

AN A-Z OF  
ESSENTIAL  
DESIGN TERMS  
FOR COMPLETE  
BEGINNERS

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A

**Design intuitive** Create it yourself

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## **300 DPI**

Stands for 300 dots per inch. This is shorthand for saying that an image needs to have 300 dots per inch resolution in order to be sufficient quality to be commercially printed. In the Adobe products this is known as PPI – for Pixels Per Inch, but it stands for the same thing. Use InDesign’s Links Panel to determine whether an image has enough pixels per inch to look good when printed commercially.

## **ADOBE**

Adobe is the company that make InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop and many other programs used for creative work.

## **.AI**

This is the “native” file format used by Illustrator. Meaning that if you create a new document in Illustrator and save it, this is the type of file you’ll get by default. If you see a file like this, it’s likely that it’s a logo, illustration, infographic or some other vector graphic.

## **BITMAP**

An image that’s made out of pixels. When you take an image with a digital camera, it breaks down what’s in front of it into thousands or millions of pixels, which you can think of as tiny squares. Each square can have its own colour, and so if the squares are small enough, you can capture the complex range colours and tones, say, of someone’s face.

## **BLEED**

When something is being commercially printed, it’s often printed on larger paper than the final document will be, and then trimmed down to size. When it’s trimmed down it’s possible that the trim might not be 100% accurate, and elements that are supposed to print all the way out to the edge of the paper might not do so. To prevent this, such elements are made larger so that they “bleed” over the edge of the page.

## **CANVA**

A website that offers a free (and paid) alternative and quick way to produce graphics, particularly for social media.

## **CREATIVE CLOUD**

To use the latest versions of Adobe programs you need to have a Creative Cloud subscription. This gives you access to all of their programs, and other services too such as TypeKit.

## **CMYK**

Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and black are the four inks that are used to print most things you’d come across that have been printed in large quantities, like newspapers and magazines. They are also described as Process Colour, Four Colour Process or Full Colour. So when you’re making something that will be printed you’ll use CMYK colours (as opposed to RGB).

## **.EPS**

This file type is likely to come from Illustrator and is often used for logos. It’s a vector file format.

## **FONT**

Any time you type on your computer, what that type looks like depends on which font that you use. Technically a font is a file or collection of files that you install on your computer for InDesign and other programs to use. If you're getting into design work then it's likely you'll need to buy fonts to use – or you can use free fonts, or use TypeKit, which is bundled with the Creative Cloud.

## **.GIF**

This is a bitmap file format used for the web. Before png came along, it was the way people used to save their logos so they could add them to a web page.

## **GUTTER**

The gap between two columns.

## **HI RES**

Resolution refers to the number of pixels per inch in an image. The higher the number, the more pixels there are in a given inch. You need around 300 pixels per inch to ensure that an image will not appear pixelated when printed. Hi res is shorthand for that quality (lo res is shorthand for low quality).

## **ILLUSTRATOR**

Any logo you've ever seen is likely to have been created in Illustrator. Think MacDonald's, Starbucks, Apple. Their logos use only a few colours at most, and the shapes are crisp and clear. It's also used to create infographics, graphs, charts and maps.

## **.INDD**

InDesign's "native" file format. Which means when you save a document created in InDesign, this is the file you'll get by default.

## **INDESIGN**

Anything you've ever seen in a book shop is likely to have been created with InDesign: books, magazines, and anything else that's printed in large quantities: flyers, brochures, leaflets. It's also used to create e-books and pdfs that can be read online.

## **INDESIGN PACKAGE**

An InDesign "package" is used when you want to send someone everything you used to create your design. It contains the .indd file but also any fonts or images you used. If you've asked for your designer to send you the InDesign files they used, this is what they might have sent you.

## **.INDT**

Notice that InDesign's native file format is an .indd. That final "d" stands for "document". An .indt stands for InDesign template. Like in other programs, a template provides a starting point for creating a variety of similar documents

## **.JPG**

A .jpg file is a popular bitmap file format, because it has a much smaller file size than formats like .tif or .psd. It does this by using “lossy” compression: it makes the file size smaller by throwing away information it doesn’t think you’ll notice. You can control how much you’re compressing the image (and therefore how much quality you’ll lose).

## **KERNING**

The space between a pair of letters. If you imagine a really large heading on the front of a newspaper or magazine, it’s likely that some of the pairs of letters have been “kerned” to make them look better.

## **LEADING**

The vertical space between two or more lines of text. This can be used to make the text more noticeable from a distance, or more easy (or difficult) to read.

## **LIGHTROOM**

Photoshop works with one image at a time. Lightroom is used by professional photographers and picture editors who need to process hundreds of images from a shoot at once. It’s a sort of cross between a database and Photoshop.

## **LO RES**

This means an image with too low a resolution to be used for commercial print, but that often is fine for on screen or web use.

## **.PDF**

Pdfs are used in a variety of ways, here are three: 1) A proof (a way to show someone what their design looks like). 2) The final file sent to a commercial printer so they can print a document made in InDesign 3) A way to present something like a report or bid, often featuring interactive elements like buttons.

## **PHOTOSHOP**

Most photos that you see in magazines or books would have been worked on in Photoshop. It's what the professionals use to edit photographs, whether just for simple cropping, or complex retouching, such as removing someone from a photo.

## **PIXEL**

A digital photo is simply a collection of pixels: the camera converts what it sees into thousands or millions of tiny squares of data, each of which are capable of having a unique colour. Each of these squares is a pixel, and together they make a bitmap image.

## **.PNG**

A .png file is a bitmap file format that’s increasingly used for web graphics, especially ones that are created with vectors.

## **.PSD**

Photoshop's "native" file format. Which means if you save a file you've been working on in Photoshop, that's what you'll get by default. Certain Photoshop features, like layers, are retained in .psd files, whereas in other types of bitmap files like .tifs and .jpgs they may not be.

## **QUARK**

QuarkXpress is InDesign's predecessor. Whilst InDesign, made by Adobe, is used by the vast majority of designers today, if you were to go back ten years or so they would have been using Quark.

## **RGB**

Everything that you see when you look at a screen, whether a TV, tablet, laptop or mobile, is generated by a mixture of red, green and blue light. So when you're making something destined for the screen you'll use RGB colours (as opposed to CMYK).

## **SERIF**

The text you're reading now does not have serifs. But this text does have serifs. If you compare the two, you might find one easier to read than the other. Generally, texts with serifs are determined to be easier to read in small sizes when printed, whereas for on-screen use text without serifs (sans serif) are often used instead. Sans serifs are likely to be used for headings, whether in print or on screen.

## **.TIF**

A .tif file is a bitmap file format that generally regarded as higher quality than a .jpg. This is because it uses "lossless" compression: it makes the file size smaller but with no loss in quality. The price you pay for the extra quality is extra file size.

## **TRACKING**

The space between the letters on a whole chunk of text. This can be used to make the text more noticeable, or more easy to read, or fill up more or less space.

## **TRIMS**

These are thin guidelines that are placed around the edge of a document so that it can be cut down to size after it has been printed. You can add them when you create a pdf from InDesign, or the printer can add them in later.

## **TYPEKIT**

This is a service that you can access if you've got a Creative Cloud subscription. It allows you to find and use fonts that otherwise you'd often have to buy.

## **VECTOR**

An image that's made using anchor points. Unlike with a bitmap, whose pixels have a physical size, vectors use anchor points which are defined mathematically. This means you can make a vector ten times larger and there will be no loss in quality – which can not be said of a bitmap image.

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