

How to work with layers

Like many Adobe products, InDesign features layers that can help you separate content in complex projects (**Figure 1**). At the very least, you can use layers to separate text from artwork so you can view each separately. You can also lock layers to ensure you do not make inadvertent changes to one layer as you edit another layer. Download the assets used in [this tutorial here](#).

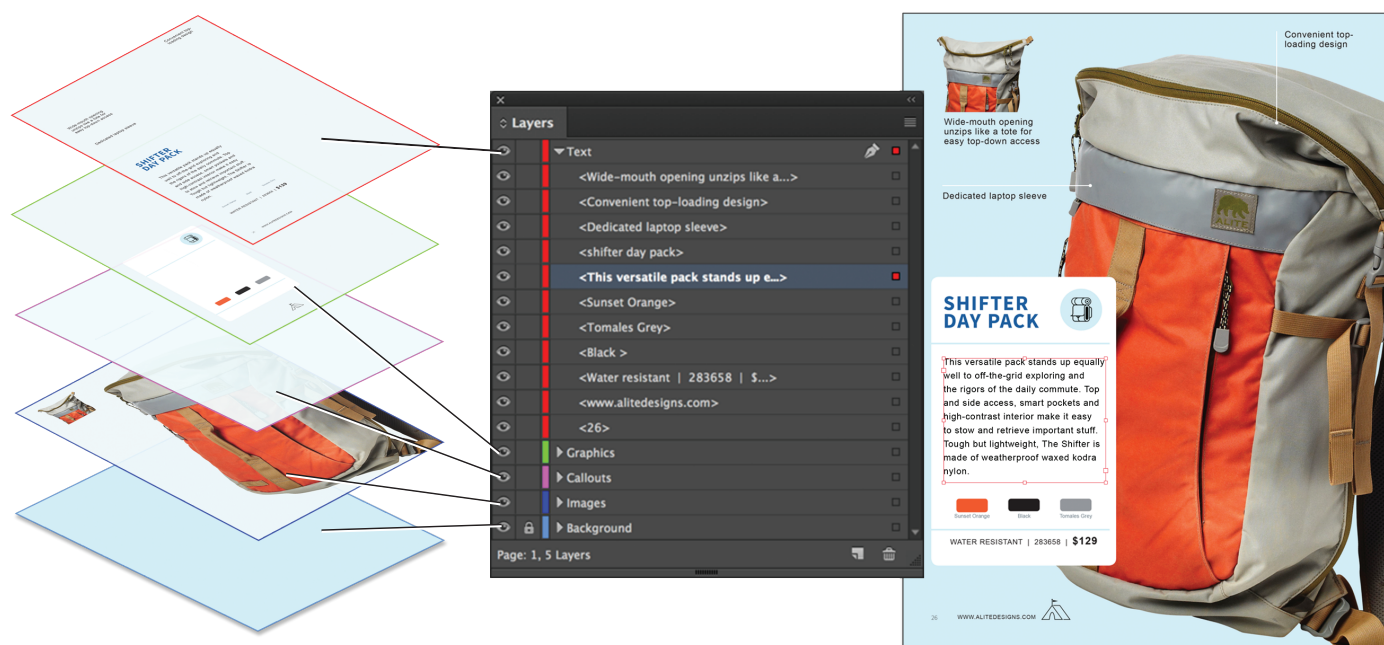


Figure 1 The Layers panel lists layers with the frontmost layer appearing at the top of the panel.

Working with layers

Each document includes at least one named layer. By using multiple layers, you can create and edit specific areas or kinds of content in your document without affecting other areas or kinds of content. For example, if your document prints slowly because it contains many large graphics, you can use one layer for just the text in your document; then, when it's time to proofread the text, you can hide all other layers and quickly print the text layer only. You can also use layers to display alternate design ideas for the same layout, or versions of advertisements for different regions.

Think of layers as transparent sheets stacked on top of each other. If a layer doesn't have objects on it, you can see through it to any objects on layers behind it.

You can draw objects in a document and use them as paths or as frames. Paths are vector graphics like those you create in a drawing program such as Adobe Illustrator. Frames are identical to paths, with only one difference—they can be containers for text or other objects. A frame can also exist as a placeholder—a container without contents. As containers and placeholders, frames are the basic building blocks for a document's layout.

To create layers and work with objects:

1. Start InDesign and create a new document.
2. Choose **Window > Layers**.

The **Layers** panel opens (**Figure 2**). Notice there is an existing layer labeled Layer 1. You will use this layer as the background.

3. Double-click **Layer 1** in the Layers panel.

The **Layer Options** dialog box opens (**Figure 3**).

4. Specify the layer options in the **Layer Options** dialog box, and then click **OK**.

Color Assigns a color to identify the objects on that layer.

Show Layer Makes a layer visible. Selecting this option is the same as making the eye icon visible in the Layers panel.

Show Guides Makes the guides on the layer visible. When this option is not selected for a layer, the guides cannot be made visible, even by selecting **View > Show Guides** for the document.

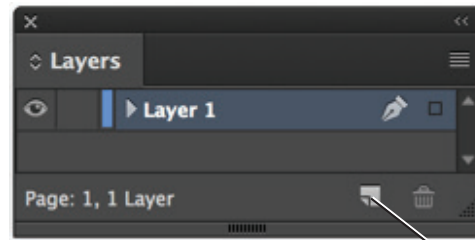
Lock Layer Prevents changes to any objects on the layer. Selecting this option is the same as making the crossed-out pencil icon visible in the Layers panel.

Lock Guides Prevents changes to all ruler guides on the layer.

Print Layer Allows the layer to be prevented from printing. When printing or exporting to PDF, you can determine whether to print hidden and non-printing layers.

Suppress Text Wrap When Layer Is Hidden Makes text on other layers flow normally when the layer is hidden and it contains objects with text wrap applied.

5. In the Tools panel, select the Rectangle tool.
6. Drag in the document window to create a background shape that covers the whole document (**Figure 4**).



Create New Layer button

Figure 2 Layers panel

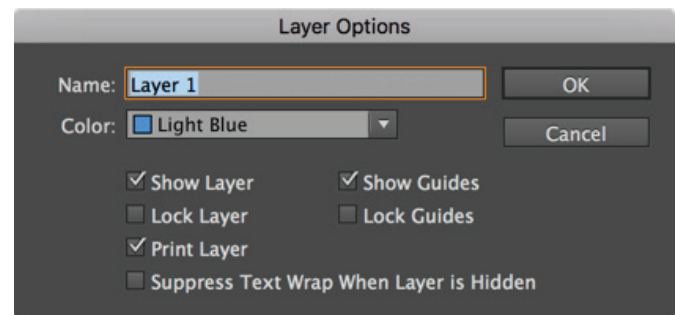


Figure 3 Layer Options dialog box

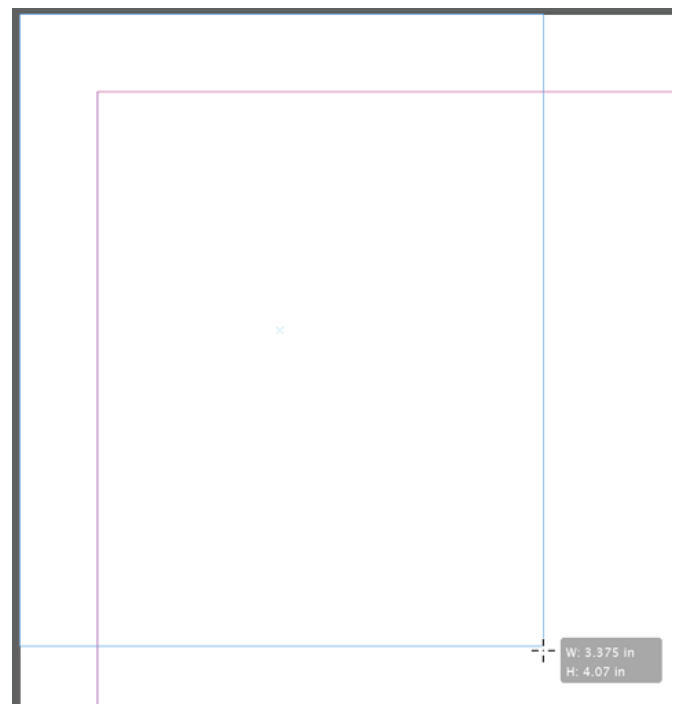


Figure 4 Dragging the Rectangle Tool in the document window

7. Double-click the Fill box in the Tools panel (**Figure 5**).

The color **Color Picker** opens (**Figure 6**).

8. Select a fill color for your background graphic frame and click **OK**.

9. Create a new layer by clicking the New Layer button in the **Layers** panel.

This is **Layer 2**, into which you will import a graphic.

10. In the Tools panel, select the Rectangle Frame tool.

11. Drag in the document window to create the foreground frame in the document into which you want to place a graphic (**Figure 7**). Make sure the shape is the proper orientation to fit the image, but don't worry about the exact size because you can fix that later.

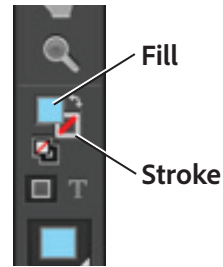


Figure 5 Tools panel

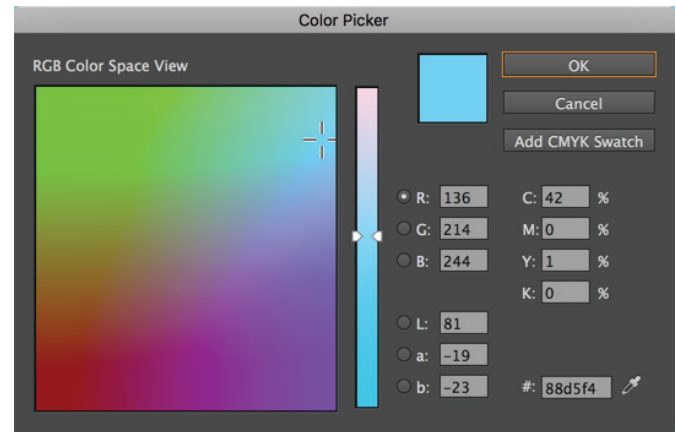


Figure 6 Color Picker

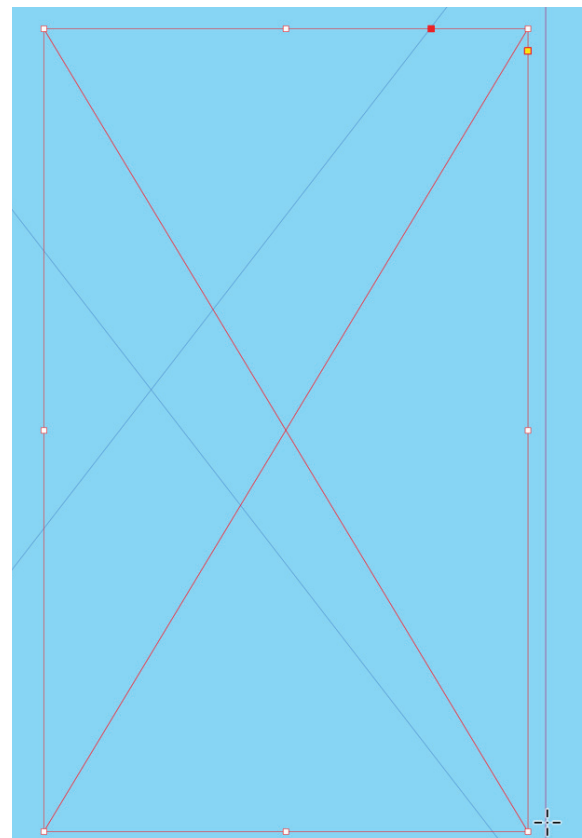


Figure 7 Creating a graphics frame

12. Choose **File > Place**.

The **Place** dialog box opens (**Figure 8**).

13. Select a graphics file.

14. Click **Open**.

The image is placed inside the document in the layer.

15. Select **Object > Fitting**.

There are several options for fitting the content to the frame or the frame to the content (**Figure 9**).

If the new image is smaller or larger than the frame and you want to maintain the image aspect ratio, you can refit the content by choosing **Object > Fitting > Fit Content Proportionally**.

The placed object is fit into the frame (**Figure 10**).

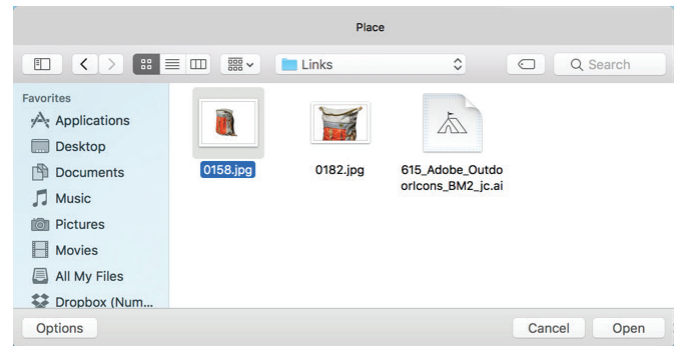


Figure 8 Place dialog box

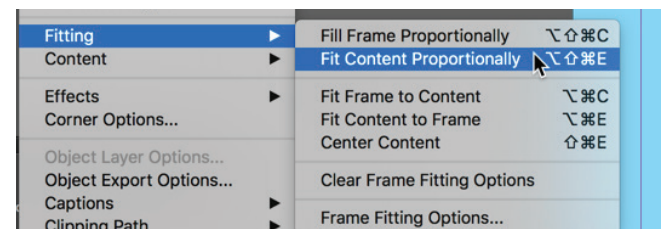


Figure 9 Object fitting options



Figure 10 Object placed with a frame

Select and move objects and layers

You can select any object on any layer. In the Layers panel, dots mark layers that contain selected objects. The layer's selection color helps you identify an object's layer. You can also change the stacking order of layers in your document by rearranging the layers on the Layers panel.

To change the order of objects:

1. Open a document that contains existing text and artwork.
2. Choose **Window > Layers** to display the Layers panel.
3. Do any of the following:
 - To select individual objects on a layer, click the disclosure triangle icon next to the layer to display all objects, select the target object, and drag it to a new location (**Figure 12**).
 - To select all objects on a specific layer, hold down **Alt** (Windows) or **Option** (Mac OS) as you click a layer in the **Layers** panel.
 - To move or copy objects to another layer, use the Selection tool to select one or more objects on a document page or master. In the **Layers** panel, drag the colored dot on the right side of the layer list to move the selected objects to the other layer.

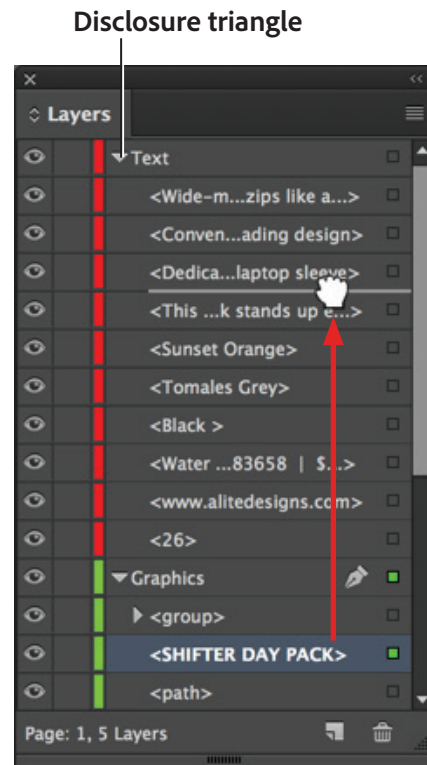


Figure 12 Drag objects from one layer to another

To change the order of layers:

1. In the **Layers** panel, drag a layer up or down in the list (**Figure 13**).

You can also select and drag multiple layers at one time.

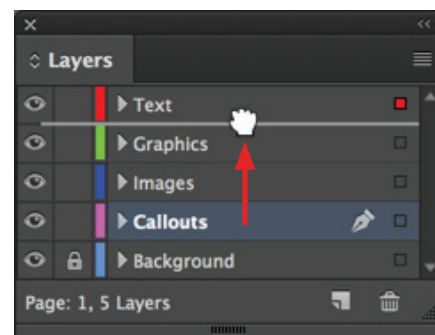


Figure 13 Layers panel with expanded layers

Show or hide objects and layers

You can hide or display any layer at any time, and you can hide or display objects on a layer. Hidden layers and objects can't be edited, and don't appear on screen or in print. Hiding layers can be useful when you want to do any of the following:

- Hide parts of a document that are not meant to appear in the final document.
- Hide alternate versions of a document.
- Simplify the display of a document, to make it easier to edit other parts of the document.
- Prevent a layer from printing.
- Speed up screen redraw when a layer contains high-resolution graphics.

To show/hide an object or layer:

1. In the **Layers** panel, do any of the following:
 - To hide or show one layer at a time, in the **Layers** panel, click the square at the far left of a layer name to hide or show the eye icon for that layer (**Figure 14**).
 - To show or hide individual objects in a layer, click the disclosure triangle to view all objects in a layer, and then click the eye icon to show or hide the object.
 - To hide all layers except the selected layer, or to hide all objects on a layer except the selected object, choose **Hide Others** in the **Layers** panel menu. Or, **Alt-click** (Windows) or **Option-click** (Mac OS) the square on the far left side of the layer or object you want to remain visible.
 - To show all layers, choose **Show All Layers** in the **Layers** panel menu. Or, **Alt-click** (Windows) or **Option-click** (Mac OS) the square on the far left side of a visible layer or object to show all layers or all objects in a layer.

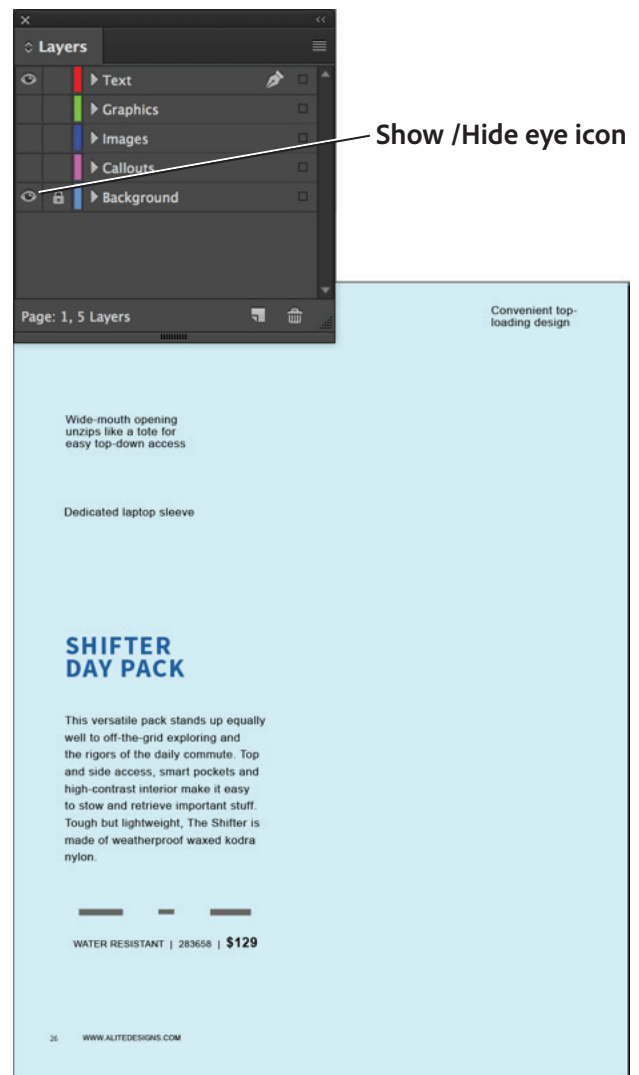


Figure 14 Design project with only Text and Background layers visible

Lock or unlock objects and layers

Locking is useful for preventing accidental changes to a layer. A locked layer displays a crossed-out pencil icon in the Layers panel. Objects on locked layers cannot be selected or edited directly; however, if objects on locked layers have attributes that can be edited indirectly, they will change. For example, if you edit a tint swatch, objects on locked layers using that tint swatch will reflect the change. Similarly, putting a series of threaded text frames on both locked and unlocked layers will not prevent text on locked layers from recomposing.

You can also use the Layers panel to lock or unlock objects in a layer.

Lock or unlock objects:

1. Select the object or objects that you want to lock in place.
2. Do any of the following:
 - To lock the objects, choose **Object > Lock**.
 - To unlock an object, click the lock icon (**Figure 15**).
 - To unlock the objects on the current spread, choose **Object > Unlock All On Spread**.

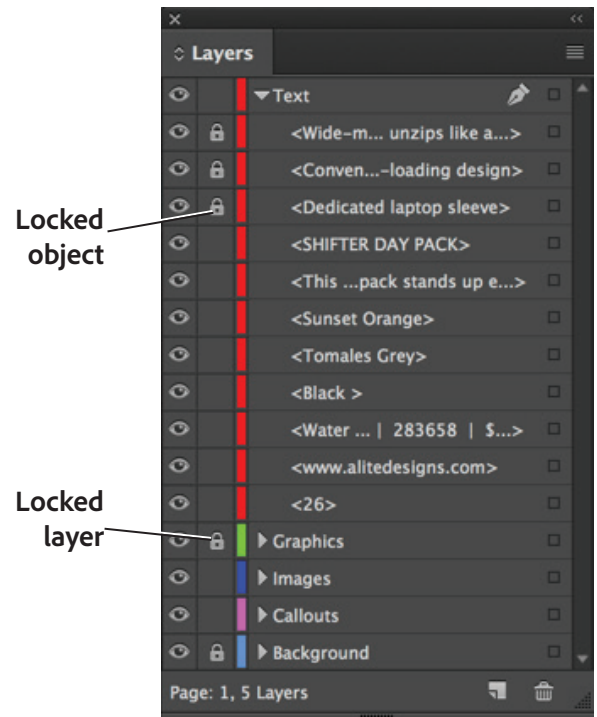


Figure 15 Layers panel

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