

BACKGROUNDS IN INDESIGN

Inevitably, you're going to want to design something that *doesn't* have a white background in InDesign. That's OK. Some people mistakenly think that changing the "Paper" color in the Swatches panel also changes the background color of their design. It does not. **DO NOT CHANGE THE PAPER COLOR UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.** Just don't — you will be very sad when you export your work as a PDF or you try to print it.

There are two proper ways to create backgrounds.

METHOD 1: THE GIANT BOX

This method is the simplest method. I personally save this until the very end to avoid having to deal with accidentally moving my background, but you can also do this at the very beginning and lock down your object. (Doing this at the beginning is probably best if you're working with, say, an image as your background.)

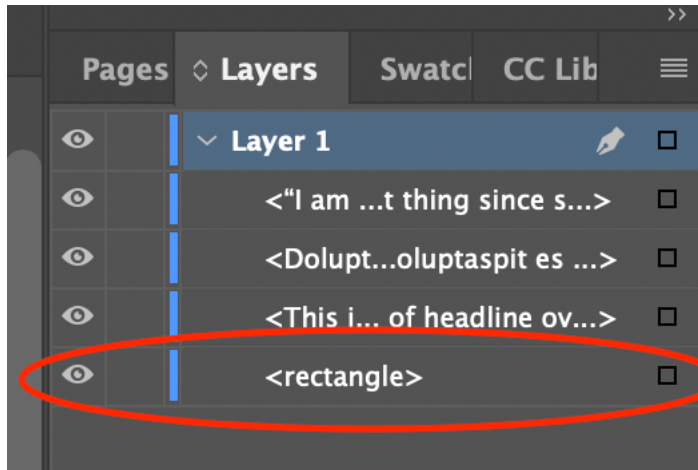
All you have to do is take the rectangle tool and draw a giant box that covers your entire page. It can be messy.

Fill that box with whatever color you want. Or, place an image inside it. (If you're placing an image, you'll probably want to draw your frame a little less messy. Give yourself a little room past the edges, though.)

If you have other objects on your page, select your giant box and send it to back (Object > Arrange > Send to Back).

At this point, you'll want to lock down your object to keep from accidentally moving or selecting it as you work. To do this, go to the Layers panel (Window > Layers if you don't have it open already).

Expand your working layer — for most people it's Layer 1 — by clicking the little notch next to the layer name. You'll see several things in there but you're looking for the giant box you just created. It's likely the very last thing in the list called <rectangle>.



If you haven't already, select your giant box in your document. You should see the little box next to the <rectangle> sublayer turn blue, indicating that's the selected object.

Next to the eyeball is an empty square. Click in the empty square and you should see a lock appear. This will lock your layer down. When it's locked, you won't be able to do anything to it while you work on your document — you can't select it, change its color, etc.

If you change your mind and need to do something to that giant box, just go to Layers, unlock it, do your thing, and re-lock it if you wish.

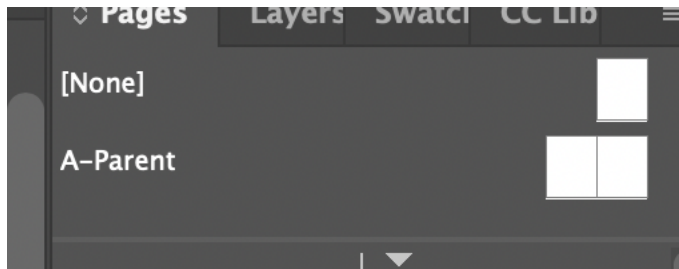
An alternate way of doing this is to go to the Layers panel and create a new layer (click the little box with a plus sign in it). Make sure this layer is selected (you'll know because when you draw an object, its frame will be a different color, it won't be blue). Put your giant box in this layer, then go to the Layers panel and lock just this layer and move it below Layer 1. Some people prefer this method to digging around for objects, but both work.

METHOD 2: PARENT TEMPLATES

This is the fancier method and helpful if you are working in a multi-page document and need repeating elements on each page (for example, the same colored background on every page, or a logo in a specific place on every page).

(If you're just working in a single page or you're in a hurry, Method 1 will do just fine.)

InDesign has templates — they're called Parents. You'll see them at the very top of the Pages panel.



By default, every document has an "A-Parent" template and one marked "None". You'll also notice that on every page in the Pages template, you'll see a tiny letter "A" in the upper right or left corner, depending on whether it's an even or odd-numbered page (if you are in a document with facing pages).

This means that all the pages have the "A-Parent" template applied. This is the default setting. This template is blank by default, of course.

If you want to put stuff in it, double-click either side of the A-Parent template and it will open. Notice that it is facing pages by default if you're in a document with facing pages. (If you create a document without facing pages, then you'll only see one page here.)

For documents with facing pages, pay attention to which side of the template you're on! You can have different elements on each side; they are considered independent of each other.

From here, it's pretty straightforward. You can treat these pages as regular pages and put in whatever you want — draw a big box to put a colored background, put a photo in the background, draw your own polka dots, place a logo somewhere, etc.

As you place elements on the page, you'll see a miniature version of them start to appear on the pages in your Pages panel. When you're done, click whatever page you want to work on and you'll see all the template elements in the background and they'll be unclickable.

You can have multiple Parent templates. To do this, hover your cursor over the Parent section of Pages and right-click; you'll see "New Parent" as an option. You can have as many Parents as you like.

To apply a different parent, simply drag it from the Parent section and drop it on the page thumbnail **in the Pages panel, not on the document itself**.

If you need to manipulate a part of your template on a specific page, you can break the parental bond by holding down command + shift (on Mac) or control + shift (on PC) and clicking the object in the Parent template. (Be careful when you do this, though, especially on templates that have multiple objects. You could mess up the order of stuff and make it difficult to rearrange things.)

If you don't want a Parent template to be applied on a specific page only (for example, your cover or back cover), drag the "None" template on top of the page thumbnail in the Pages panel.