

Cover Design Made Easy

Presented by Robert Harrison

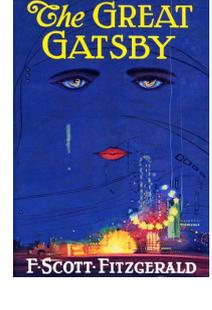
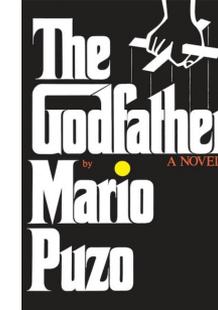
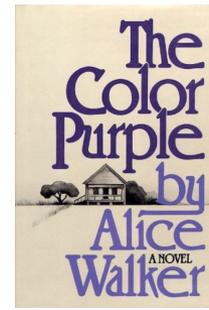
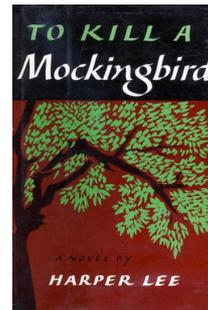
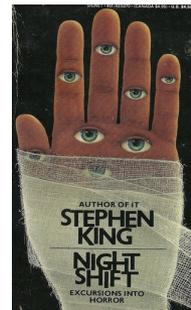
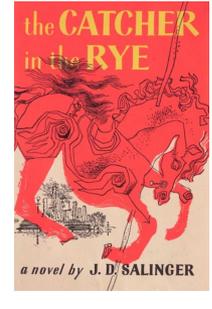
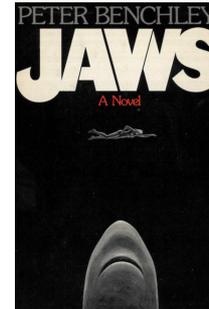
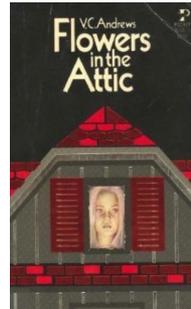
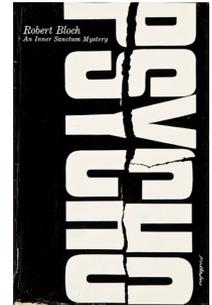
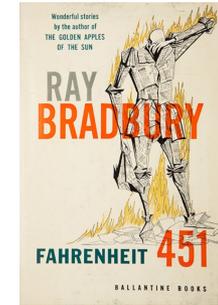
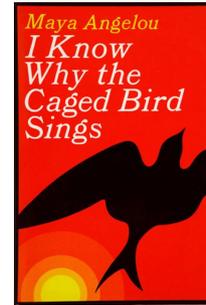
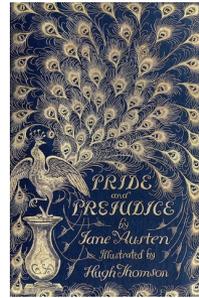
Seneca Author Services

May 18, 2025



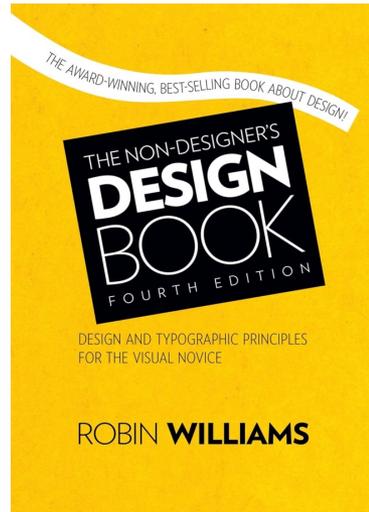
www.senecaauthorservices.com

A book's cover has one job...to stop people from scrolling or browsing, get them to read the description, and buy the book.



Q. What makes an effective cover?

A. Solid graphic design foundation

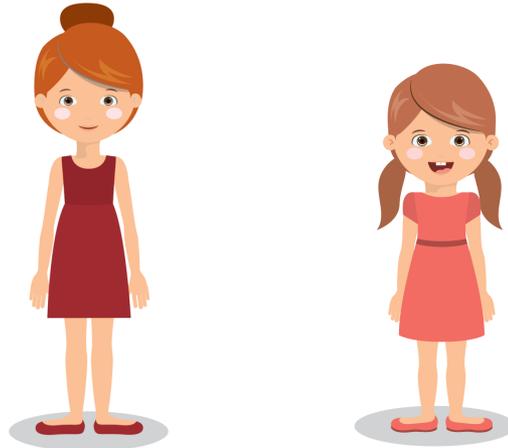


Graphic design is C.R.A.P.

The four basic principles of graphic design, as explained by Robin Williams (not *that* Robin Williams):

- **CONTRAST** — Avoid elements on the page that are merely similar. If the elements (type, color, size, line thickness, shape, space, etc.) are not the same, make them *very* different. Contrast is one of the first things noticed about a design.
- **REPETITION** — Repeat visual elements of the design throughout the piece. You can repeat colors, shapes, textures, spatial relationships, fonts, etc. This strengthens the unity of the design.
- **ALIGNMENT** — Nothing should be placed on the page arbitrarily. Every element should have some visual connection to another element. This creates a clean and sophisticated look.
- **PROXIMITY** — Items related to each other should be grouped together, helping them become a cohesive visual unit, rather than several separate units. This reduces clutter and gives the viewer a clear structure.

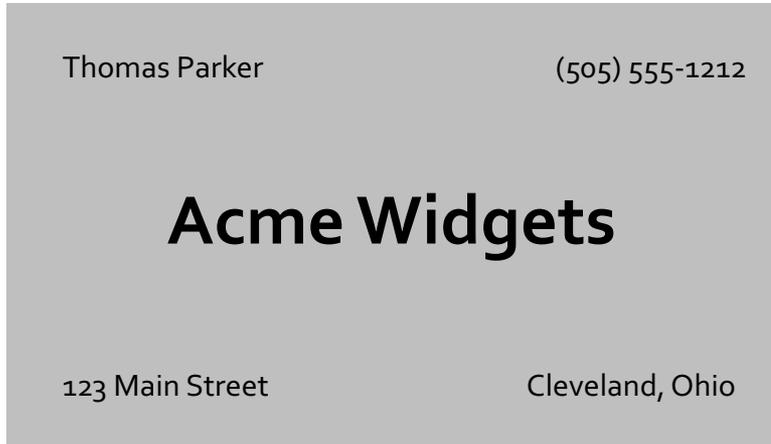
Proximity



With no proximity, their relationship is unclear.

Now their proximity to each other clearly indicates there is a relationship between the two.





How many separate elements do you see in the above business card? How many times does your eye stop as you're scanning the card?

You probably started on the company name, because it was in bold and in the middle, but where does your eye go after that? Does it wander around the card, stopping at each corner?

Now let's confuse the issue even further, by bolding the name in the upper left. Where do you start now? In the middle again, or in the upper left corner?

From there, where does your eye go?

Does the layout of this business card have a natural flow?



If we do one thing to this
business card, group related
elements together, look what
happens:

Acme Widgets

Thomas Parker

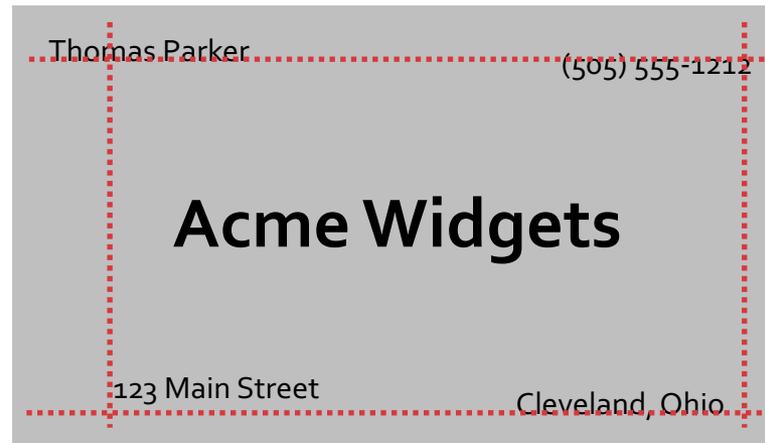
123 Main Street
Cleveland, Ohio
(505) 555-1212

Now there's no question
where to start reading the
card, and you instinctively
know when you're done. Your
eyes aren't wandering
around.

By applying this one principle,
the card is now organized both
visually and intellectually, and
communicates its intent much
more clearly.

Alignment

Place every element on the page deliberately. Every item should have a visual connection with something else. Don't place an item in the corner just because there's room.





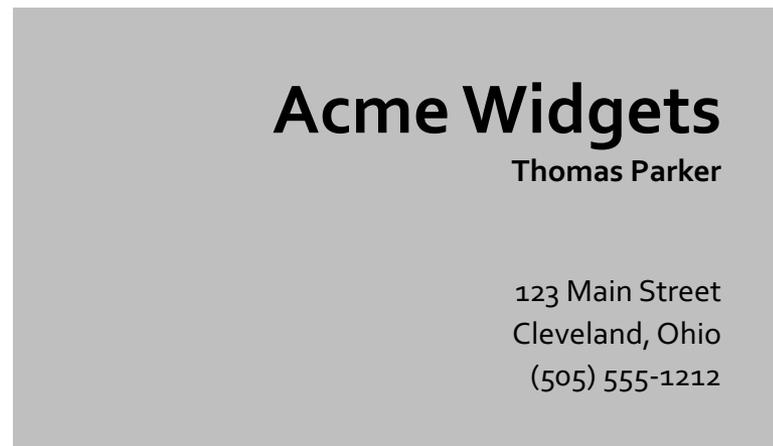
The centered example has a nice arrangement. The text is center-aligned, and centered on the page.

However, the edges are “soft” and you don’t really see the strength of the center line.

This has the same logical arrangement as the center-aligned layout, but a much stronger right edge. You can see the line on the right very readily.

The strength of the connection between all the elements gives the layout its strength and impact.

If you’re using center alignment, do so deliberately. Make sure it’s a conscious decision, not the default.



Repetition

Repeat some aspect of the design throughout the entire layout. It can be a bold font, a color, format, design element...anything that the viewer will recognize.

Acme Widgets

Thomas Parker

123 Main Street
Cleveland, Ohio
(505) 555-1212

When you get to the bottom, does your eye just kind of wander off the card?

Here, with the phone number in bold to match the company name, your eye reads the phone number, then bounces back to the company name. The repetition reinforces the brand.

Acme Widgets

Thomas Parker

123 Main Street
Cleveland, Ohio
(505) 555-1212

Contrast

Contrast is one of the most effective ways to add visual interest to your layout. For contrast to be effective, though, it must be bold. Don't be wimpy!



Are these two men the same person, or are they different people? They're similar, but different, but we can't know for sure.



Now it's very apparent that they are two different people. If two elements are not the same, make them *very* different.

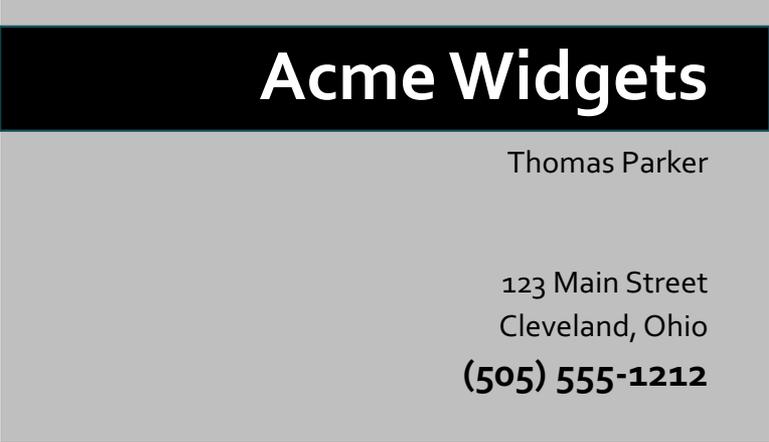
Contrast large type with small type, a thin line with a bold line, a cool color with a warm color, a smooth texture with a rough texture.

Don't contrast dark brown with black, that's not enough of a contrast.

Don't contrast a 12-pt. font with a 14-pt. font.

Be bold when using contrast!

Notice how much difference a bold contrast makes to the business card.

A business card for Acme Widgets. The top section is a black bar with the company name 'Acme Widgets' in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, the card has a light gray background. The text is right-aligned: 'Thomas Parker' in a regular weight, followed by '123 Main Street', 'Cleveland, Ohio', and a phone number '(505) 555-1212' in a bold weight.

Acme Widgets

Thomas Parker

123 Main Street
Cleveland, Ohio

(505) 555-1212

The design now incorporates all four C.R.A.P. principles:

Contrast (white text on black bar)

Repetition (repeating the bold text)

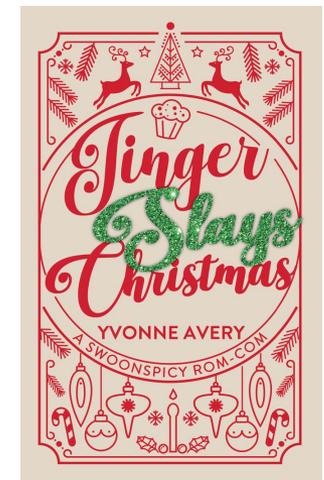
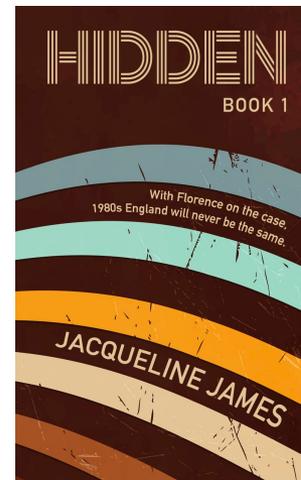
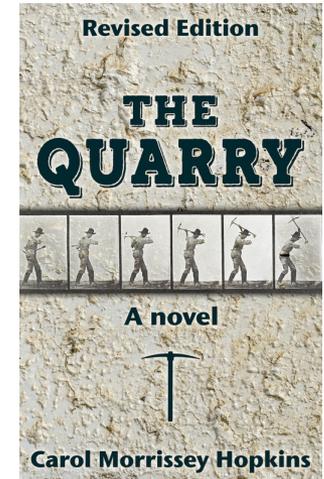
Alignment (all text is flush-right)

Proximity (similar elements are grouped together)

Note that this is not the only layout that would effectively combine the C.R.A.P. principles. Dozens, if not hundreds, of other effective designs are possible.

Book Cover Design Principles

- Less is more, keep it simple
- Use no more than one or two fonts
- Choose an image that reflects the main character, or a theme, or symbol from the book
- Type-based covers are just as impactful as image-based
- Keep the cover aligned with your genre



Software

- Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign (\$60/month, steep learning curve)
- Affinity Photo, Designer, Publisher (\$165 for suite, one-time purchase, steep learning curve)
- BookBrush (3 plans: \$99/year, \$146/year, \$246/year, template-based, easy to use)
- Canva (free, or premium version for \$120/year)

Click Calculate Dimensions, then Download Template

Step One: After formatting, determine final page count

Step Two: Download template from KDP:

kdp.amazon.com/en_US/cover-calculator

Fill in book info.

Print Cover Calculator and Templates

To find out the exact dimensions of your cover, use the calculator. You can also download a template (PDF and PNG) to be used as a guide layer in your image editing software. Learn more about [Hardcover](#) and [Paperback](#) cover requirements.

Enter Your Book Information

Binding type
Paperback

Interior type
Black & white

Paper type
Cream paper

Reading Direction
Left to Right

Measurement units
Inches

Interior trim size
5.25 x 8 in

Page count
Number of pages at your formatted trim size.
[Learn more about trim size and page count](#)
300

Calculate dimensions

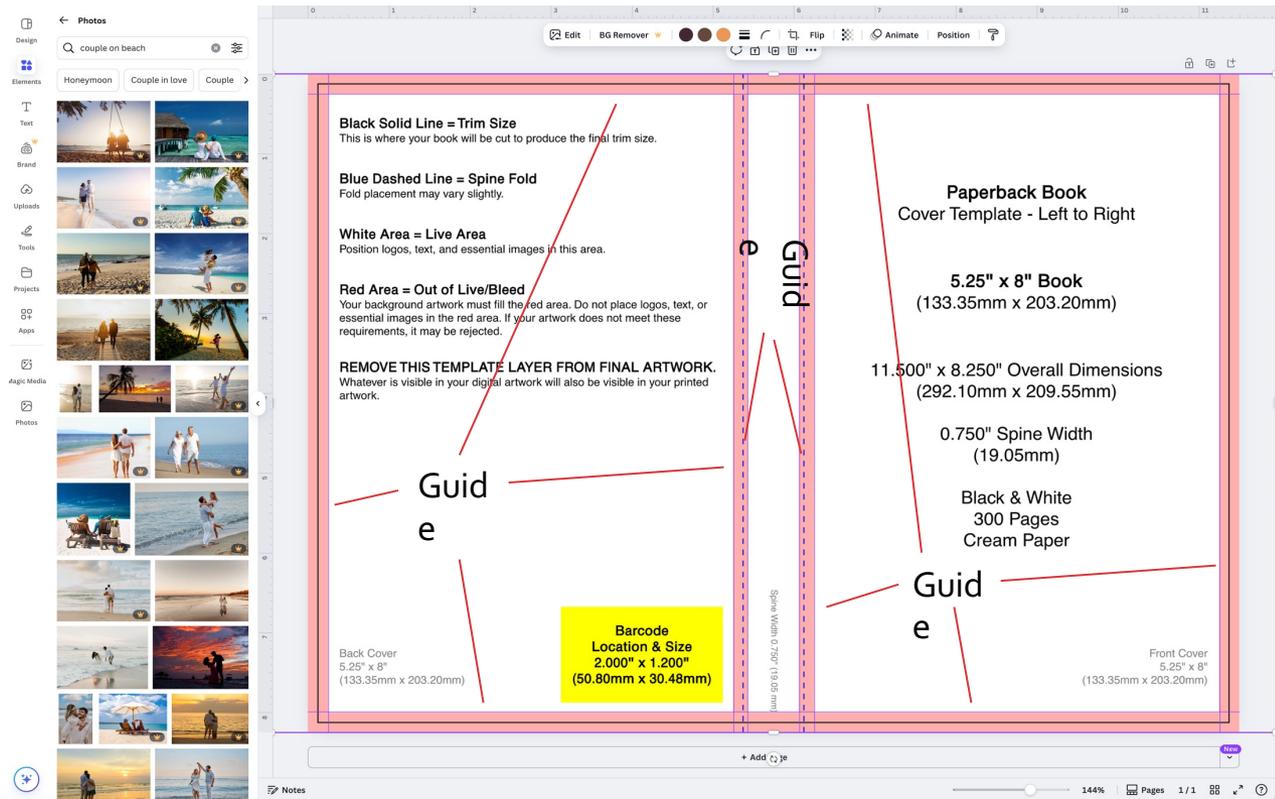
Download Template

Reset book information

#	Description	Width (in)	Height (in)	#	Description	Width (in)	Height (in)
1	Full Cover	11.5	8.25	6	Spine	0.75	8
2	Front Cover	5.25	8	7	Spine Safe Area	0.625	7.75
3	Safe Area	5.125	7.75	8	Spine Margin	0.062	0.062
4	Bleed	0.125	0.125	9	Barcode Margin	0.25	0.25
5	Margin	0.125	0.125				

Image for reference only

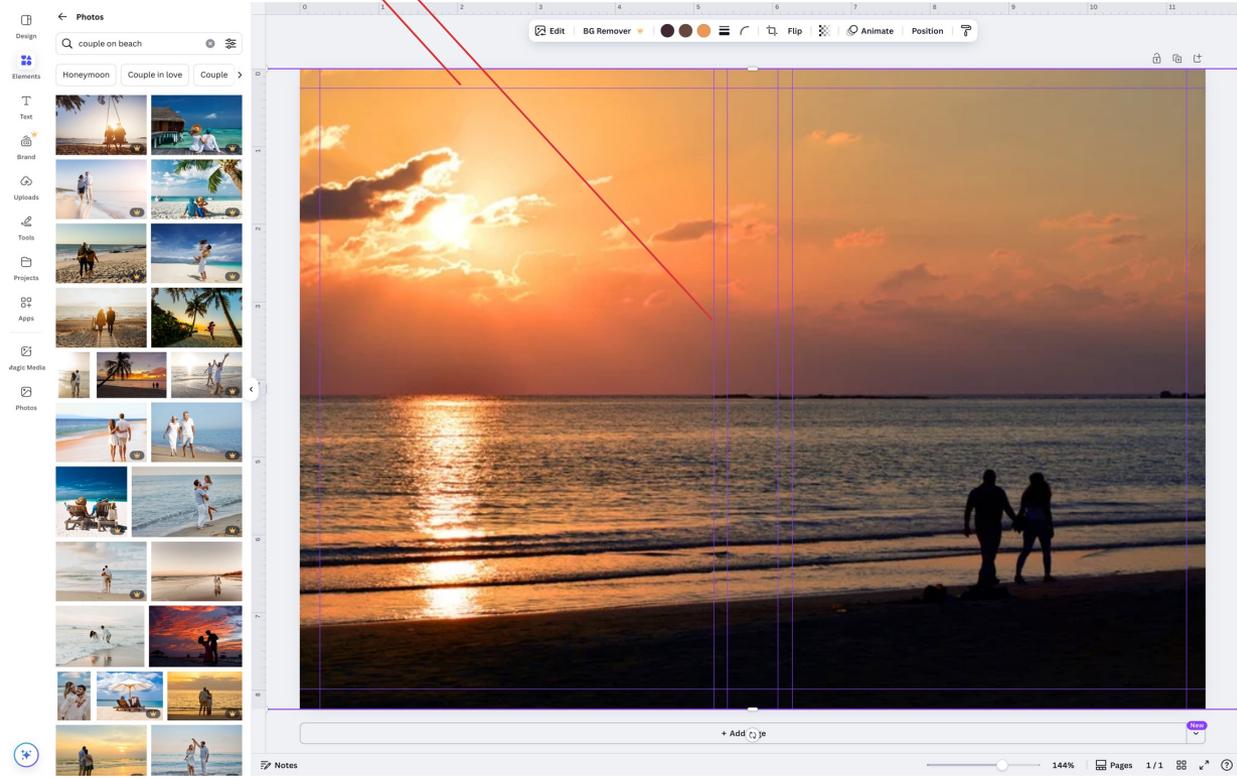
- In Canva, File > Create New Design > Custom Size
- Enter overall dimensions from template (ex. 11.50" x 8.25")
- Uploads > Upload template, size to fit by dragging corners to fill canvas
- Create guides on inside edges of pink area. File > Settings > Show Rulers and Guides. Rulers appear at left side and top edge. Click inside the ruler and drag out a guide to inside edge of safe area, on back cover, spine, and front cover.



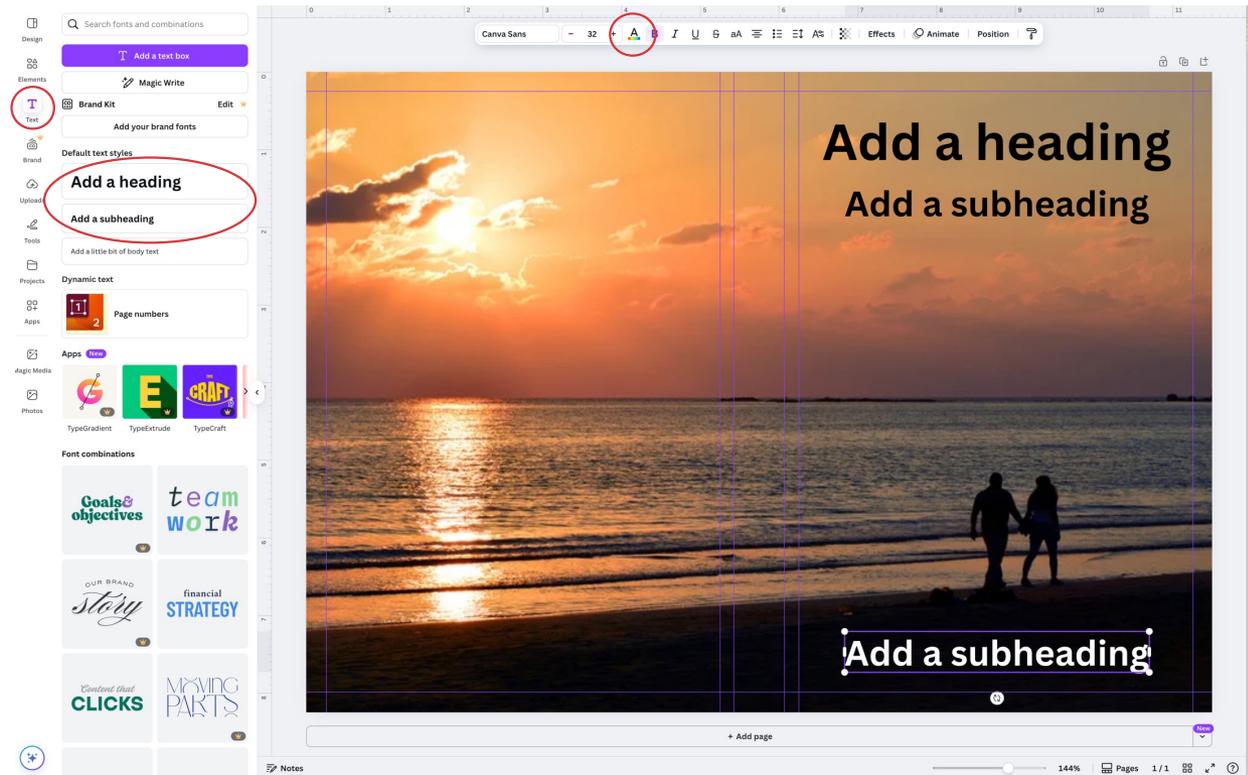
- Upload an image of your own: Click Uploads button on sidebar, select image from your computer, then select file and upload. OR...
- Select an image within Canva library: Click Elements button on sidebar, scroll to Photos, click See All. Use search bar to filter results.

NOTE: Check licensing for Canva Library images. Canva uses images from a variety of sources, such as Pixabay, Pexels, and other stock image agencies. To check the license for a particular image to make sure it's approved for commercial use, hover over the thumbnail, click on the menu popup, and click the Information icon.

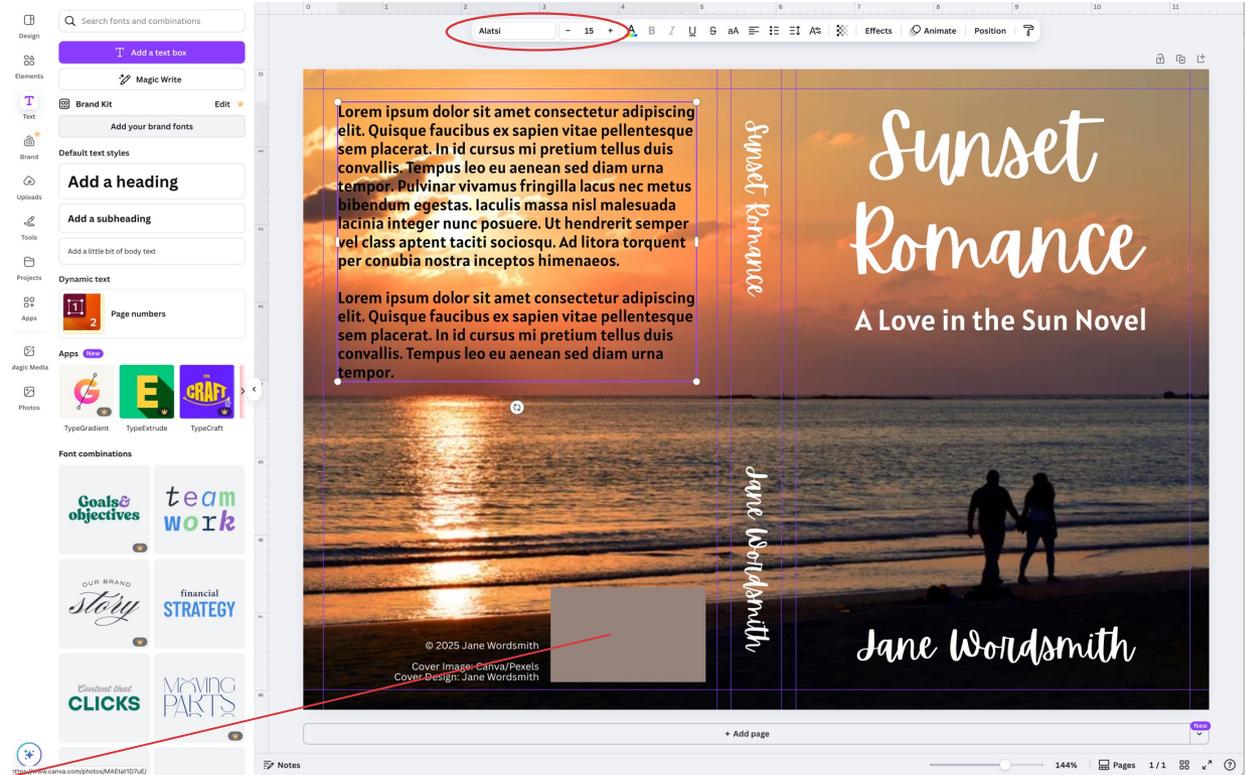
Guides (added in previous step)



- Insert text by clicking on the Text tool in the sidebar
- Click on “Add a heading”, and position it at the top of the front cover. Click on “Add a subheading” and position it under the main heading. Click on “Add a subheading” and position it at the bottom.
- To change color of text, highlight text, and click on Text Color button in top ribbon.



- Highlight text, type in title, subtitle, author name.
- To change font, select text, click text box in ribbon at top.
- Increase or decrease font size by clicking on font size button in ribbon at top.
- For spine, click on text, select rotation tool below text and rotate 90 degrees clockwise, position in center of spine. Stay within spine guidelines.



Click on background image, click transparency button to left of "Effects" in top ribbon, move slider to left so bar code area is visible on back cover. Draw a box over bar code, click on background image and restore transparency to 100%.

Don't position any text or important elements in bar code area.

Final Step
Delete template

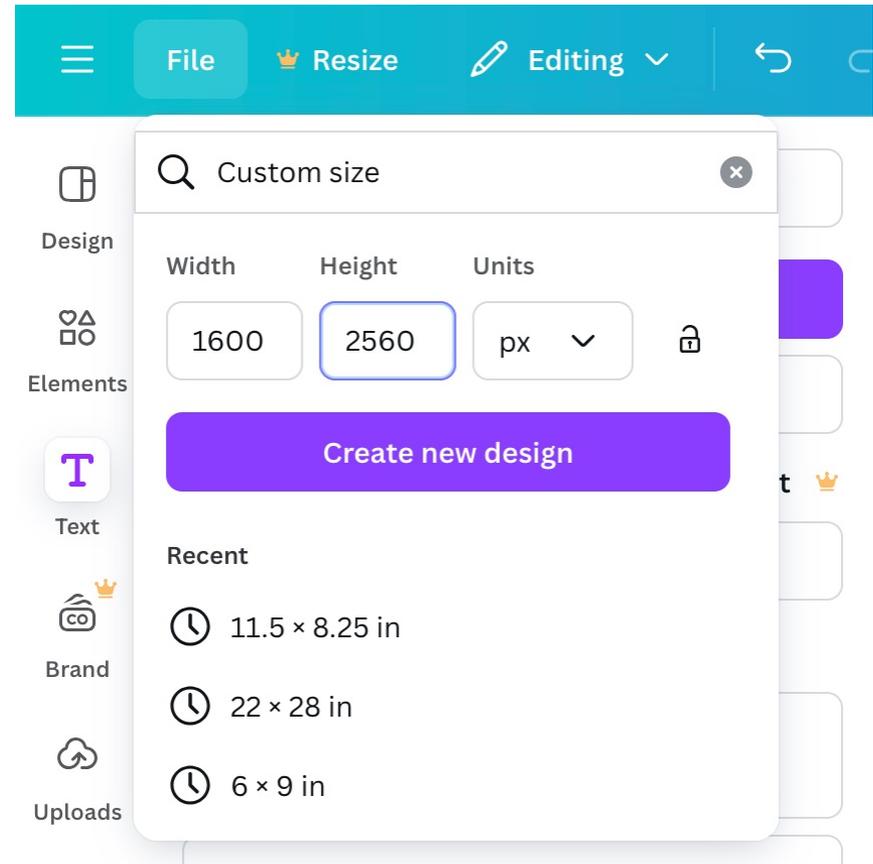


Click on background image, use UP arrow to nudge image up 3-4 times. Click on template under background image and delete. Nudge background image back down to original position.

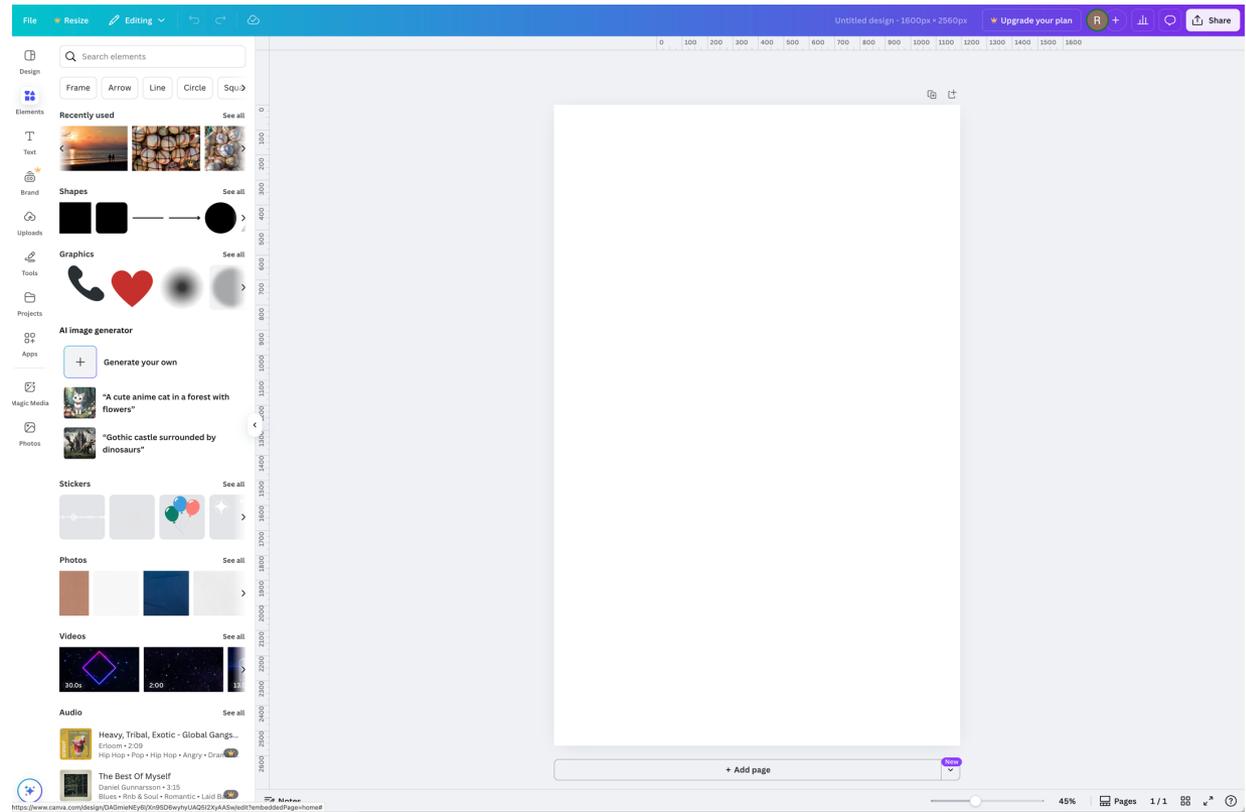
- Delete bar code box drawn in previous step.
- Type title of book/file above ribbon, click Enter.
- Click Share > Download
- Select PDF Print for File type
- Check "Flatten PDF"
- If you have Canva Premium, select "CMYK Color Profile". If not, leave it at RGB. CMYK is used in printing, and will provide a more accurate rendering of colors.
- Click "Download".

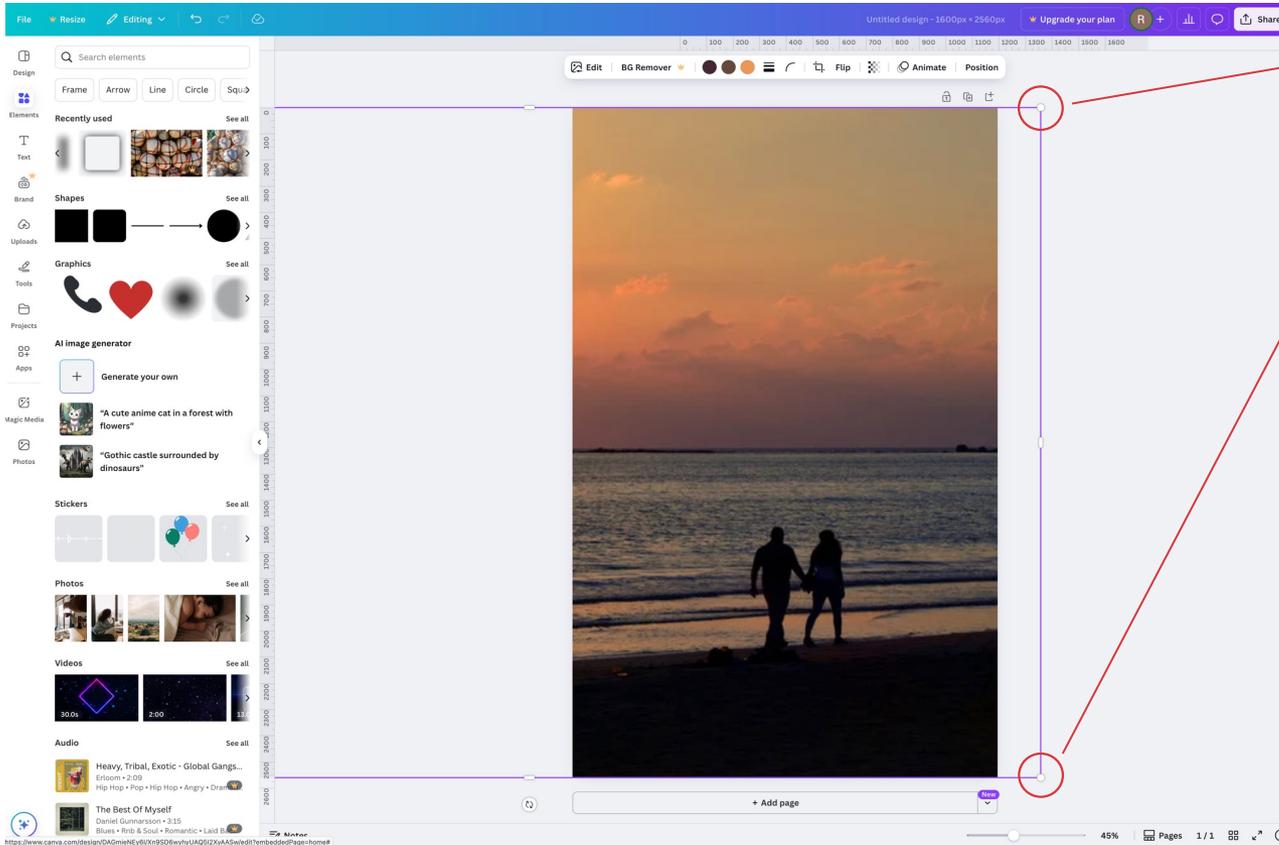


- For Kindle cover, create a new file:
File > Create New Design > Custom Size
- Make sure Units is set to "px" (pixels)
- Set dimensions to Width 1600, Height 2560.
- Click "Create new design"



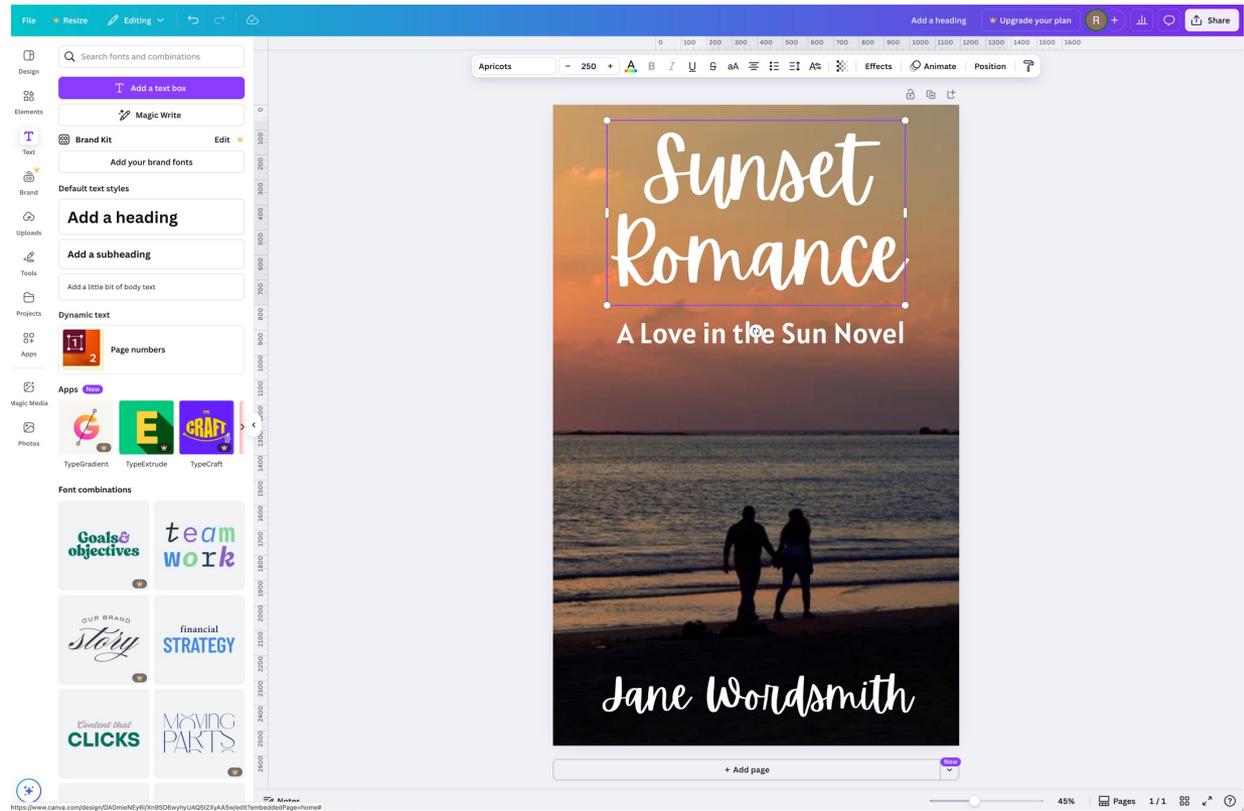
- Click on Elements in left sidebar
- Under "Recently Used", click on same image used in paperback design. OR...
- If you uploaded your image, instead of clicking on Elements, click on Uploads in left sidebar, select image.



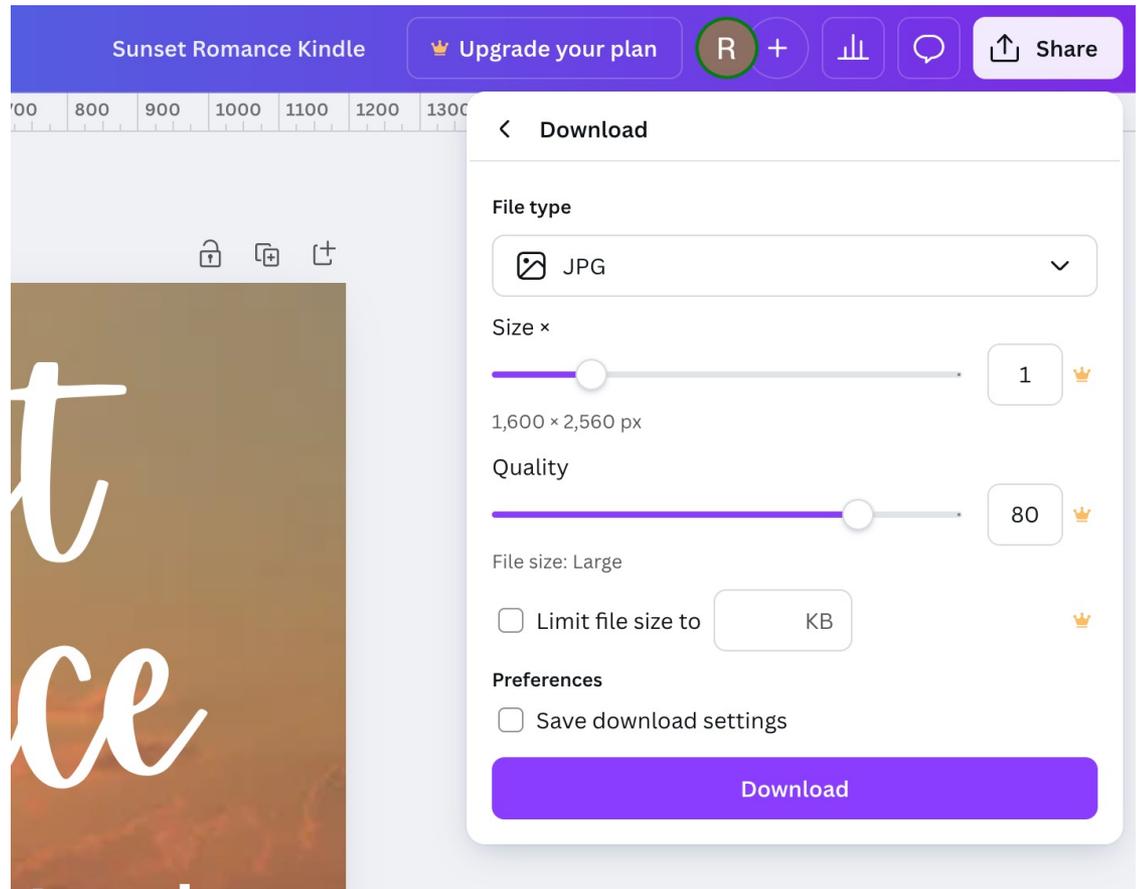


The Kindle cover is only the front of your book, so click and drag handles in corners to adjust. Make sure background image fills the entire page. Position it so it looks similar to front page of paperback.

- Select the Text tool in the left sidebar, create headings and subheadings, position text boxes on page.
- Highlight text and type in book title, subtitle, and author name.
- With text highlighted, change color and font to match paperback cover.



- In upper right, name the file with title of book + Kindle.
- Click Share > Download.
- Set File type to JPG.
- If you have Canva premium, set Quality to 100.
- Click "Download".



Additional Resources

How-To Guides

- The Ultimate Guide to Master Your Book Cover Design
<https://www.ingramspark.com/master-your-book-cover-design>
- How to Design the Best Book Cover in 8 Simple Steps
<https://kindlepreneur.com/book-cover-design/>
- How to Design a Book Cover: A 7-Step Guide
<https://blog.reedsy.com/how-to-design-a-book-cover/>

Stock Image Agencies (not free, but fully licensed for commercial use)

- DepositPhotos
- Shutterstock
- iStock
- Adobe Stock
- Envato

Free Stock Image Agencies (use caution, check licensing for commercial use).

- Pexels
- Unsplash
- Pixabay

Fonts (fully licensed, approved for commercial use)

- FontSquirrel
- Google Fonts

Facebook Group

- Indie Cover Project