Intermediate InDesign: Master Pages

About Masters, Stacking Order, and Layers

A master is like a background that you can quickly apply to many pages. Objects on a master appear on all pages with that master applied. Master items that appear on document pages are surrounded by a dotted border. Changes you make to a master are automatically applied to associated pages. Masters commonly contain repeating logos, page numbers, headers, and footers. They can also contain empty text or graphic frames that serve as placeholders on document pages. A master item cannot be selected on a document page unless the master item is overridden.

Masters can have multiple layers, just like pages in your document. Objects on a single layer have their own stacking order within that layer. Objects on a master page layer appear behind objects assigned to the same layer in the document page.

Create Masters

By default, any document you create has a master page. You can create additional masters from scratch or from an existing master page or document page. After you apply master pages to other pages, any changes made to the source master carry forward to the masters and document pages that are based on it. With careful planning, this provides an easy way to make layout changes to multiple pages across your document.
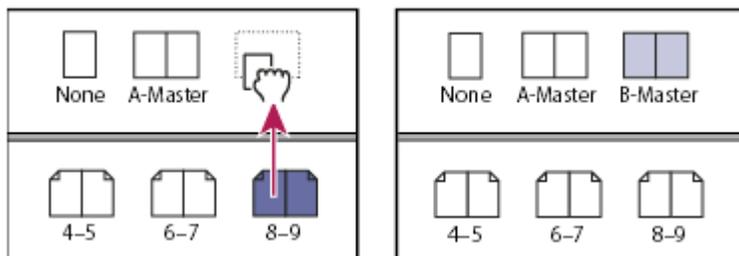
Beginning of Exercise

Create a Master from Scratch
1. Choose **New Master** in the **Pages** panel menu.
2. Specify the following options, and click **OK**:
   - For **Prefix**, type a prefix that identifies the applied master for each page in the **Pages** panel. You can type as many as four characters.
   - For **Name**, type a name for the master spread.
   - For **Based On Master**, choose an existing master spread on which you'll base this master spread, or choose None.
   - For **Number Of Pages**, type a value for the number of pages you want in the master spread (as many as ten).

Create a Master from an Existing Page or Spread

Drag an entire spread from the Pages section of the **Pages** panel to the Masters section.

Any objects on the original page or spread become part of the new master. If the original page used a

master, the new master is based on the original page's master.

Edit the Layout of a Master
You can edit the layout of master pages at any time; changes you make are automatically reflected on all pages with that master applied. For example, any text or graphic you add to a master will appear on document pages to which the master is applied.

Note: When you override or detach a master page object on a particular page, that object may not update to reflect changes made on the master page.

1. In the **Pages** panel, double-click the icon for the master you want to edit, or select the master page from the text box list at the bottom of the document window. The master spread appears in the document window.
2. Make changes to the master.

InDesign automatically updates any pages using that master.

💡 *Use multiple views to see the results of master edits. Choose Window > Arrange > New Window, and then choose Window > Arrange > Tile. Set one view to a page and the other view to the master applied to that page. Then edit the master and watch the page update.*
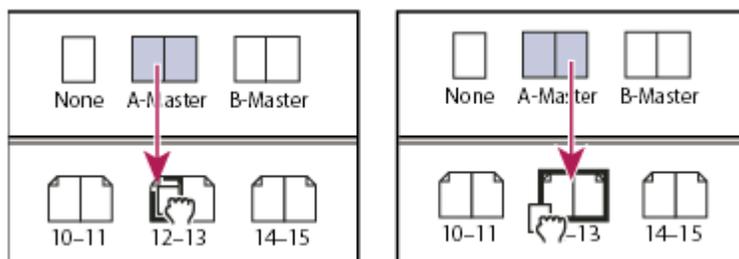
Change Master Page Options
You can edit master page options to change the name or prefix of the master, base the master on another master, or change the number of pages in the master spread.

1. In the **Pages** panel, click the name of a master spread to select the master spread.
2. Choose **Master Options For [master name]** in the **Pages** panel menu.
3. Change any option, and then click **OK**.

Apply a Master to a Document Page or Spread
- **To apply a master to one page**, drag the master page icon to a page icon in the Pages panel. When a black rectangle surrounds the desired page, release the mouse button.
- **To apply a master to a spread**, drag the master page icon to a corner of the spread in the Pages panel. When a black rectangle surrounds all pages in the desired spread, release the mouse button.

Applying a master to a page (left) and applying a master to a spread (right)

Delete a Master from a Document

1. In the **Pages** panel, select one or more master page icons.

    💡 *To select all unused master pages, choose Select Unused Masters in the Page panel menu.*

2. Do one of the following:

    *   🗑️ Drag a selected master page or spread icon to the **Delete** icon at the bottom of the panel.

    *   🗑️ Click the **Delete** icon at the bottom of the panel.

    *   Choose **Delete Master Spread [spread name]** in the panel menu.

When you delete a master, the [None] master is applied to any document page to which the deleted master was applied.

Override Master Items

When you apply a master page to a document page, all objects on the master, called master items, appear on the document page. Sometimes you want a specific page to be only slightly different from a master. In this situation you don't need to re-create the master layout on the page or create a new master. You can override the master item, and other master items on the document page will continue to update with the master.

Override Master Item Attributes
Overriding a master item puts a copy of it on the document page without breaking its association with the master page. Once the item itself is overridden, you can customize it. For example, you can change the fill color of the local copy. After that, changes to the fill color on the master page itself will not update to the local copy. However, other attributes, such as size, will continue to update because they have not been overridden on the local copy. Overrides can be removed later to make the object match the master.

Attributes you can override for a master page object include strokes, fills, contents of a frame, any transformations (such as rotating, scaling, shearing, or resizing), corner options, text frame options, lock state, transparency, and object effects.

Override a Master Item
1. Do either of the following:

    *   To override specific master items on a document page, press **Ctrl+Shift** (Windows) or **Command+Shift** (Mac OS) and **click the item** (or drag to select multiple items). Change the selected master items as desired. The item can now be selected like any other page item, but retains its association with the master page.

    *   To override all master page items on a document spread, target the spread, and then choose **Override All Master Page Items** in the **Pages** panel menu. You can now select and modify any and all master items as you wish.

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Once you override any master item, its dotted bounding box becomes a solid line, to show that a local copy has been created.

Note: If you override a threaded text frame, all visible frames in that thread are overridden, even if they are on a different page in a spread.　🛑 *End of Exercise*

Additional Tips and Guidelines for Masters

- You can compare alternative design ideas by creating a variety of masters and applying them in turn to sample pages containing typical content.

- To quickly lay out new documents, you can save a set of masters in a document template, along with paragraph and character styles, color libraries, and other styles and presets.

- If you change column or margin settings on a master, or apply a new master with different column and margin settings, you can force objects on the page to adjust to the new layout automatically.

- Automatic page numbers inserted on a master display the correct page number for each section of the document to which the master is applied.

Base One Master on Another
You can create a master variation that is based on and updates with another master (called the parent master) within the same document. The master spreads based on the parent master are called child masters. For example, if your document has ten chapters that use master spreads that vary only slightly, base all of them on a master spread that contains the layout and objects common to all ten. This way, a change to the basic design requires editing just the parent master instead of editing all ten separately. Vary the formatting on your child masters. You can override parent master items on a child master to create variations on a master, just as you can override master items on document pages. This is a powerful way to keep a consistent yet varied design up to date.
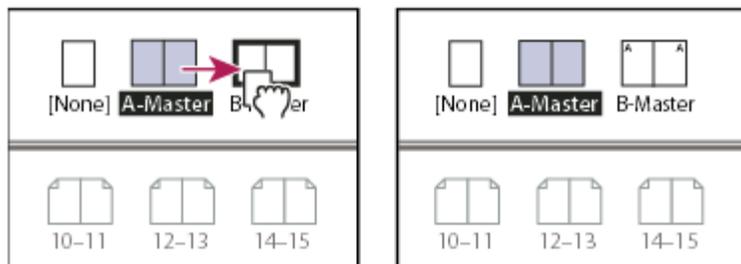

Original parent and child masters (left); when the parent master is modified, the child masters are automatically updated (right)

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Base One Master on Another:
In the Masters section of the **Pages** panel, do either of the following:

- Select a master spread, and choose **Master Options for [master spread name]** in the

Pages panel menu. For **Based On Master**, choose a different master, and click **OK**.
- Select the name of the master spread you want to use as the base and drag it onto the name of another master to apply it.

Hide Master Items

Use the **Hide Master Items** to hide master page items on one or more pages in your document. Hidden master items are not printed or output.

1. In the **Pages** panel, select the pages and spreads on which you'd like the master items to be hidden.
2. From the **Pages** panel menu under **Master Pages**, choose **Hide Master Items**.

To display master items again, select the spreads in the **Pages** panel and choose **Show Master Items** from the **Pages** panel menu.

Import a Master from another Document

You can import masters from another InDesign document (any version) into the active document. If your destination document contains master pages that have different names from any master page in the source document, those pages and their document page overrides will be unchanged.

1. In the **Pages** panel menu under **Master Pages**, choose **Load Master Pages**.
2. Locate and double-click the InDesign document containing the master pages you want to import.
3. Determine what should occur if a loaded master has the same name as a master in the current document.

   - Choose **Replace Master Pages** if you want the masters from the source to override the destination document's masters with the same names. If your destination document does not have any overridden items, it is safe to **Replace Master Pages** on import.

   - Choose **Rename Master Pages** to change the page prefixes to the next available letter in the alphabet.

Once you have imported masters from a source document, a link is set up between the source document and the destination document. When you subsequently load masters from the same source document, the association between overridden items and their parent items on reloaded master pages is maintained. This association lets you keep master pages in different documents consistent without putting those documents into a book.

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If you want to use this method of keeping master pages consistent, you should load the master pages from the source document before overriding any objects on the master. If your document has overridden items and you have never imported masters from any source, those overridden items become detached the first time you load from a source document and replace master pages with the same name as the parent master of the overridden items.

If you subsequently import masters from a different source document, however, and choose **Replace Master Pages,** the overridden items may become detached. Any same-named masters from the new source document will be applied to the document page containing overridden items, creating two sets of objects.