

How to work with graphics frames

In Adobe InDesign, you locate all graphics within frames (**Figure 1**). A graphics frame determines what parts of the frame's content (such as TIFFs, JPEGs, PDFs, PSDs, and AIs) appear on a page. You can also change the size and shape of the frame's content, and adjust its transparency and tint settings.



Figure 1 Design project in layout with multiple graphic frames

This guide covers the following topics:

- Drawing graphics frames
- Adding content to a graphics frame
- Applying a stroke to a graphics frame
- Changing the size or shape of a graphics frame
- Changing the size or shape of graphics frame contents
- Modifying transparency and applying tints to graphics frames

You can download the assets used in [this tutorial here](#).

Creating a rectangular graphics frame

To create a rectangular frame:

1. Start InDesign and create a new document.
2. Select the Rectangle Frame tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 2**) and drag the pointer to create a graphics frame.

The frame has a crossbar through it, indicating that this is a graphics frame (**Figure 3**).

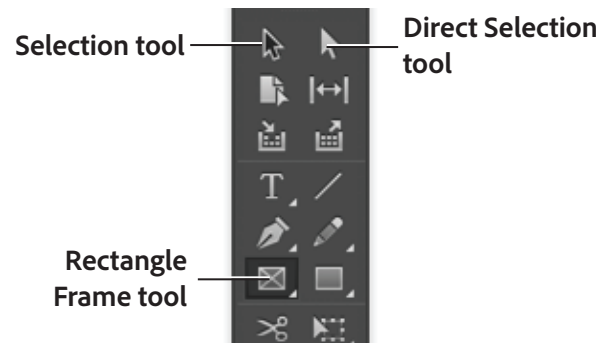


Figure 2 Tools panel

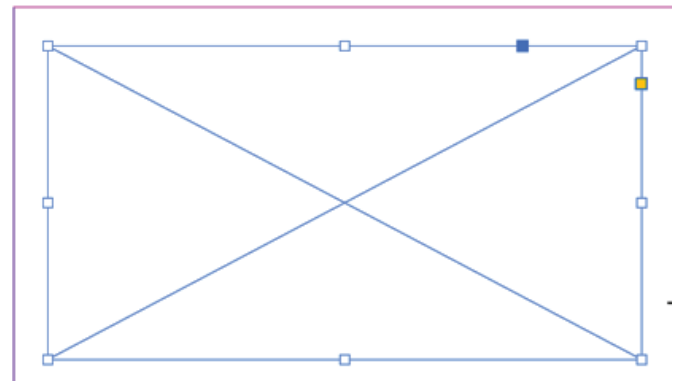


Figure 3 Rectangular graphics frame

Creating a non-rectangular graphics frame

To create non-rectangular graphics frames, such as ellipses or polygons, use the Ellipse Frame tool or the Polygon Frame tool.

To create an elliptical graphics frame:

1. Click the Rectangle tool in the Tools panel, hold down the mouse button, and then select the Ellipse Frame tool (**Figure 4**).

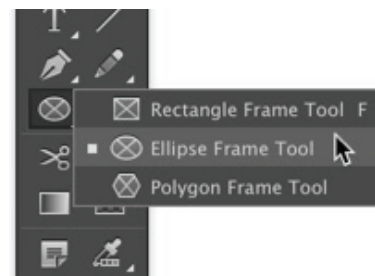


Figure 4 Ellipse Frame tool

2. Drag the pointer to create an elliptical frame (**Figure 5**).

Observe that the frame has a crossbar through it, indicating that this is a graphics frame.

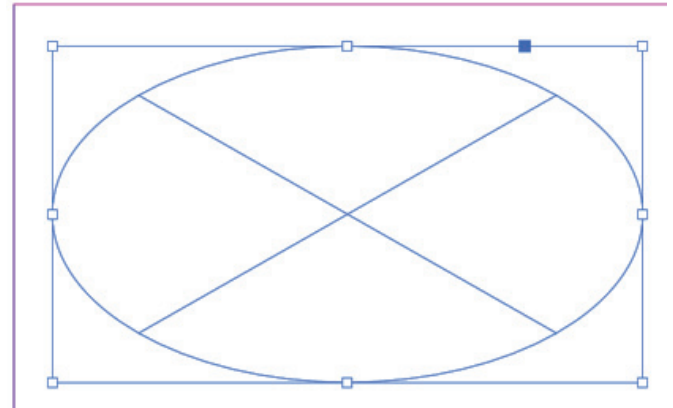


Figure 5 Elliptical graphics frame

Adding an image to a graphics frame

The Place command is the primary method used to import graphics into InDesign because it provides the highest level of support for resolution, file formats, multipage PDFs, and color.

To add an image to a graphics frame:

1. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 2**).
2. Select a graphics frame.
3. Choose **File > Place**.

The **Place** dialog box appears (**Figure 6**).

4. Browse to the location of the file you want to place.
5. Select the file and click **Open**.

A loaded icon and image thumbnail appears.

6. Click inside the graphics frame.

The graphic is added to the graphics frame. If the graphic is larger than the frame, only a portion of the graphic shows (**Figure 7**).

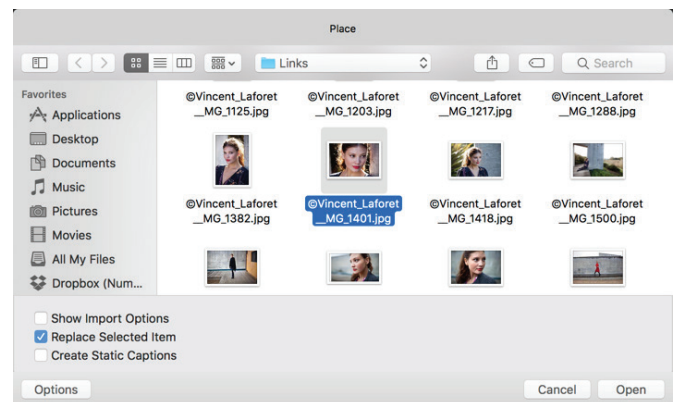


Figure 6 Place dialog box



Figure 7 A portion of the placed image

7. Select **Object > Fitting**.

This menu provides several options for fitting the content to the frame or the frame to the content (**Figure 8**).

If the new image is smaller or larger than the frame, you can refit the frame by choosing **Object > Fitting > Fit Frame To Content**.

The placed frame is fit to the object (**Figure 9**).

Note: Try testing out the various fitting options to see how both the content and the frame respond to the different settings.

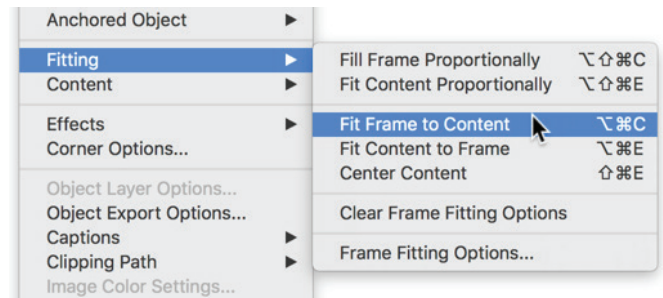


Figure 8 Object fitting options



Figure 9 Placed image in graphics frame

Applying a stroke to a graphics frame

A stroke is the border around a frame. By default, frames have no stroke. You add one by using the Stroke panel. You can also change the color of the stroke by using the Stroke box in the Tools panel.

To add a stroke to a graphics frame:

1. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel.
2. Click the edge of a graphics frame to select it.
3. Choose **Window > Stroke** to display the **Stroke** panel (**Figure 10**).

Note: You can display the **Stroke** panel with either limited options or expanded options. To hide or expand the options, choose **Hide Options** or **Show Options** from the **Stroke** panel menu.

4. Enter 5 pt in the **Weight** text box.

A 5-point stroke is applied to the graphics frame. The more you increase point size for the stroke, the thicker the stroke will be.

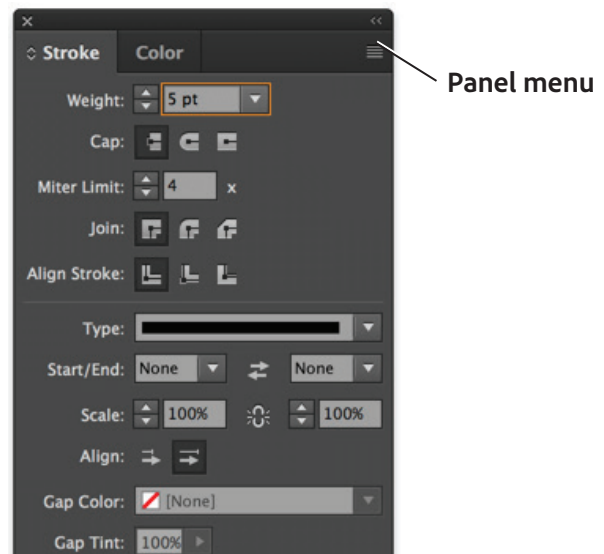


Figure 10 Stroke panel

5. With the object still selected, click the Stroke box in the Tools panel (**Figure 11**).
6. Double-click the Stroke box in the Tools panel (**Figure 11**).

Note: You can also use the Eyedropper tool to select a specific color from any object in an InDesign file. For more information about how to use the Eyedropper tool, please see the “How to manage colors” guide.

7. The **Color Picker** appears (**Figure 12**).
8. Choose a color in the **Color Picker** by clicking somewhere in the square on the left side.
9. Click **OK** to close the **Color Picker**.
10. The stroke is now the color you chose in the **Color Picker** (**Figure 13**).

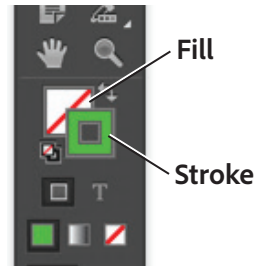


Figure 11 Tools panel

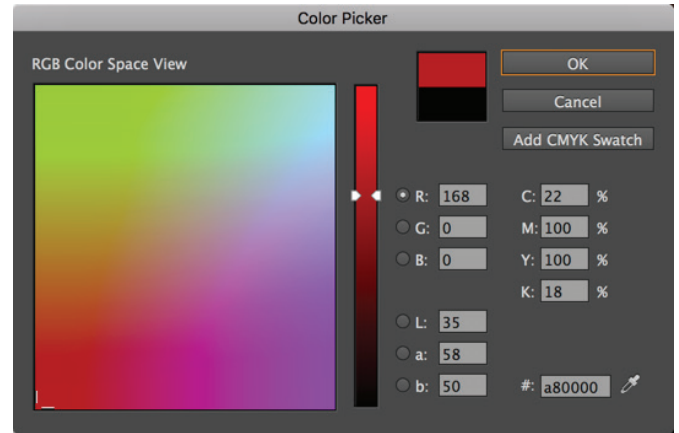


Figure 12 Color Picker



Figure 13 Stroke applied to graphics frame

Changing the shape of a graphics frame

InDesign provides a number of options for changing the shape of a graphics frame. As you change the shape of a graphics frame, it restricts the view of the image contained in the frame.

To change the shape of a graphics frame:

1. Select the Direct Selection tool in the Tools panel.
2. Drag one of the corners to change the shape of the frame (**Figure 14**).

3. Release the mouse button to accept the change.

The frame's shape has changed what part of the image you see.

4. Move the pointer over one of the frame's edge segments (not over a selection handle).

The pointer changes to an arrow with a bar (**Figure 15**).

5. Drag the edge of the frame to change its shape .
6. Release the mouse to accept the change (**Figure 16**).



Figure 14 Drag a corner to change frame shape



Figure 15 Move Segment pointer



Figure 16 Move edge applied

Changing the shape of an image without changing the frame

You can change the shape of a frame's content—its image—-independent of the frame itself.

To change the shape of an image but not the frame:

1. Select the Selection tool in the Tools panel.
2. Select the frame.
3. Choose **Object > Select > Content** to select the graphics frame's content (**Figure 17**).
A brown bounding box appears in the shape of the original image.
4. Drag a corner of this bounding box to change the size of the image independent of the frame (**Figure 18**).
To change the image uniformly, hold down the Shift key as you drag the corner.
5. Release the mouse to accept the change (**Figure 19**).



Figure 17 Frame content selected



Figure 18 Drag a corner to change image size

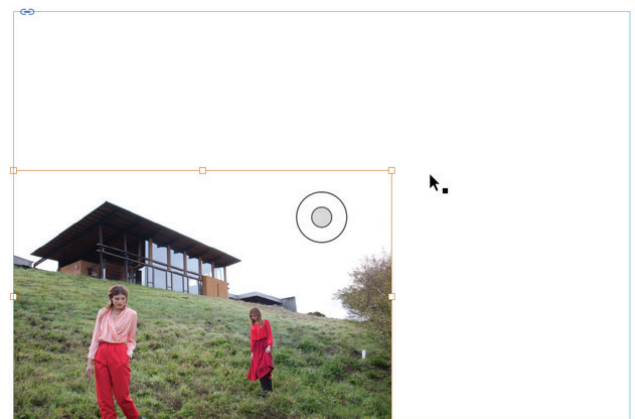


Figure 19 Image sized changed

Modifying transparency and applying tints to graphics frames

You may want to fine-tune the look and feel of a graphics frame to suit a particular mood or concept. For example, adjust the transparency of an image so that an underlying artwork becomes visible through the surface of the object, stroke, fill, or text. Or apply a tint to an individual object, stroke, fill, or text. These changes are easily accomplished using the Effects and Swatches panels in InDesign.

In this section, two images are layered one on top of the other and the transparency is adjusted so that a background image shows through slightly. A rectangular footer frame is added on top and tint and transparency are applied to create a multi-layered image.

To change transparency and apply a tint to a frame:

1. Select the Rectangle Frame tool in the Tools panel and drag the pointer to create a graphics frame, and place an image in the background.
2. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel and select the graphics frame.
3. Choose **File > Place** and import an image into the graphics frame.
4. Use the **Object > Fitting** menu to scale the image to fit as needed.
5. Place another graphics frame on top of the first frame and make it the same size.

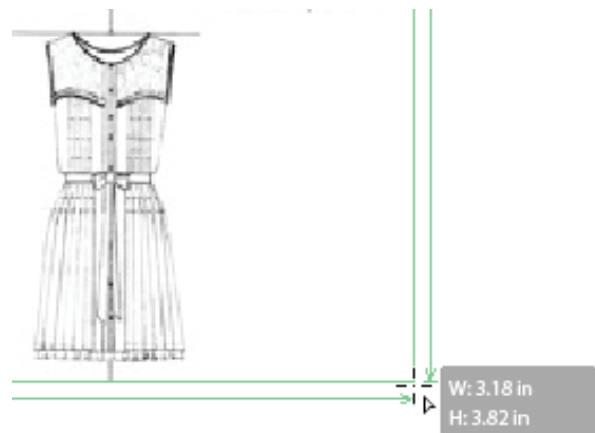


Figure 20 Smart Guides

To help match the second frame size, turn on smart guides (Figure 20) by choosing **View > Grids & Guides > Smart Guides**.

Smart Guides makes it easy to snap objects to items in your layout. As you drag or create an object, temporary guides appear, indicating that the object is aligned with an edge or center of the page or with another page item.

Import an image into the topmost graphics frame and scale the image to fit.

6. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel and select the graphics frame.
7. Choose **Window > Effects** to display the **Effects** panel.

The **Effects** panel opens (Figure 21).

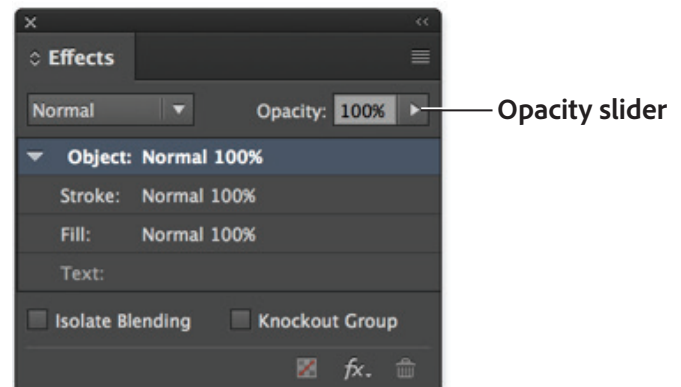


Figure 21 Effects panel

8. Select the arrow next to **Opacity** box and drag the slider, or enter a percentage measurement in the number box to achieve a degree of transparency so that the background image shows through slightly (**Figure 22**).
9. Select the Rectangle Frame tool and draw a third, smaller graphics frame over the previously-created frames.
10. Click the Selection tool in the Tools panel and select the graphics frame.
11. Click the **Swatches** button in left of the workspace to open the **Swatches** panel (**Figure 23**).
12. In the **Swatches** panel, select a color swatch.

The graphics frame is filled with the selected swatch (**Figure 24**).

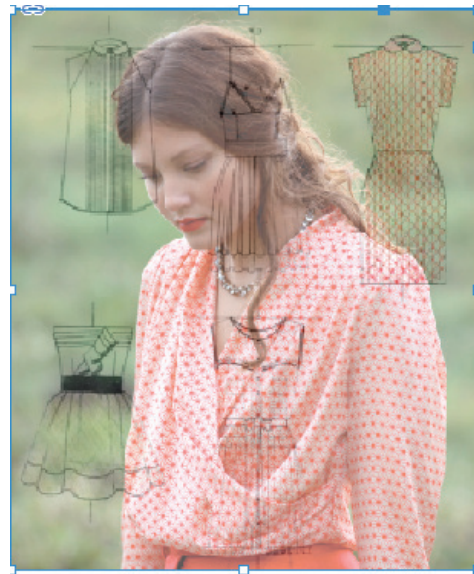
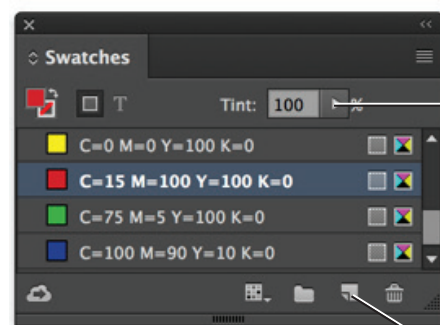


Figure 22 Image opacity set to 55%



Tint slider

New swatch

Figure 23 Swatches Panel

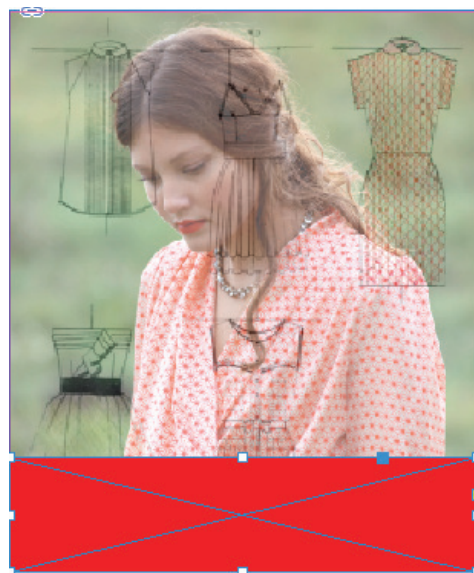


Figure 24 Frame filled with color

13. Select the arrow next to the **Tint** box and drag the Tint slider, or enter a tint value in the Percentage box, to achieve the desired degree of tint (**Figure 25**).
14. To preserve the new tint in the **Swatches** panel for additional use, click the New Swatch button.

The new color swatch is added to the **Swatch** panel (**Figure 26**).

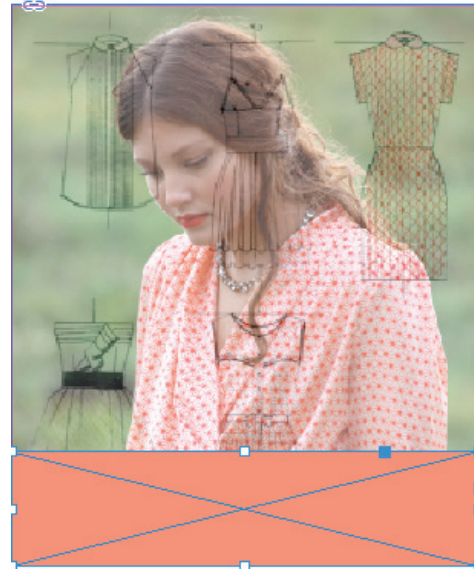


Figure 25 Tint set to 50%

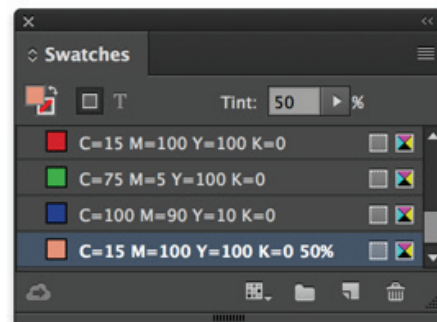


Figure 26 Swatches Panel with newly added swatch

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