

## How to work with text frames

In Adobe InDesign, you place all text within frames. You can then change the margins, number of columns, color, and other settings for these text frames (**Figure 1**). This guide reviews 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

You can download the text frame samples used in [this tutorial here](#).



**Figure 1** A selection of text frames with different columns, shapes, fills and strokes.

### Changing text frame settings

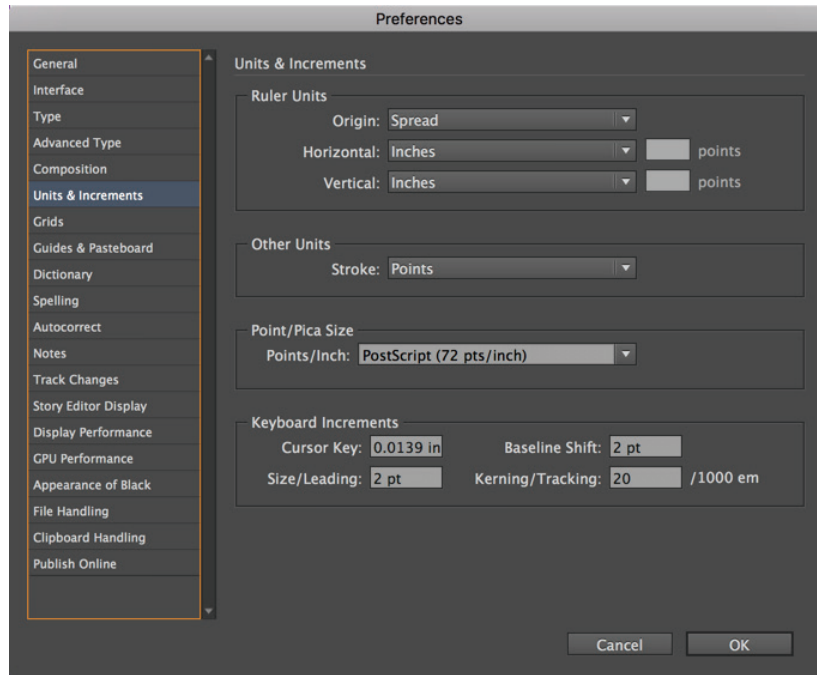
Text frame settings determine the number of columns in the text frame; the inset, or margin, of the text frame; and the vertical orientation—top, middle, or bottom—of the text in the frame.

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 to another unit of your choice; this guide uses inches but you can easily set another.

### 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 2**).



**Figure 2** Units & Increments category of the Preferences dialog box

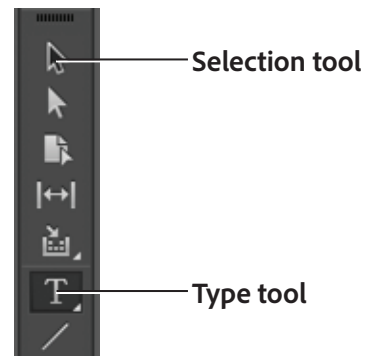
2. Select a unit of measurement, such as **Inches**, in both the **Horizontal** and **Vertical** pop-up menus.
3. Click **OK**.

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

### To change general text frame settings:

1. In InDesign, create a new document.
2. Click the Type tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 3**).
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.



**Figure 3** Tools panel

- Choose **Object > Text Frame Options**.

The **Text Frame Options** dialog box appears (Figure 4).

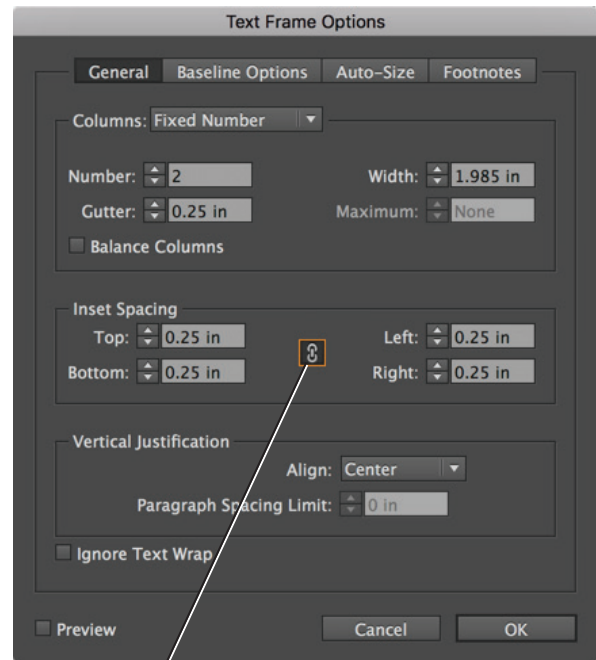
- Change the following settings in the **Text Frame Options** dialog box:
  - Under **Columns**, enter **2** in the **Number** box.
  - Under **Columns**, enter **.25** in the **Gutter** box. A *gutter* is the defined space between the columns.
  - Under **Inset Spacing**, enter **.25** in in the **Top** 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 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.
- Click **OK** to close the **Text Frame Options** dialog box.

The text frame options have been applied (Figure 5). 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.

- With the text frame still selected, choose **Type > Fill With Placeholder Text** or copy and paste your choice of text.

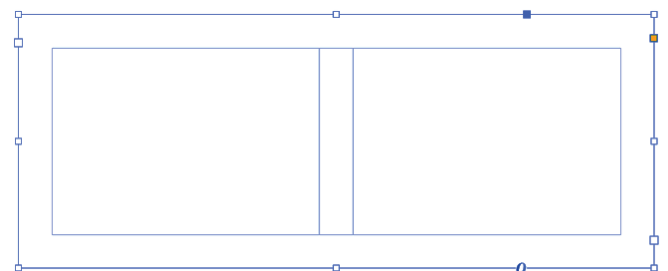
The text appears within the columns (Figure 6).

**Note:** If you enter more text than can fit within an area, a small box containing a plus symbol (+) appears near the bottom of the bounding area. You can resize the text area or extend the path to display the overflow text. You can also thread text into another object. For more information about overset text, see the "How to use text" guide.

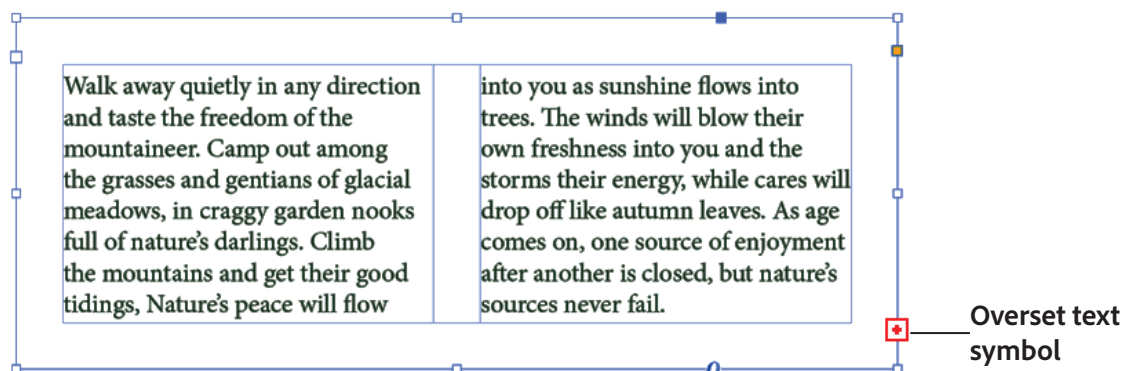


**Make All Settings The Same icon**

**Figure 4** Text Frame Options dialog box



**Figure 5** Text frame options applied



**Figure 6** Text frame filled with text

## 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 7).

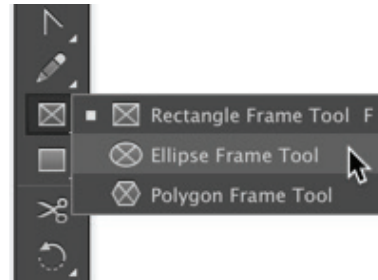


Figure 7 Ellipse Frame tool

2. Drag the pointer to create an elliptical frame (Figure 8).

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** or copy and paste your choice of text.

The text conforms to the elliptical shape of the frame (Figure 9).

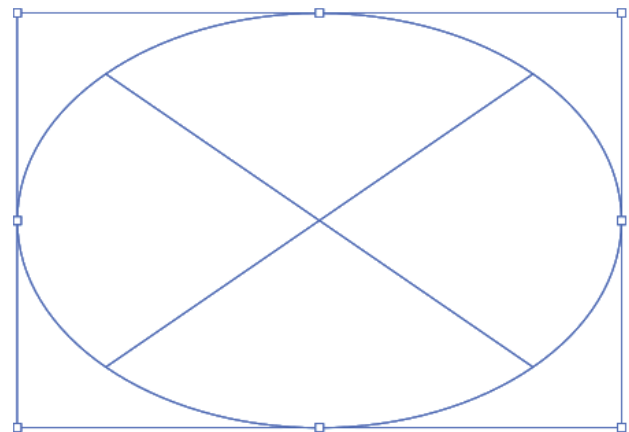


Figure 8 Elliptical frame

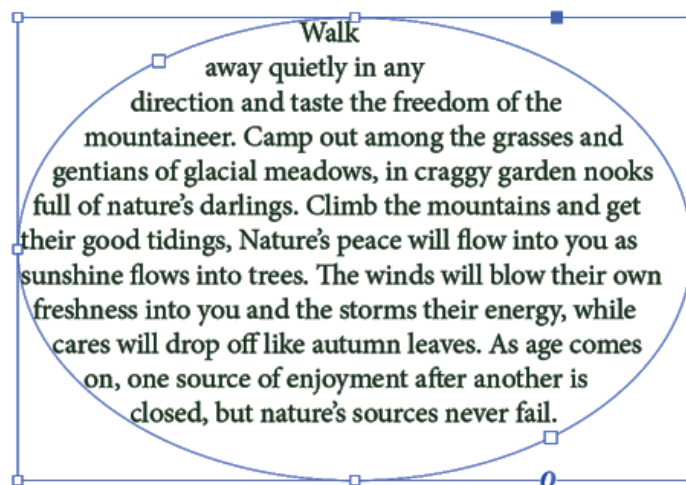


Figure 9 Elliptical text frame filled with text

## 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 10**).

The **Color Picker** appears (**Figure 11**).

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 12**).

In **Figure 12**, the text frame's inset spacing forms a margin around the text. The actual text frame is bordered by the outside line.

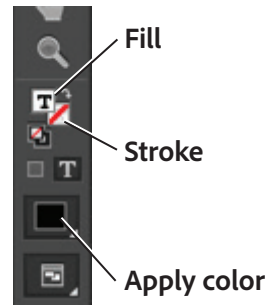


Figure 10 Fill and Stroke tools in the Tools panel

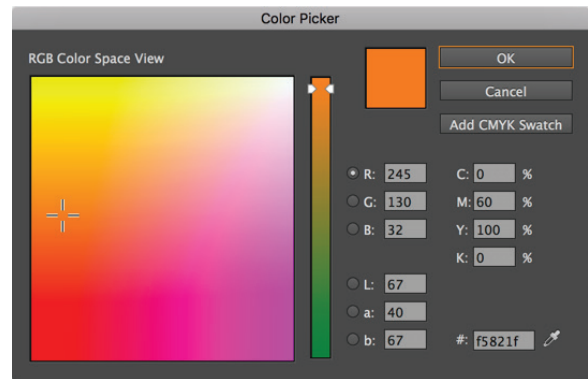


Figure 11 Color Picker

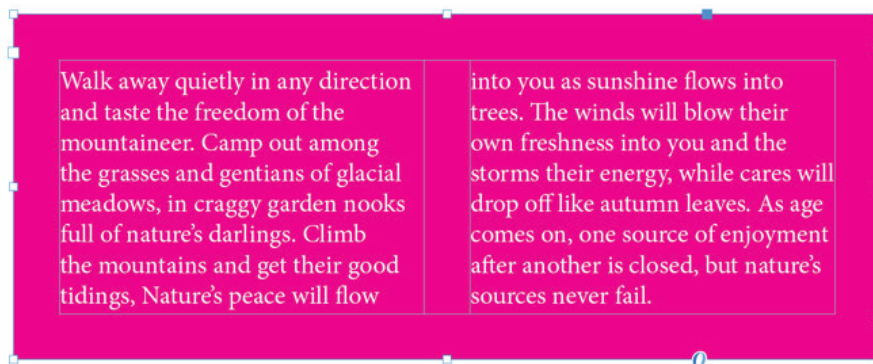


Figure 12 Fill applied to text frame

## 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 13).

**Note:** You can display the **Stroke** panel with either limited options or expanded options (as is shown in Figure 13). To hide or expand the options, choose **Hide Options** or **Show Options** from the **Stroke** panel menu.

4. Enter **5** in the **Weight** drop-down menu.

The stroke of the text frame is more visible because it is now 5 points wide (Figure 14).

5. With the text frame still selected, double-click the Stroke box in the Tools panel (Figure 10).

The **Color Picker** appears (Figure 11).

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 14).

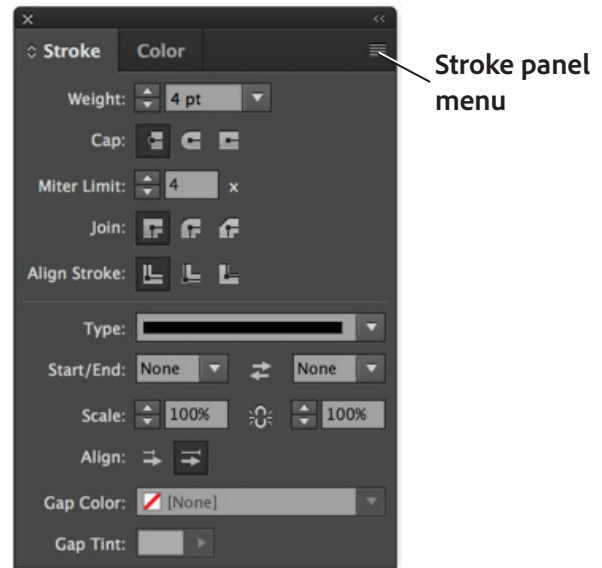


Figure 13 Stroke panel

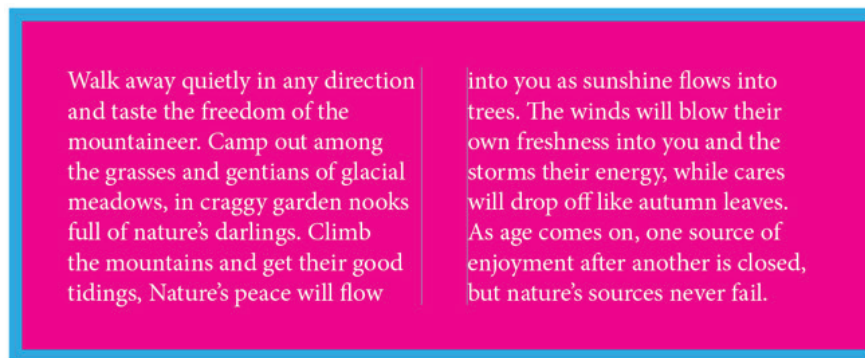


Figure 14 Stroke applied to text frame

### For more information

Get instant access to free courses, workshops, & teaching materials and connect with the creative education community on the Adobe Education Exchange: <https://edex.adobe.com/>.



Adobe Systems Incorporated  
345 Park Avenue  
San Jose, CA 95110-2704  
USA  
[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

Adobe and the Adobe logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Adobe Systems Incorporated in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

© 2017 Adobe Systems Incorporated. All rights reserved.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License.