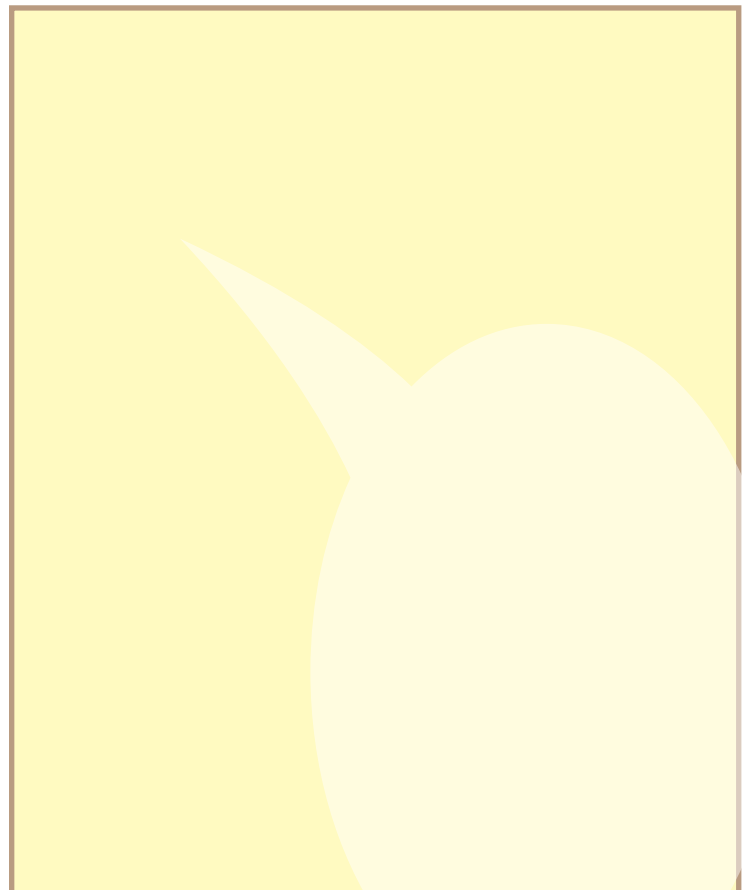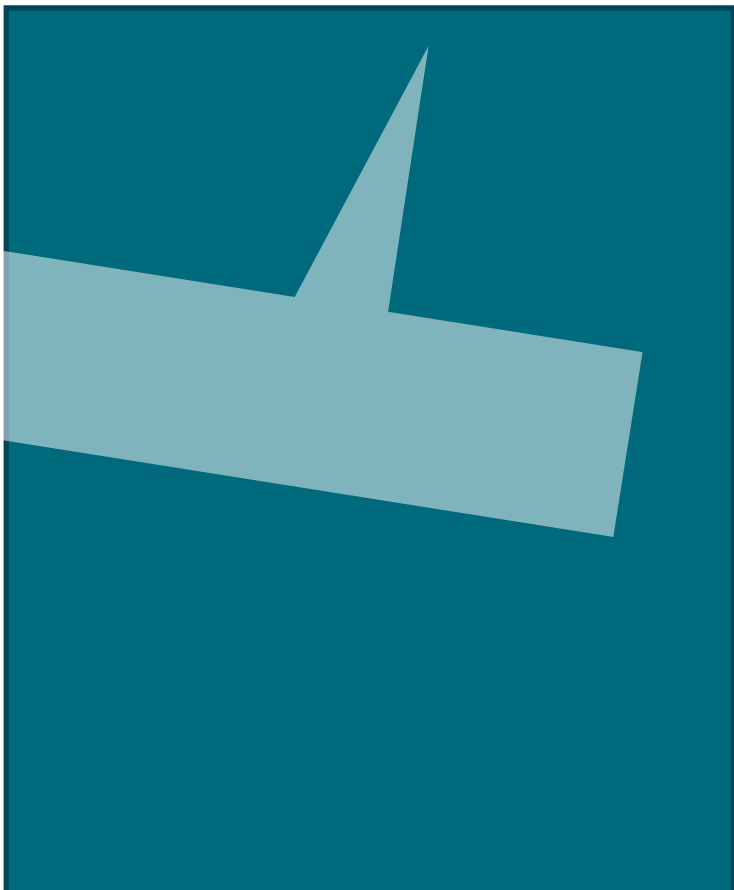# COMIC BOOK
GUIDELINES

Naming your InDesign Files and Assets

It is important to name your files using the following system:

COUNTRY NAME ABBREVIATION_COMIC BOOK TITLE_language(s)

For example:

SN_MARY GOES TO SCHOOL_fre

If the book is in more than one language:

SN_MARY GOES TO SCHOOL_fre_wol

International country abbreviation codes can be found here: https://iso639-3.sil.org/code_tables/639/data

Country name abbreviations use two letters only.

Creating your comic book illustration

Once the manuscript/story is completed and finished, it's time to create the illustrations. The first step is to create the storyboard. A storyboard is a simple draft of each page of the comic book. The storyboard doesn't have to be precise and clean, as long as it helps the illustrator and designer review how the story flows from panel to panel. Storyboards also help the designer plan the placement of the text and speech bubbles. It is recommended to provide ample space for text, boxes, and speech bubbles - especially if the text will be translated into other languages.

If your illustrator creates digital art, you can share with them a variety of panel templates (*size: B5 paper with added bleed*) for the Photoshop application in this link. The illustrator can also print out the JPEG template files on a piece of paper to create the illustrations traditionally. The illustrator can create comic book illustrations in any art style.
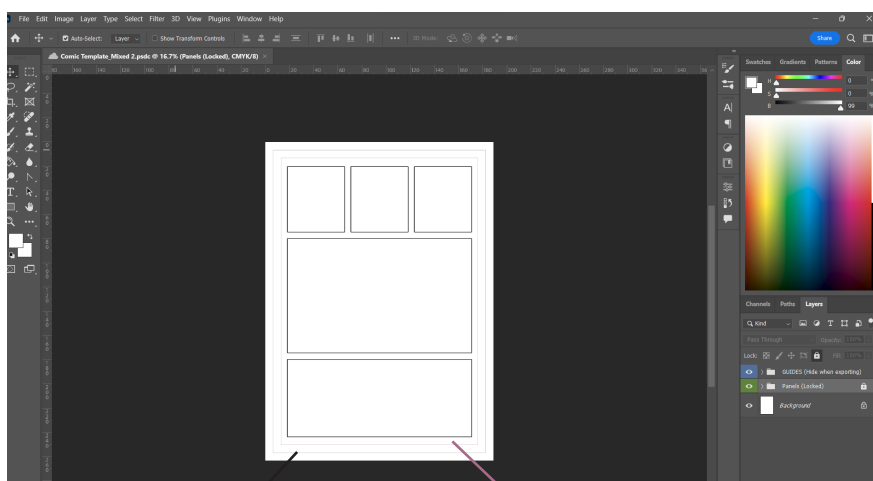
Black Box

Purple Box

Designer Tip: *All illustration and picture files in the comic book should be set in minimum 300 DPI to make sure that the pictures show clearly when printed. The templates are already set in 300 DPI.*

The size of the template is B5 (176 x 250 mm) with 6.5 mm bleed around, totaling to 189 mm x 263 mm. There are two guides on the canvas:

- **The Black Box** around the page is the trim of the B5 page, separating the bleed and the page trim.
- **The Purple Border** around the page is called the "Safe Area". There is a 6.5 mm gap between the edge of the paper/canvas and the safe area, indicating that this area is safe for you to add any illustration, speech bubbles, and text. Illustrations and text that are outside of the safe area are difficult to read because they are too close to the edge of the paper, and could easily be cut off if a printer trims pages improperly.

When creating the illustrations, it is recommended to not add the boxes and speech bubbles yet. The designers will add them later during the lettering process. Below is a sample of a finished comic book illustration without the boxes and speech bubbles:

Designer Tip: *The guidelines are not supposed to be shown in the final art. Once the illustration is finished, please make sure to either delete the "Guides" layers, or hide them by deselecting the EYE (👁) icon before saving/exporting the file.*

If the illustrations are being done using traditional media (pencil, pen, markers, paint, etc.), please scan the illustration and save the files as high-quality **JPEG** or **TIFF**.

If the illustrations are being done digitally using drawing applications, please save the files as **PSD**, **JPEG**, or **TIFF**.

Illustrations should be named as follows:
book title_illustration #
For example:
marygoestoschool_1, marygoestoschool_2, etc

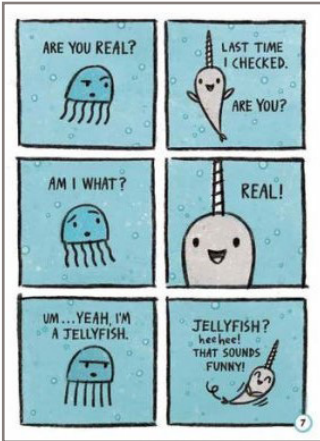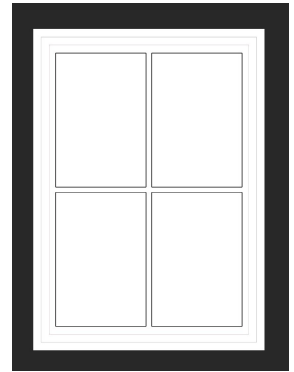Other assets, such as logos, author photos, etc, can be named accordingly:
company logo, author photo_1, author photo—2, etc.

Types of panels and their samples:

Even Panels
Each panel in this template is split evenly.

Narwhal: Unicorn of the Sea! (A Narwhal and Jelly Book #1)
by Ben Clanton

Maya Makes a Mess: TOON Level 2 (Toon Books)
by Rutu Modan

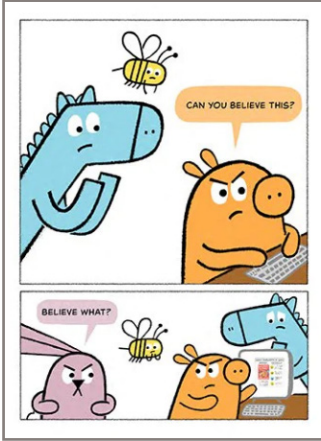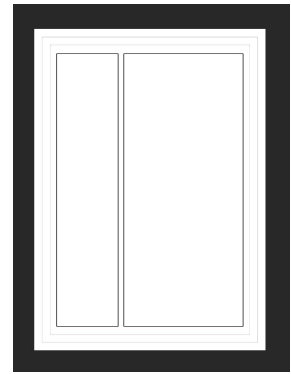## Full Panels
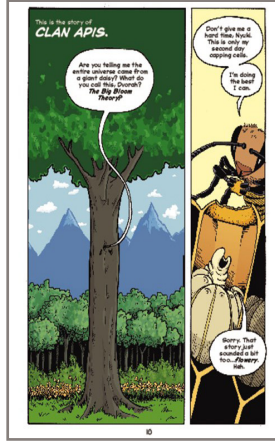A page with only one huge panel.

El Deafo
by Cece Bell

Benny and Penny in Lights Out!
by Geoffrey Hayes

Split Panels

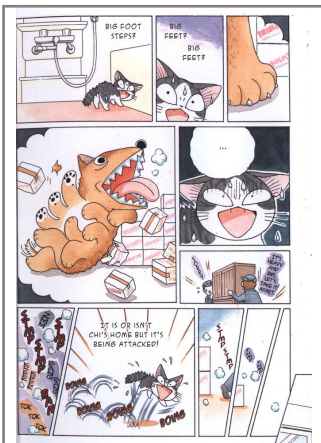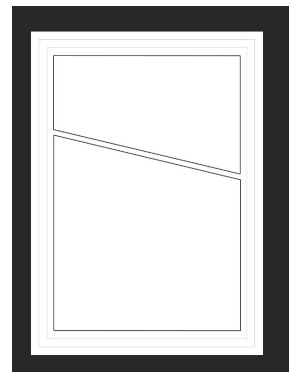Two panels split either vertically or horizontally on one page.
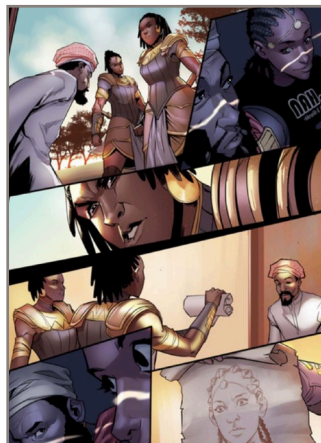

Balloney and Friends
by Greg Pizzoli

Clan Apis
by Jay Hosler

Diagonal Panels
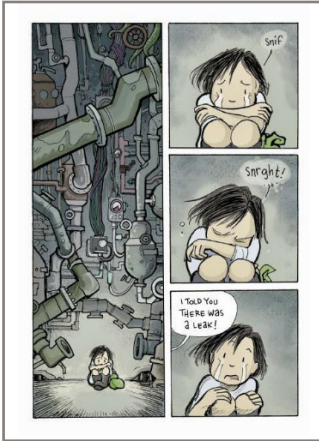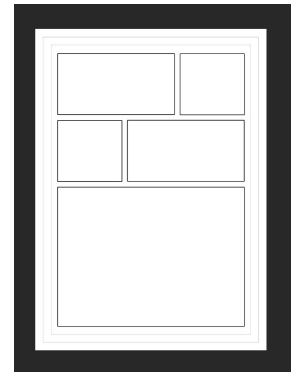
The panels are split with diagonal lines.

Chi's Sweet Home
by Konami Kanata

HAWI
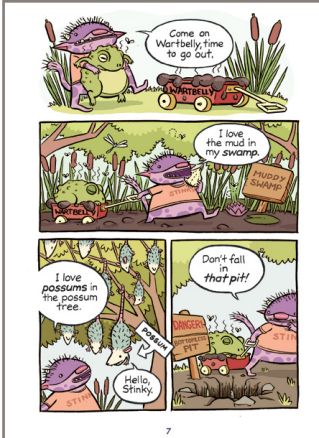by Beserat Debebe, Stanley Obende

Mixed Panels

A mix of different types of panels on one page.

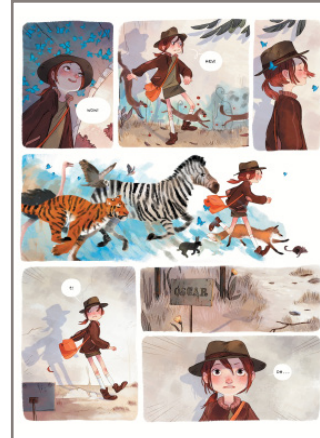

Legends of Zita the Spacegirl
by Ben Hatke

Babymouse: Queen of the World!
by Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew
Holm

Stinky | Level 2 TOON Book
by Eleanor Davis

Akissi
by Marguerite Abouet,
Mathieu Sapin

*Maya Makes a Mess: TOON Level 2
(Toon Books)*
by Rutu Modan

Using the master/parent files

Master/Parent Files

These subsequent guides will show you how to compile all the files in Adobe InDesign and create ready-to-print files for printing houses. You can find a comic book template for Adobe InDesign here: (link). The size of the page is B5 with 6.5 mm of bleed surrounding the page. With the bleed, the total size of the page is 189 mm x 263 mm.

Once you open the INDD files, you will see blank pages. In the "Pages" window, you will see a set of master/parent pages that you can choose from. A master/parent page is a template that you can apply to each page in your InDesign file. "A-Comic Template_Font Type" master/parent page is for the inside pages of your comic book, complete with the page number on the bottom. There are four font types that you can choose from.

Let's take a look at page one. Similar to the Adobe Photoshop canvas template, you will see three boxes/lines:
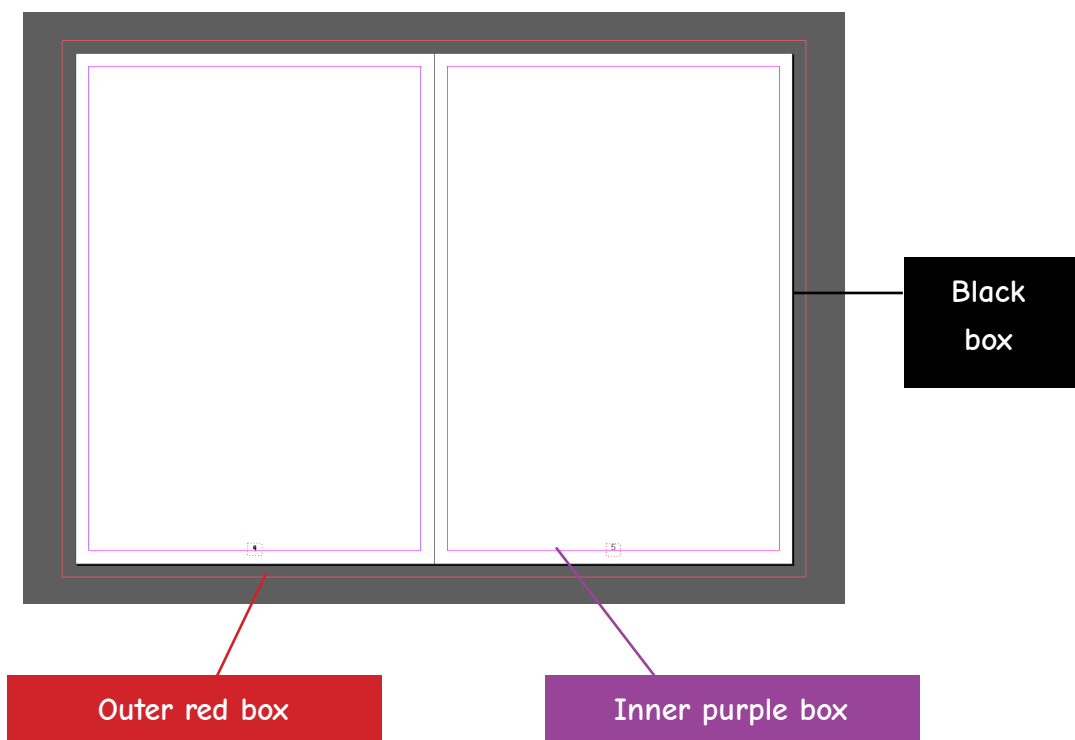

- **Outer red box**: Bleed area.
- **Black box**: Page trim size with the size of B5.
- **Inner purple box**: Safe area

Inside the master page template, you will see several layer groups:

- **Page number** - the number of the page.
- **Text** - this is where you add the text.

If your book will be published in **only one language**, you will need only one text layer, as shown below. Your text layers should be named with the name of the language you are using.
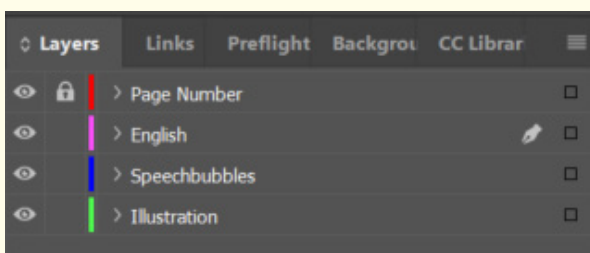
If your book will be published in **several languages**, create a layer group for each language, and name them accordingly. You can hide the languages you are not using by clicking off the "Eye" icon in the left column.
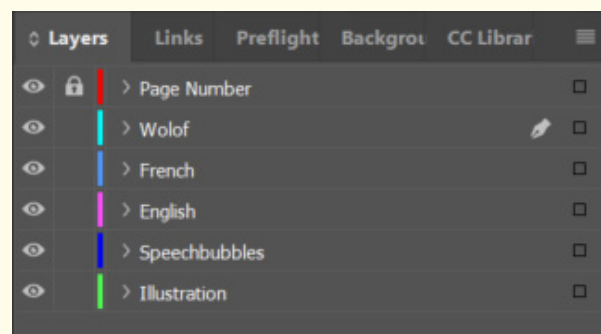
- **Boxes and speech bubbles** - this is where you add the boxes and speech bubbles.
- **Illustration** - this is where you add the illustration layers.

Designer Tip: *When master/parent pages are opened, all items on the pages will be locked. In order to unlock the items, highlight the pages you would like to unlock, and choose "Override All Parent Page Items" from the box menu. Now all items on the pages will be unlocked and can be edited.*

Choosing a Font Family (Inside)

Narrative Description and Speech Bubbles

To make sure that the text can be read clearly, it is recommended to **choose one font for both narrative description and speech bubbles**. The font size should be no smaller than 12 pt, and should be the same size throughout the book. It is recommended to use black color for narrative description and speech texts to make sure that the text is readable. Below are some font recommendations that you can download for free from Google Font:

Comic Neue

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Comic+Neue

> You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

Kalam

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Kalam

> You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

Playpen Sans

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Playpen+Sans

> You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

Klee One

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Klee+One

> You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

Designer Tip: *Make sure that the text font matches the page number font that you have selected for the parent page.*

Sound Effects

In comic books, you can use written sound effects to convey environmental sounds that accompany the actions shown in the illustration sequences. For example, the sound effect "Bang!" can accompany an illustration of an item being slammed onto a hard surface. We recommend using a thicker font family and a bigger font size. Below are some font recommendations that you can download from Google Font:

Vina Sans

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Vina+Sans

YOU'RE BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, STRONGER THAN YOU SEEM, AND SMARTER THAN YOU THINK.

Modak

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Modak

You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

Designer Tip: *Typically, sound effect text is colored brightly. However, our recommendation is to not use colored text because it is easier to print multiple languages at one time with only a black plate change. Designers should check with their project manager to understand how the books will be printed before using colored text in the book.*

Designing Interior pages

Lettering

Adding the text and creating speech bubbles can easily be done using Adobe InDesign.

After the illustration is placed on the page, you can add the text to the page. Make sure that all of the text layers are in the correct language layer group. For example, English text layers reside inside the "English" layer group.
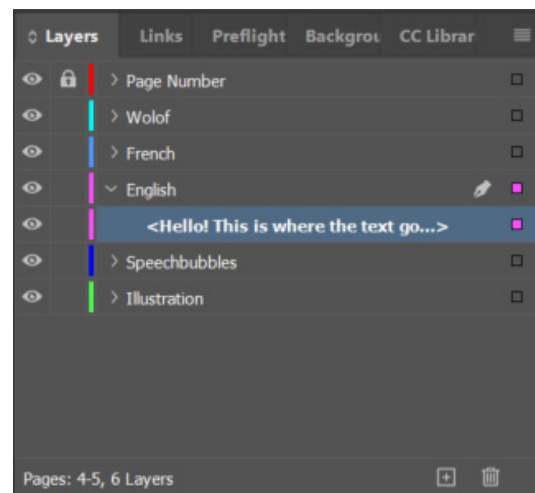
Click the "Text" icon (T) to add a text box. Create a text box anywhere inside the panels. Please make sure that the text doesn't go outside of the panel lines and that you have an adequate amount of space to put the speech bubbles or box graphics behind the text.

If the text will be translated into other language(s), the translated text should be placed in the same place. Therefore, please be aware that the text might expand in that language.

Creating Boxes and Speech bubbles

Now, create a new layer group underneath the "Text" layer group and call them "Speech Bubbles". All boxes and speech bubbles graphics should be grouped here.

Once the text has been laid out, we can gauge where to add boxes and speech bubbles. Usually, boxes are used for narrative text. To create boxes in InDesign, simply click the "Rectangle Tool" and create a box behind the narrative text.

Create a box behind the narrative text by clicking and dragging the shape on the page. Once the box is created, use the "Properties" window to change the line/stroke weight and colors.

Designer Tip: *White, or light colors as background colors are preferable to make sure the text stands out. Black, or darker line/stroke colors can make the box pop against the illustration and direct readers' eyes to the text.*

To create speech bubbles, you can start by clicking the "Ellipse tool". Create an ellipse behind the speech text. Make sure that the speech text is positioned in the middle of the ellipse. Similar to creating boxes, use the "Properties" window to edit the line/strore weight and colors. As the text might expand when translated into other languages, **creating bigger boxes and speech bubbles** and providing ample space around the text box will accomodate longer text.
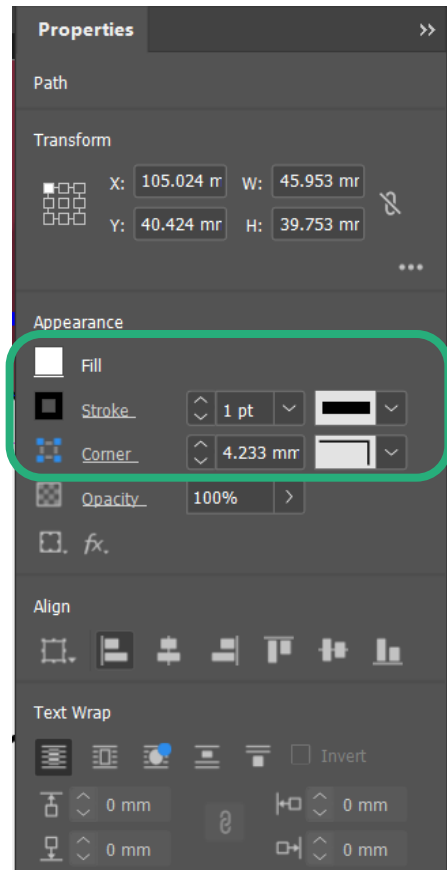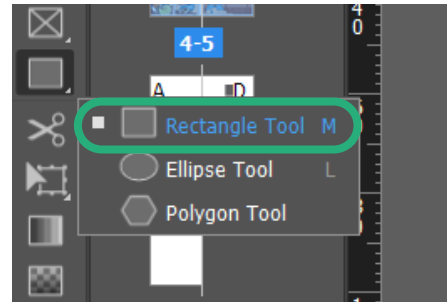
An important part of the speech bubble is the arrow, or tail, which indicates who is speaking in the scene/panel. To create this graphic, choose the pen tool. Using the pen tool, create a triangle shape. The base of the triangle should be positioned inside of the ellipse, while the point is usually positioned near and pointing to the character.

If you want to create a curved effect, you can use the "Convert Direction Point Tool" to curve the sides of the triangle. Using this tool, click on the base points of the triangle and curve the sides accordingly. *(Tip: At this stage, do not worry if the base of the triangle looks untidy and/or obstructs the text)*

Once you are satisfied with the shape of the triangle, merge the ellipse and triangle to create a speech bubble. Using the arrow tool, select both the ellipse and the triangle. Then, in the "Properties" window, find the "Pathfinder" option and choose the merge shapes icon.
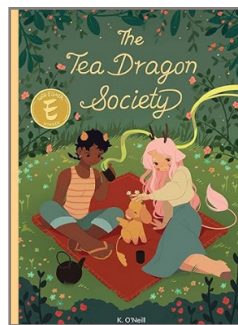
Designing the cover

Illustrating the book cover

Comic book covers are similar to illustrated book covers. They don't usually have speech bubbles. For this reason, please ask your illustrator to draw the comic book cover on a blank piece of paper, or use the blank cover template (don't forget about the bleed as safe area). A good book cover must be eye-catching and inviting. Some important elements of the covers are bright colors, interesting characters doing dynamic actions, and fun typography that capture the spirit of the story. Be certain the cover title is large and legible.
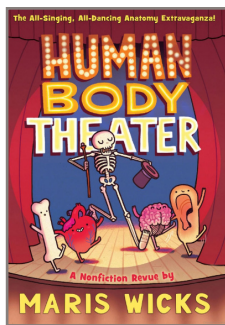
Human Body Theater
by Maris Wicks

The Tea Dragon Society
by K. O'Neill

Twins
by Varian Johnson,
Shannon Wright

Mulatako
by Reine Dibussi

Designing the book cover

Use the "B_Cover" master page for the cover. The cover should include the author's name and the illustrator's name. If the text was translated, please include the translator's name.

Designer Tip: *Even though the cover is the first part of your book, try designing it after the interior pages are completed. By designing the interior pages first, you will become familiar with the story and the illustrations. You'll have mastered the use of the color palette and shape motifs, and you will have created the mood and spirit of the book. With the interior pages completed, the cover will be fun and easy to design.*

Choosing a cover font

Hanalei Fill

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Hanalei+Fill

YOU'RE BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, STRONGER THAN YOU SEEM, AND SMARTER THAN YOU THINK.

Bebas Neue

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Bebas+Neue

YOU'RE BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, STRONGER THAN YOU SEEM,
AND SMARTER THAN YOU THINK.

Potta One

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Potta+One

You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem,
and smarter than you think.

Rubik Bubbles

https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Rubik+Bubbles

You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem,
and smarter than you think.

Title Page

The title page is the first page of the book—a bridge between the cover and the story, setting the stage for the excitement to follow. The title page should be similar to the cover, but the title, illustrations, author, illustrator, and translator names are smaller. You can add a small or spot illustration that sets as an introduction to the following inside pages.
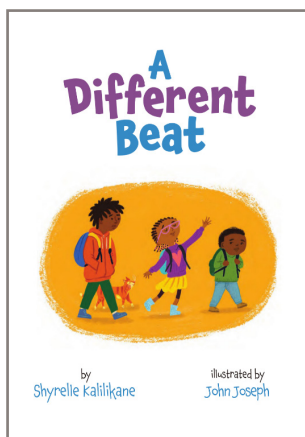
A Different Beat
by Shyrelle Kalilikane, John Joseph
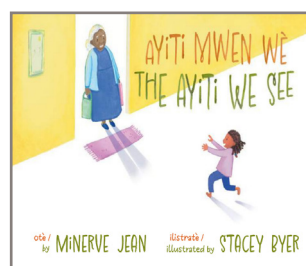
The Ayiti We See
by Minerve Jean, Stacey Byer
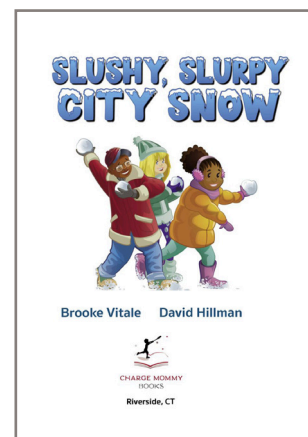
Slushy, Slurpy City Snow
by Brooke Vitale, David Hillman

Copyright Information

Use the "B-Inside Front Cover_Font Type" master template for copyright information. The text for your inside front cover will be delivered by the publisher.

The inside front cover may include a logo, address and website link of the copyright owner. Publishers may also include logos of funders, a mission statement, or a dedication, as well as the names of the editor, designer, printer, or others involved in the creation of the book. The text can go over white, a solid color, or an extension of the title page illustration.

A Different Beat
by Shyrelle Kalilikane,
John Joseph

Inside Back Cover

Use the "C-Inside Back Cover_Font Type" master template for the author and illustrator photo and brief biography.

The biography text and images can go over white, a solid color, or an extension of the illustration on the last page.

Back Cover

Use the "B_Cover Page" master page for the back cover. The back cover is ideal for a spot illustration and a short synopsis of the book, as shown in the examples below. The synopsis can go over white, a solid color, a texture, or an illustration.

Elephant Runs
by Room to Read

Bilou's Journey to the East
by Tyas Widjati, Singgih Cahyo

Copyright & Licensing Information

Rights and Permissions

Acknowledgments

The 100 First Children's Books Templates

The 100 First Children's Books guideline offers recommendations for "first collection" of children's literature. It is intended for Read@Home and other early reading programs involved in the development and/or selection of books to support children's pre-reading and early reading skills.

To support the development of the books suggested in the guideline, Read@Home has also created a series of InDesign templates for designers. Each template contains two parts:

- An InDesign Master Template in the proper trim size, with pre-created parent pages for ease of use.
- A PDF Users' Guide to aid designers working with the templates.

The following templates are available:

First Book Template

- These are square books. The square size mimics the format of most board books for this age group.

Picturebook Template

- This template is fairly large, in order to give space for interesting images and engaging design.
- This template can be used for fiction or nonfiction.
- It is available in both portrait and landscape trims.

Leveled Reader - Fiction Template

- This template is available only in portrait trim, and at a smaller size than a picturebook.
- The size is standard for leveled readers in the children's book industry.

Leveled Reader - Nonfiction Template

- This template includes nonfiction features such as a table of contents, captions, sidebars, and bibliographies.

Comic Template

- This template includes panel layouts for sequential storytelling.
- Its user guide also includes more detailed information about developing comic books, as their process is more complex than standard narrative books.

Important Notes

All links connect to the Early Learning Resource Network. You can also search "100 First Children's Books" on the site to find a webpage containing all the relevant resources.

The trim sizes for these templates were selected by Blue Tree Group.

- They are based on cost-effectiveness for offset print runs of 10k+, on coated paper for the brightest color reproduction.
- Print runs between 2500 and 10k are generally printed in a sheet machine with no cut-off feed, thus trim size also plays a minor role in cost.
  - Print runs under 2500 are generally most affordable when printed digitally on-demand, thus trim size is a less critical cost factor.

Suggestions about procurement, cover and paper weight, and other helpful topics are available at Early Learning Resource Network.