



Design Effective Newsletters with Adobe InDesign

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Designing ideas for effective newsletters: Part 1

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Businesses and organizations frequently use newsletters as a way to communicate information to consumers and members. Success depends on the quality of their content and the effectiveness of their design. As a designer, you probably don't have a lot of input on what goes in your newsletter, but it's your job to put it all together in an attractive and comprehensive package. In this article, we begin a three-part series that shows you how to use InDesign to accomplish that goal and produce effective newsletters, like the one shown in **Figure A**.

Application:

Adobe InDesign 2/CS

Operating Systems:

Macintosh, Microsoft Windows

TIP: No time to design a newsletter from scratch? StockLayouts LLC offers a library of Graphic Design Templates for InDesign, on both Mac and PC platforms, at affordable prices ranging from \$39 to \$149. The newsletters shown in this article are all StockLayouts designs. The company also offers templates for brochures, postcards, stationery, menus, and ads. Each template includes royalty-free stock photos and artwork, all of which are suitable for commercial printing. For additional information regarding StockLayouts' Graphic Design Templates, point your browser to www.stocklayouts.com.

Here ye, here ye!

We'll assume the preliminary stages for producing your newsletter are complete. You've established a content mix; identified the company image; confirmed a budget, hired a service bureau to print the

newsletter; and set a deadline. What else is there? Oh yeah, designing the actual newsletter. That's where we come in.

In this article, we'll show you how to translate the approved specs for your newsletter into a new InDesign document. This involves specifying a page size, the number of columns, and the margins. Then, in part 2, we'll show you how to choose fonts and colors for your newsletter and use them wisely. Finally, in part 3, we'll show you how to make the most of the content you're given to lay out a great-looking newsletter.

Create a new document

Newsletters come in many different shapes and sizes. The overall size of your newsletter, the number of pages it has, the way it's folded and distributed—these are all budget considerations first, design issues second. These are also things you need to know before you choose File ▶ New ▶ Document in InDesign to set up a new document.

In the New Document dialog box, shown in **Figure B**, you're presented with the familiar Page Size presets: Letter, Legal, and Tabloid. Although you can specify a custom page size, these page sizes are standard for newsletters because most printers can accommodate them and, therefore, they're economical choices. With these three page sizes, you can create several different layout configurations. For example:



- **Letter.** This is the most common page size for newsletters. Each page is 8½ by 11 inches and each two-page spread measures 17 by 11 inches. Each spread is folded in half lengthwise to create four 8½-x-11-inch pages. Then, it's often folded in half (bifold) or thirds (trifold) for distribution purposes. If there are more than four pages, some sort of binding is necessary, such as stapling. If you choose a Letter page size, enter the exact number of pages for your newsletter and select the Facing Pages check box. As shown in **Figure C1**, this setup creates individual letter-size pages and arranges facing pages as spreads.

For a six-page newsletter, you might consider creating a *gatefold*, which is three 8½-x-11-inch pages, arranged and printed as a single spread. The three pages are folded to create a finished size of 8½ x 11 inches, and then usually folded down to a bifold or trifold piece.

- **Legal.** This is another common page size for newsletters. Generally, each two-page spread is printed on a single sheet and folded in half to create four 8½-x-14-inch pages. Then, the piece can be folded in thirds to create an efficient tri-fold piece suitable for mailing.

- **Tabloid.** This page size is also good for printing a four-page newsletter on one double-sided sheet. To set it up, enter 2 in the Number Of Pages text box and deselect the Facing Pages check box. Next, choose Tabloid from the Page Size pop-up menu and click the Landscape button. Then, click the Make All Settings The Same button in the Margins pane. (This button is a new feature in CS. In version 2, manually enter the same values in the Right and Left text boxes.) This setup creates the page arrangement shown in **Figure C2**. The two-page document is printed on both sides of one sheet and the finished piece is folded lengthwise in half to create four 8½-x-11-inch pages. It can then be folded again to create a bifold or trifold piece.

After specifying the number of pages for your newsletter and choosing a page size according to plan, it's time to set margin and column guides. Now, the fun begins!

Build a solid foundation

A newsletter without a solid and consistent layout appears sloppy and unprofessional. Margins and columns are the framework for your newsletter. Let's take a quick look at how you can best set the Margins and Columns options in the New Document dialog box.

TIP: By definition, *white space* is any area on a page that's absent of all text or graphic elements. Adequate margins add some amount of white space to a page, but consider calculating it into your column grid as well. Be careful, though. Too much white space can ruin a layout just as quickly as too little.

With columns

Column guides serve more of a purpose than just keeping your text inline. You can also use them to create visual stimulation and to infuse white space. Common column grids used to layout newsletters are as follows:

- **Two-column grid.** This grid provides a lot of room for text, and it's commonly used for technical publications. If you're designing a newsletter for a tech-savvy company or the science department of a college, for example, this more scholastic column grid is suitable.
- **Three-column grid.** This grid gives you a few more options and allows you to create a less formal

