match your paper stock by double-clicking it in the Swatches panel. Use the Paper color for previewing only—it will not be printed on a composite printer or in color separations. You can't remove this swatch. Do not apply the Paper swatch to remove color from an object; use the None swatch instead. Note: If the Paper color is not working as described and you are printing to a non-PostScript printer, try switching your printer driver to Raster Graphics mode.

- **Black** Black is a built-in, 100% process color black defined by using the CMYK color model. You can't edit or remove this swatch. By default, all occurrences of Black overprint (print on top of) underlying inks, including text characters at any size. You can disable this behavior.
- **Registration** Registration is a built-in swatch that causes objects to print on every separation from a PostScript printer. For example, registration marks use the Registration color so printing plates can be aligned precisely on a press. You cannot edit or remove this swatch. You can also add colors from any color library to the Swatches panel so they are saved with your document.

### How to customize the swatch display:

1. In the **Swatches** panel menu (Figure 12), choose one of the following:
  - **Name** displays a small swatch next to the name of the swatch. The icons to the right of the name show the color model (CMYK, RGB, and so on) and whether the color is a spot color, process color, registration color, or none.
  - **Small Name** displays compacted swatch panel rows.
  - **Small Swatch** or **Large Swatch** displays only the swatch. A triangle with a dot in the corner of the swatch indicates the color is a spot color. A triangle without a dot indicates a process color.
2. To set what type of swatches display, click one of the following buttons at the bottom of the Swatches panel:
  - **Show All Swatches** displays all color, tint, and gradient swatches.
  - **Show Color Swatches** displays only process color, spot color, mixed ink color, and tint swatches.
  - **Show Gradient Swatches** displays only gradient swatches.
  - **Show Color Groups** displays defined color groups.

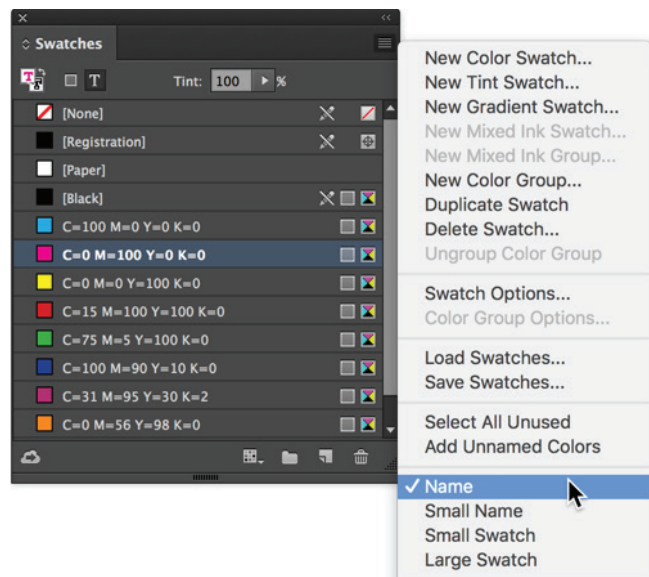


Figure 12 Detail of Swatches panel menu

**Note:** The None swatch is always displayed, regardless of which button you click.

### How to create a new color swatch:

1. Choose **New Color Swatch** in the Swatches panel menu.  
The **New Color Swatch** dialog box opens (Figure 13).
2. For **Color Type**, choose the method you'll use to print document colors on a printing press.
3. For **Swatch Name**, do one of the following:
  - If you chose **Process** as the color type and you want the name always to describe the color values, make sure **Name With Color Value** is selected.

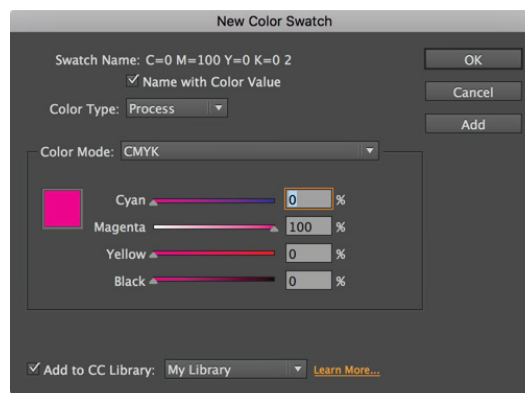


Figure 13 New Color Swatch dialog box

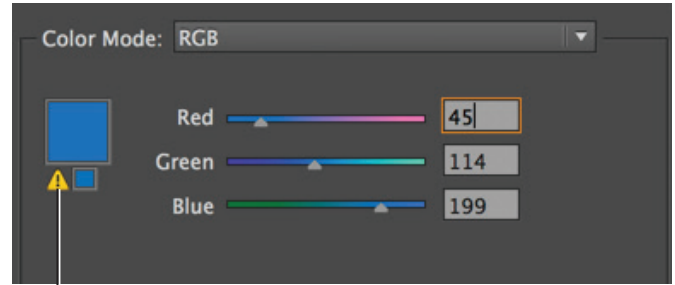
- If you chose **Process** as the color type and you want to name the color yourself, make sure **Name With Color Value** is deselected, and type a **Swatch Name**.
  - If you chose **Spot**, type a **Swatch Name**.
4. For **Color Mode**, choose the mode you want to use in defining the color. Avoid changing the mode after you define a color.
  5. Do one of the following:
    - Drag the sliders to change the color values. You can also enter numeric values in the text boxes next to the color sliders (**Figure 14**).
    - For spot colors, choose from color libraries in the **Color Mode** menu.

**Note:** If an out-of-gamut alert icon appears and you want to use the in-gamut color closest to the color you originally specified, click the small color box next to the alert icon to reset the value.

6. Do one of the following:
  - Click **Add** to add the swatch and define another one. Click **Done** when finished.
  - Click **OK** to add the swatch and exit the dialog box.
 The color is added to the **Swatches** panel (**Figure 15**).

### **How to create a swatch based on the color of an object:**

1. Select the object (**Figure 16**).
2. In the Tools panel or **Swatches** panel, select the Fill box or the Stroke box.

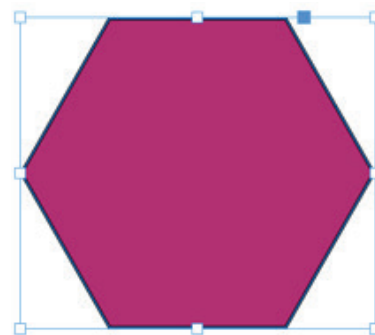


**Out of Gamut warning**

**Figure 14** New Color Swatch dialog box detail



**Figure 15** Color added to Swatches panel



**Figure 16** Selected object

3. In the **Swatches** panel, do one of the following:
  - Click the New Swatch button and double-click the resulting new swatch.
  - Choose **New Color Swatch** in the Swatches panel menu.

The color is added to the **Swatches** panel (Figure 17).

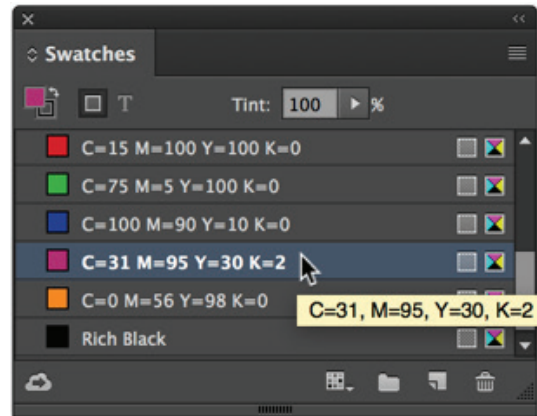


Figure 17 Color added to Swatches panel

## Manage swatches

You can edit, duplicate, delete, and merge swatches in the Swatches panel.

### Edit a swatch

You can change individual attributes of a swatch by using the Swatch Options dialog box. Additional options are available when you are editing mixed ink swatches and mixed ink groups.

#### How to edit a swatch:

1. In the **Swatches** panel, double-click the swatch. The **Swatch Options** dialog box opens (Figure 18).
2. Adjust settings as desired, and click **OK**.

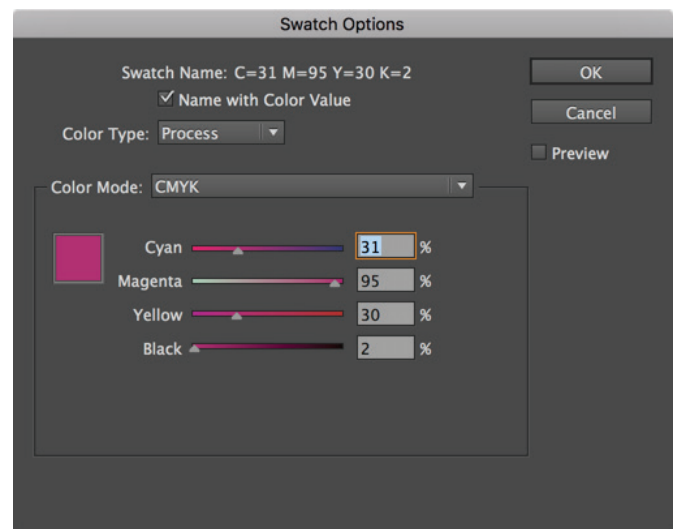


Figure 18 Swatch Options dialog box



## Delete swatches

When you delete a swatch that has been applied to an object in the document, InDesign prompts you for a replacement swatch. You can designate an existing or unnamed swatch. If you delete a swatch used as the basis of a tint or mixed ink, you will be prompted to choose a replacement.

### How to delete individual swatches:

1. Select one or more swatches.
2. Click the Delete icon at the bottom of the **Swatches** panel.
3. InDesign asks you how to replace the swatch you're deleting. Do one of the following, and click **OK**:
  - To replace all instances of the swatch with another swatch, click **Defined Swatch**, and choose a swatch in the menu (**Figure 19**).
  - To replace all instances of the swatch with an equivalent unnamed color, click **Unnamed Swatch**.

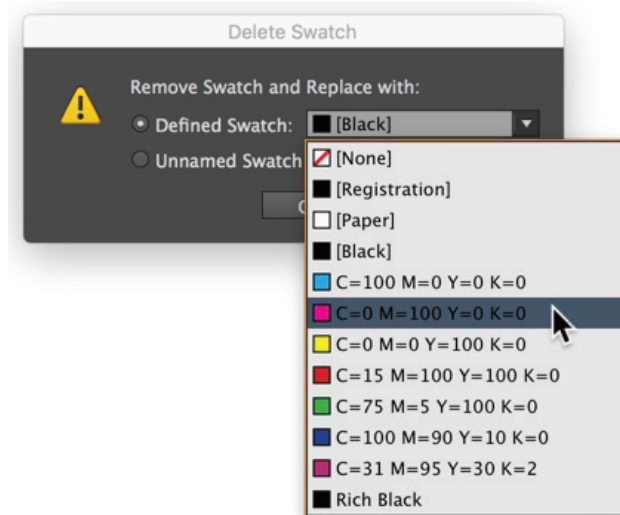


Figure 19 Delete Swatch dialog box

### How to delete all unused swatches:

1. Choose **Select All Unused** in the **Swatches** panel menu.

Only swatches that are not currently used in the active file will be selected (**Figure 20**).
2. Click the Delete icon.

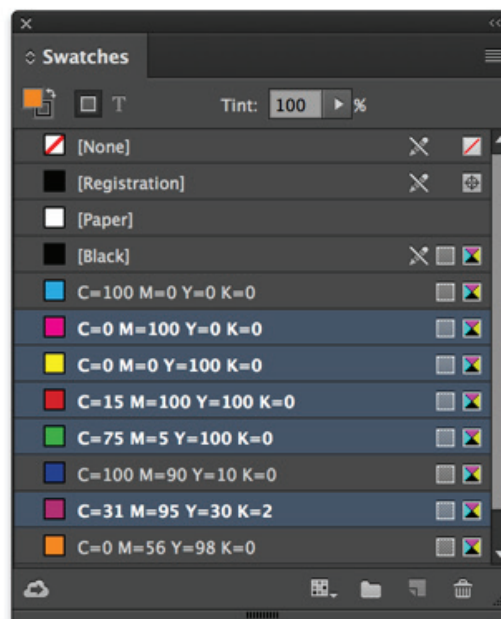


Figure 20 Swatches panel with unused swatches selected

## Duplicate swatches

If you want to create another swatch that is based on an existing swatch, it is very easy to duplicate a swatch then modify as needed.

### How to duplicate swatches:

1. Select one or more swatches.
2. Choose **Duplicate Swatch** in the **Swatches** panel menu.
3. The swatch is copied, its name appended with “copy,” and added to the bottom of the Swatches panel’s list (**Figure 21**).

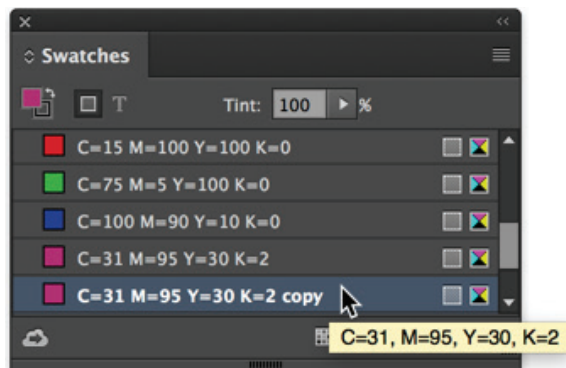


Figure 21 Swatches panel with copied swatch

## Merge swatches

When you import swatches or copy items from other documents, you may end up with duplicate swatches that may be applied to different objects. Use the Merge Swatches command to combine duplicate swatches.

### How to merge swatches:

1. In the Swatches panel, select two or more duplicate swatches (**Figure 22**).  
The first swatch you select is the one that survives (gets merged into).
2. Choose Merge Swatches in the Swatches panel menu (**Figure 23**).

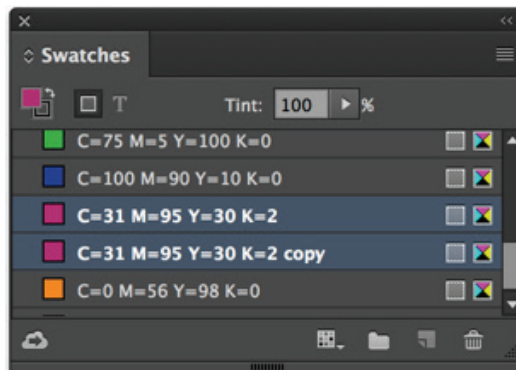


Figure 22 Duplicate swatches selected

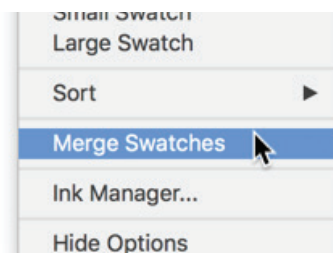


Figure 23 Detail of Swatches panel menu

## Swatch libraries

You can share the solid swatches you create in Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign by saving a swatch library in an Adobe Swatch Exchange file (.ase). The colors appear exactly the same across applications as long as your color settings are synchronized.

### How to share swatches between applications:

1. In the **Swatches** panel, create the process and spot color swatches you want to share, and remove any swatches you don't want to share (**Figure 24**).

You cannot share the following types of swatches between applications: patterns, gradients, mixed inks and tints, and the Registration swatch from Illustrator or InDesign; and book color references, HSB, XYZ, duotone, monitorRGB, opacity, total ink, and webRGB swatches from Photoshop. These types of swatches are automatically excluded when you save swatches. The first swatch you select is the one that survives (gets merged into).

2. Select **Save Swatches** from the **Swatches** panel menu, and save the swatch libraries in an easily accessible location.

The **Save As** dialog box opens.

3. Name the swatch library, and click **OK**.

The swatch library file is saved (**Figure 25**).

4. Load the swatch library into the **Swatches** panel for Photoshop, Illustrator, or InDesign.

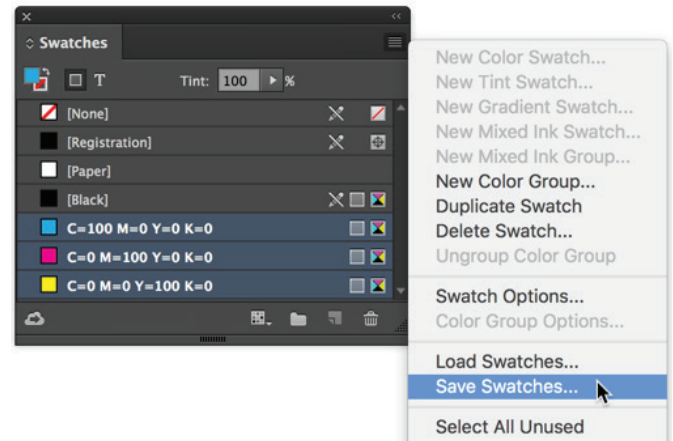


Figure 24 Swatches panel menu



Figure 25 Saved swatch library

### Import swatches

You can import colors and gradients from other documents, adding either all or some of the swatches to the Swatches panel. You can load swatches from InDesign files (.indd), InDesign templates (.indt), Illustrator files (.ai or .eps), and Adobe Swatch Exchange files (.ase) created by InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, or Adobe Kuler. Adobe Swatch Exchange files contain swatches saved in the Adobe Swatch Exchange format.

### How to import selected swatches from a file:

1. Choose **New Color Swatch** from the **Swatches** panel menu.

The **New Color Swatch** dialog box opens.

2. Choose **Other Library** from the **Color Mode** list (**Figure 26**), and then select the file from which you want to import swatches.

3. Click **Open**.

The swatch library is added to the **New Color Swatch** dialog box.

4. Select the swatches you want to import. Shift-click to add multiple swatches (**Figure 27**).

5. Click **OK**.

The swatch color or swatches are added to the **Swatches** panel (**Figure 28**).

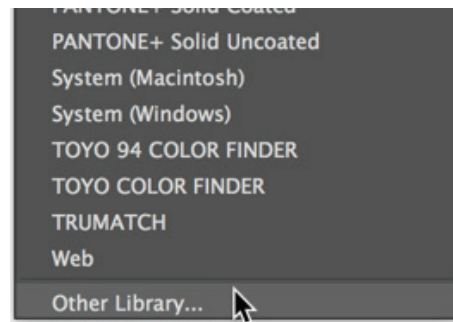


Figure 26 Detail of Color Mode list

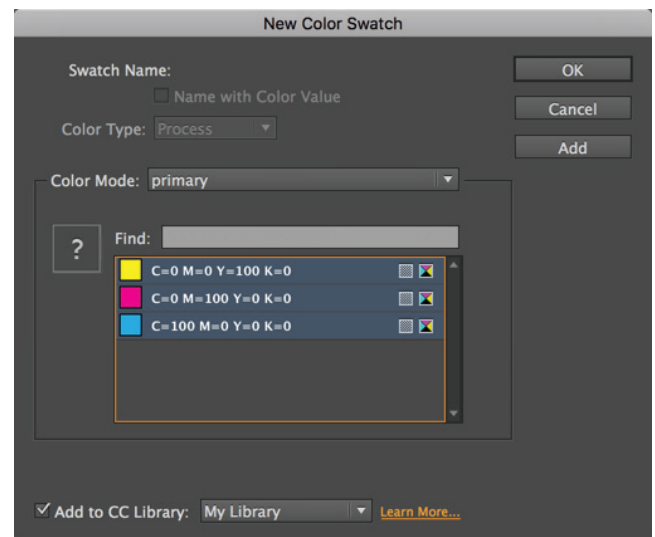


Figure 27 New Color Swatch dialog box with selected swatches

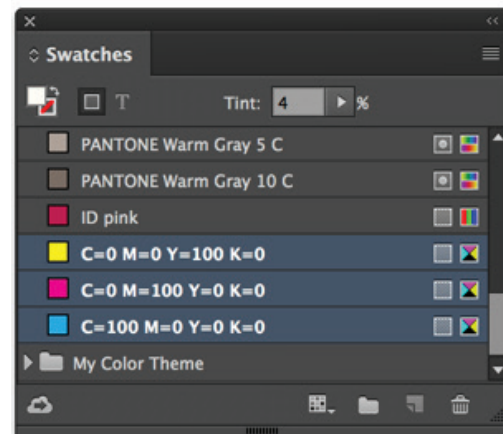


Figure 28 New colors added to Swatches panel

## How to import all swatches from a file:

1. From the **Swatches** panel menu, choose **Load Swatches** (Figure 29).
2. Double-click an InDesign document.

The Swatches are added to the **Swatches** panel (Figure 30).

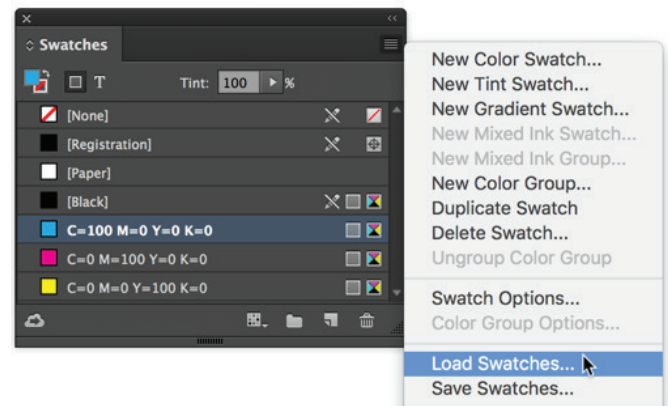


Figure 29 Swatches panel menu

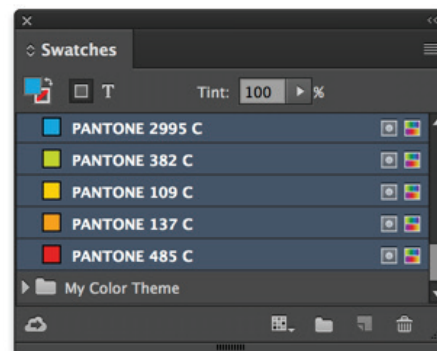


Figure 30 Swatches added to Swatches panel

## About tints

A *tint* is a screened (lighter) version of a color. Tinting is an economical way to make additional spot color variations without having to pay for additional spot color inks (Figure 31). Tinting is also a quick way to create lighter versions of process colors, although it doesn't reduce the cost of printing process colors. As with non-tinted colors, it's best to name and store tints in the Swatches panel so you can easily edit all instances of that tint in your document.

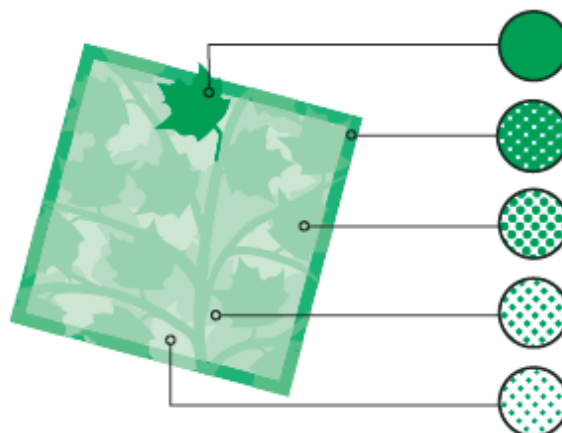


Figure 31 Spot color and tints

A tint of a spot color is printed on the same printing plate as the spot color. A tint of a process color multiplies each of the CMYK process inks by the tint percentage; for example, an 80% tint of C10 M20 Y40 K10 results in C8 M16 Y32 K8.

Because colors and tints update together, if you edit a swatch, all objects that use a tint of that swatch update accordingly. You can also edit the base swatch of a named tint by using the Swatch Options command in the Swatches panel menu; this updates any other tints based on the same swatch.

The tint range in Adobe Creative Cloud is 0% to 100%; the lower the number, the lighter the tint.

### Create and edit tints

You can adjust the tint of an individual object or create tints by using the Tint slider in the Swatches panel or Color panel. The tint range is from 0% to 100%; the lower the number, the lighter the tint will be.

#### How to create a tint:

1. In the **Swatches** panel, select a color swatch.
2. Select the arrow next to the **Tint** box.
3. Drag the **Tint** slider to achieve the desired tint (**Figure 32**).
4. Click the New Swatch button.

The tint appears in the **Swatches** panel with the name of its base color and the percentage of the tint (**Figure 33**).

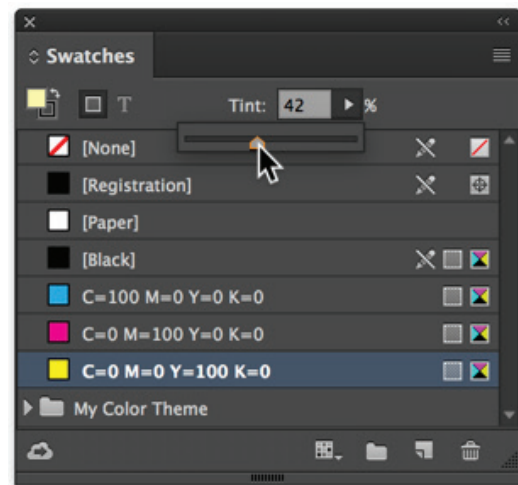


Figure 32 Drag Tint slider in Swatches panel

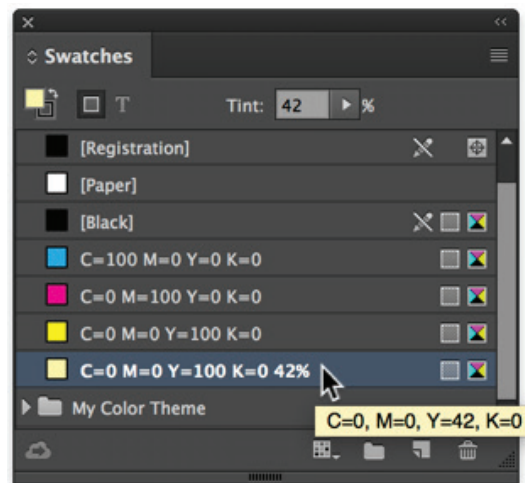


Figure 33 Tint added to Swatches panel

## About transparency

When you create an object or stroke, when you apply a fill, or when you enter text, by default these items appear solid; that is, they have an opacity of 100%. You can make the items transparent in a variety of ways. For example, you can vary the opacity from 100% (completely opaque) to 0% (completely transparent). When you decrease opacity, the underlying artwork becomes visible through the surface of the object, stroke, fill, or text (**Figure 34**).

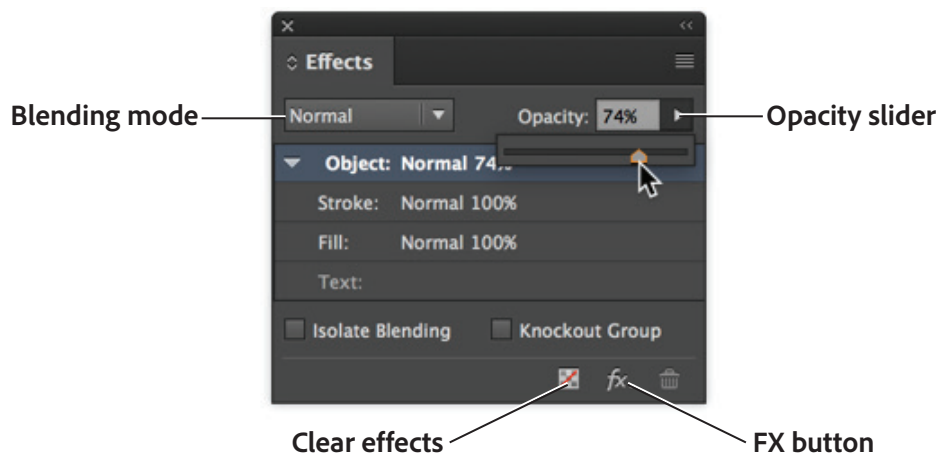


**Figure 34** Areas of underlying objects appear through transparent object

You use the Effects panel to specify the opacity of an object, its stroke, its fill, or its text. You can decide how the object itself, its stroke, fill, or text blend with objects beneath. Where objects are concerned, you can choose to isolate blending to specific objects so only some objects in a group blend with objects below them, or you can have objects knock out rather than blend with objects in a group.

### Effects panel overview

Use the Effects panel (**Figure 35**) to specify the opacity and blending mode of objects and groups, isolate blending to a particular group, knock out objects inside a group, or apply a transparency effect.



**Figure 35** Effects panel

- *Blending Mode* Specifies how colors in transparent objects interact with the objects behind them.
- *Opacity* Determines the opacity of an object, stroke, fill, or text.
- *Level* Tells you the Object, Stroke, Fill, and Text opacity settings of the object, as well as whether transparency effects have been applied. Click the triangle to the left of the word Object (or Group or Graphic) to hide or display these level settings. The FX icon appears on a level after you apply transparency settings there, and you can double-click the FX icon to edit the settings.
- *Isolate Blending* Applies a blending mode to a selected group of objects.
- *Knockout Group* Makes the opacity and blending attributes of every object in a group knock out, or block out, underlying objects in the group.
- *Clear All button* Clears effects—stroke, fill, or text—from an object, sets the blending mode to Normal, and changes the Opacity setting to 100% throughout the object.
- *FX button* Displays a list of transparency effects.

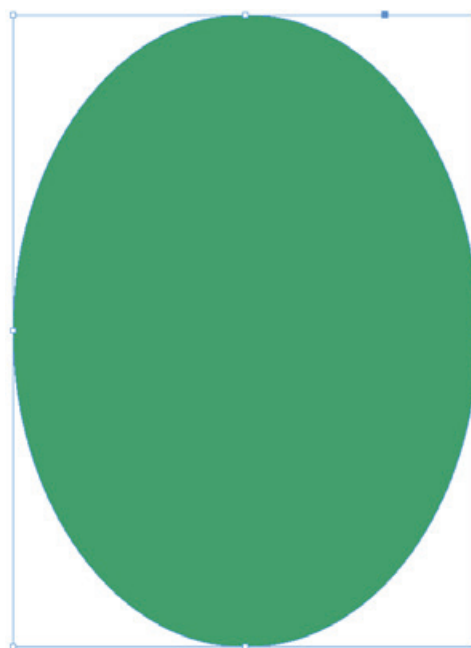
### How to apply transparency effects:

1. Place an image in the document, then draw a shape object over the image.

You will edit the transparency of the shape object to allow the image below to show through.

2. Select the shape object (**Figure 36**). To apply effects to a graphic, select the graphic with the Direct Selection tool.
3. Choose **Window > Effects** to display the **Effects** panel (**Figure 35**).
4. Select a level to designate which parts or part of the object you want to change:

- *Object* Affects the entire object—its stroke, fill, and text.
- *Graphic* Affects only the graphic selected with the Direct Selection tool. Effects you apply to the graphic remain with it when you paste the graphic in a different frame.
- *Group* Affects all objects and text in the group. (Use the Direct Selection tool to apply effects to objects within a group.)
- *Stroke* Affects only the object's stroke (including its gap color).
- *Fill* Affects only the object's fill.
- *Text* Affects only text inside the object, not the text frame. Effects you apply to text affect all the text in the object; you can't apply an effect to individual words or letters.



**Figure 36** Selected object

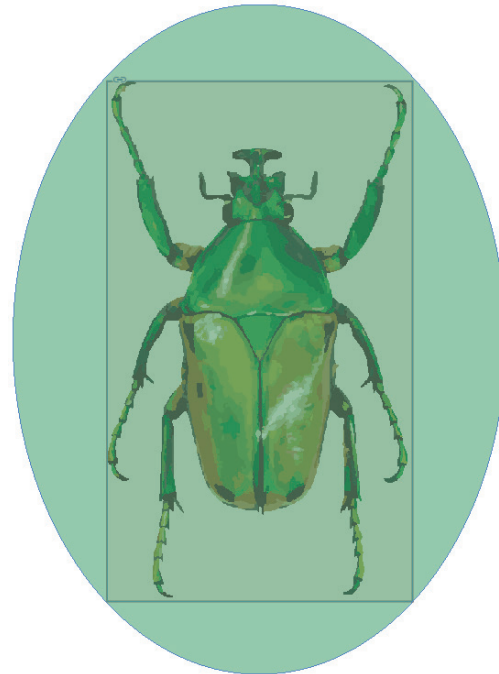


5. Drag the **Opacity** slider to achieve the desired level of opacity.

The opacity of the object is reset (**Figure 37**).

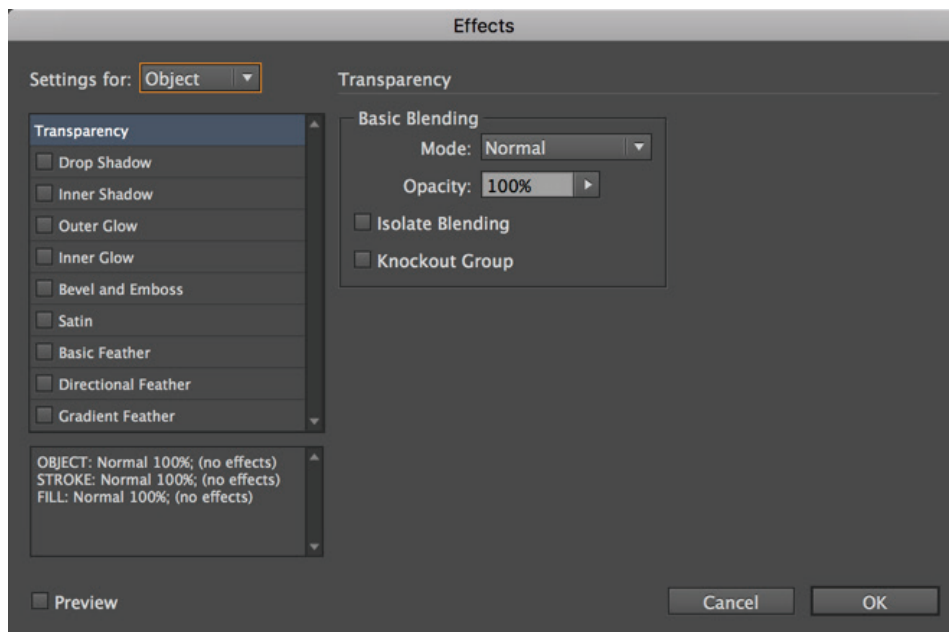
**Note:** You can also do any of the following to open the **Effects** dialog box to add other effects and set options for the effect:

- In the **Effects** panel or Control panel, click the FX button and choose an effect from the menu.
- From the **Effects** panel menu, choose **Effects** and then an effect name.
- From the context menu, choose **Effects** and then an effect name.
- Choose **Object > Effects**, and then choose an effect name.
- On the **Effects** panel, click the triangle to display level settings, and then double-click a level setting—**Object**, **Stroke**, **Fill**, or **Text**—on the **Effects** panel. By double-clicking, you both open the **Effects** dialog box and choose a level setting.



**Figure 37** Object opacity set to 50%

The **Effects** dialog box opens (**Figure 38**).



**Figure 38** Effects dialog box

## For more information

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