How to Prepare Your Cards for Press Using InDesign

This Tutorial is Divided into Sections:

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What is InDesign?

InDesign is a desktop publishing application which is available alone or as a component of the Adobe Creative Suite. It is industry-standard software and is available for both Windows and Mac OS.

InDesign is available for purchase from Adobe. Adobe does have educational discounts on its software, if you are able to take advantage of them. You can also gain access to its software by subscribing to the Adobe Creative Cloud, which is paid for by monthly fee.

Adobe: *http://www.adobe.com*

Adobe Creative Suite:
https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud.html

What do I Need?

This basic tutorial will offer you some advice on how to use InDesign to create your content and prepare print-ready PDF files for DriveThruCards. It will address how to set up one digital file so that both sides of the card are printed in full color.

The screenshots shown in the tutorial use InDesign CS 5.5 for Mac OS. If you are using a different version of the software some of the instructions and screenshots may be slightly different, but hopefully you can find the right feature in your software version.

1. How to start a new document with InDesign
This is the beginning of the step-by-step process for creating a new document for your cards

Please note: For your convenience, we have created template files to make your work easier. You can find templates via our Publisher Knowledge Base *(Book Printing & Card Printing/Card Printing/ Preparing Your Cards)*.
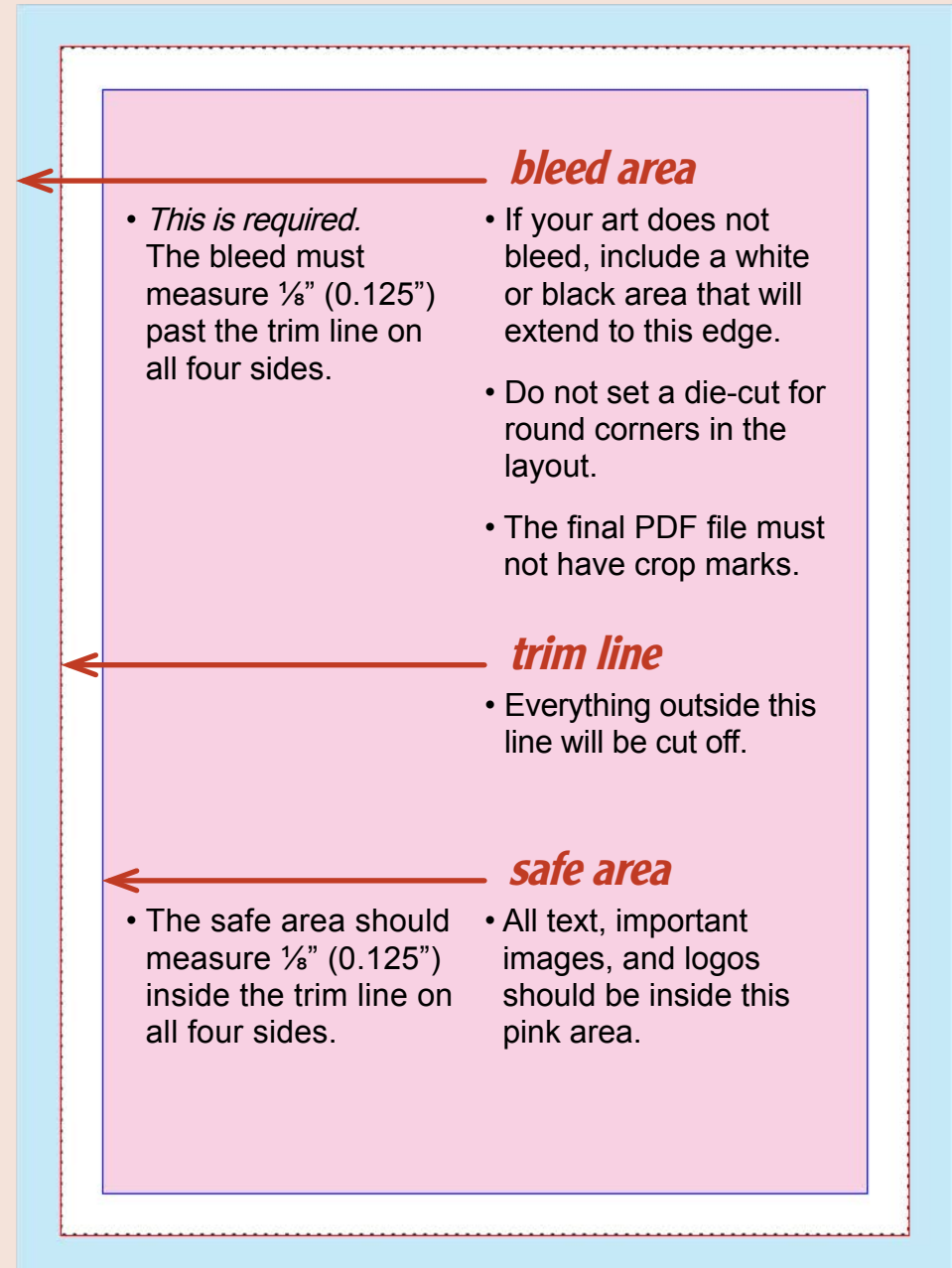
Starting your new file from a template

First, open InDesign. Then, in the File pull-down menu, select Open and then navigate to where you have saved your downloaded template file. Open it.

Click the Windows pull-down and open the Properties window.

Let's take a look at this template. What are all these lines?

• The pink area is the safe area for your text, logos and any important images. If any of these elements run outside of this area, it risks being trimmed off when the cards are cut after printing.

• The dotted edge of the white area is the trim line. This is approximately where the paper will be cut or trimmed off after the cards are printed.

• The blue space is the bleed area. Background images or color must extend to this line in the file, which you can see is outside of the paper trim line. This ensures that there is no unprinted white margin around the edges of your finished cards.

bleed area

• *This is required.* The bleed must measure ⅛" (0.125") past the trim line on all four sides.

• If your art does not bleed, include a white or black area that will extend to this edge.

• Do not set a die-cut for round corners in the layout.

• The final PDF file must not have crop marks.

trim line

• Everything outside this line will be cut off.

safe area

• The safe area should measure ⅛" (0.125") inside the trim line on all four sides.

• All text, important images, and logos should be inside this pink area.

2. What you need to know before you begin
More about Recommended File Specifications

The order of your document pages for correct back-to-front printing

Please create *one file* for your entire deck of cards. The order of the cards in the final PDF will be the order of the finished cards in their packages.

To set up your file, you *must* order the pages with one card back and then one card front for each card in the deck. See the screenshot to the right for a sample view of what your multi-page document should begin to look like.

Understanding the document order of card backs and fronts is important. This will make it very easy to design and apply master pages for the correct card back and front pages, which we will cover next in this tutorial.

Cards do not need to have a common border color between their backs and fronts.

Your image files need to be high resolution

The images you will be using for your cards, regardless of front or back placement, *need to be high resolution*, which is at least 300 dpi. The physical size of the image at 300 dpi needs to be at least the same size as the printed card or larger.
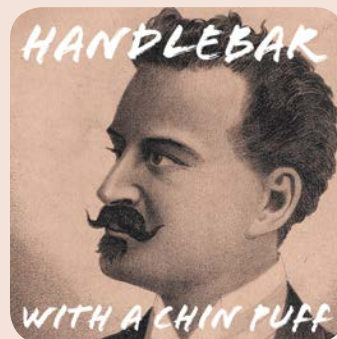
For example, if your background image is 300 dpi with a physical size of 3" by 4", you are good to go since that is larger than the card. If your background image is 300 dpi but measures 1½" (1.5") by 2", then you have a problem. To scale up this image to meet the size of the actual printed card, your image will be degraded because the physical size of the image is not large enough.

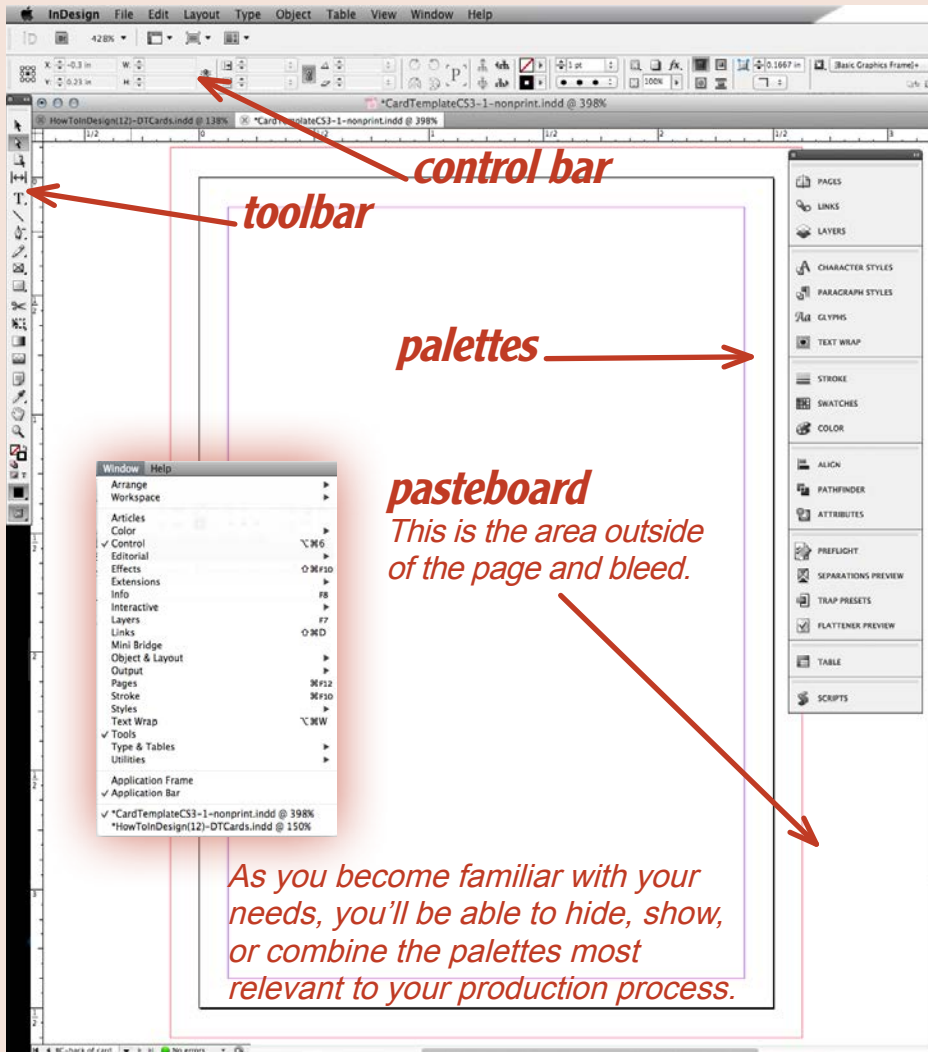| 72 dpi | 120 dpi | 300 dpi |

page 1
CARD
BACK

page 2
CARD
FRONT

page 3
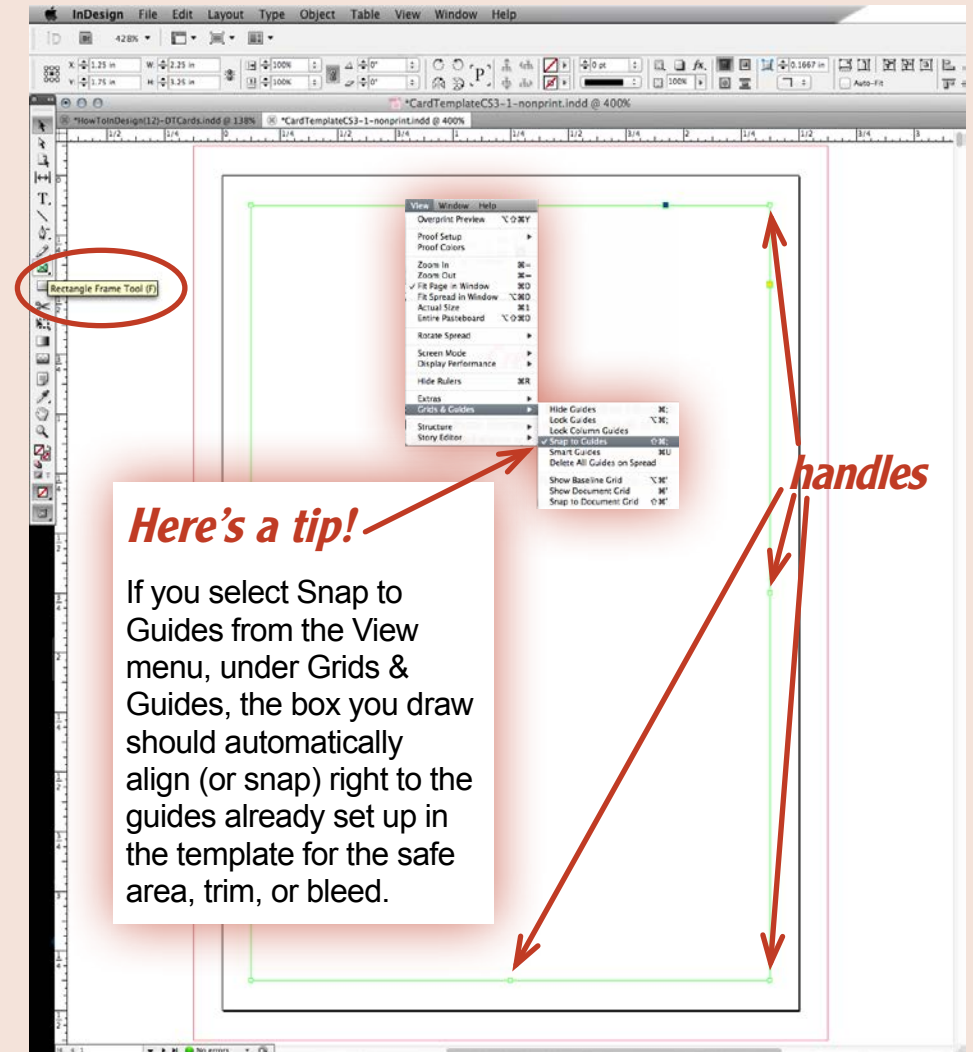CARD
BACK

page 4
CARD
FRONT

page 5
CARD
BACK

3

3. Getting to Know Your Workspace

This is just a few words to orient you to your workspace. You will use the Toolbar, the Control Bar at the top of your workspace, and various palettes throughout your document production. What remains open in your workspace is customizable. Be sure to explore the Window drop-down menu to see what palettes you may need to help your work faster.

control bar

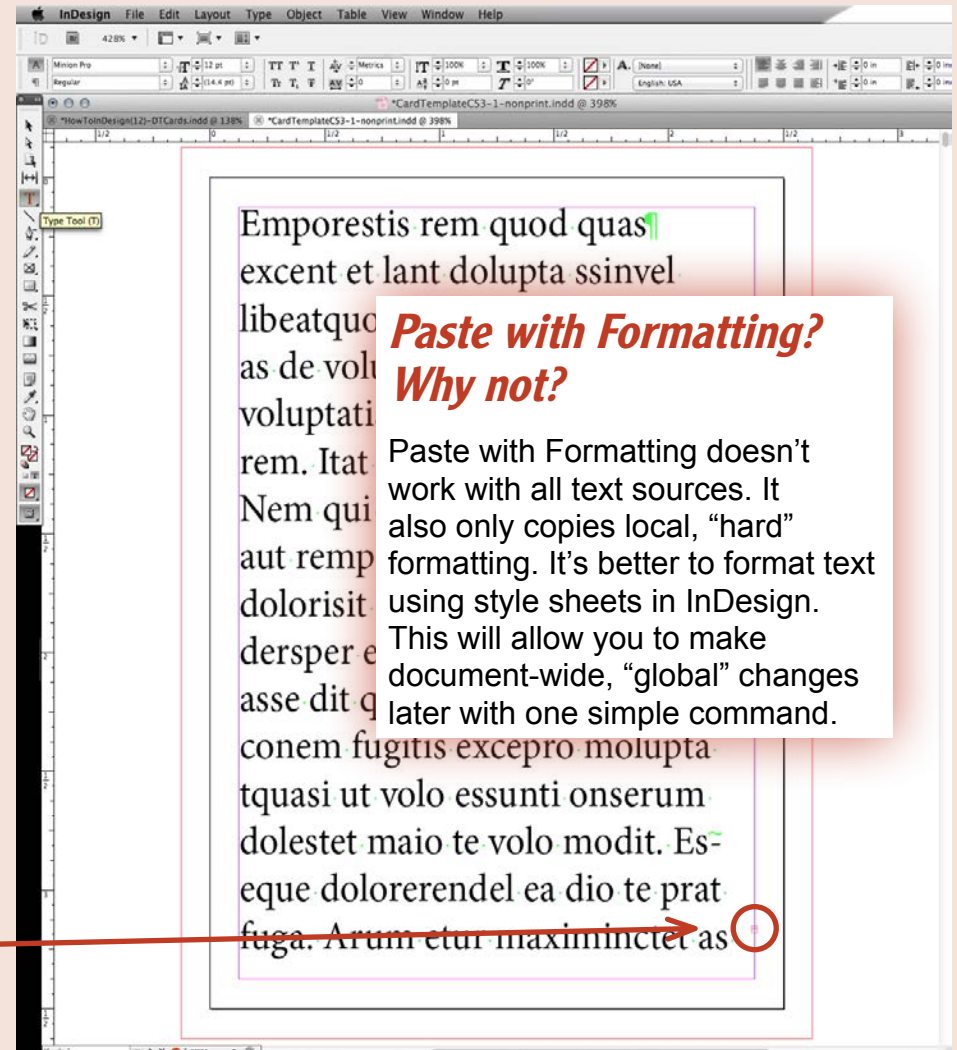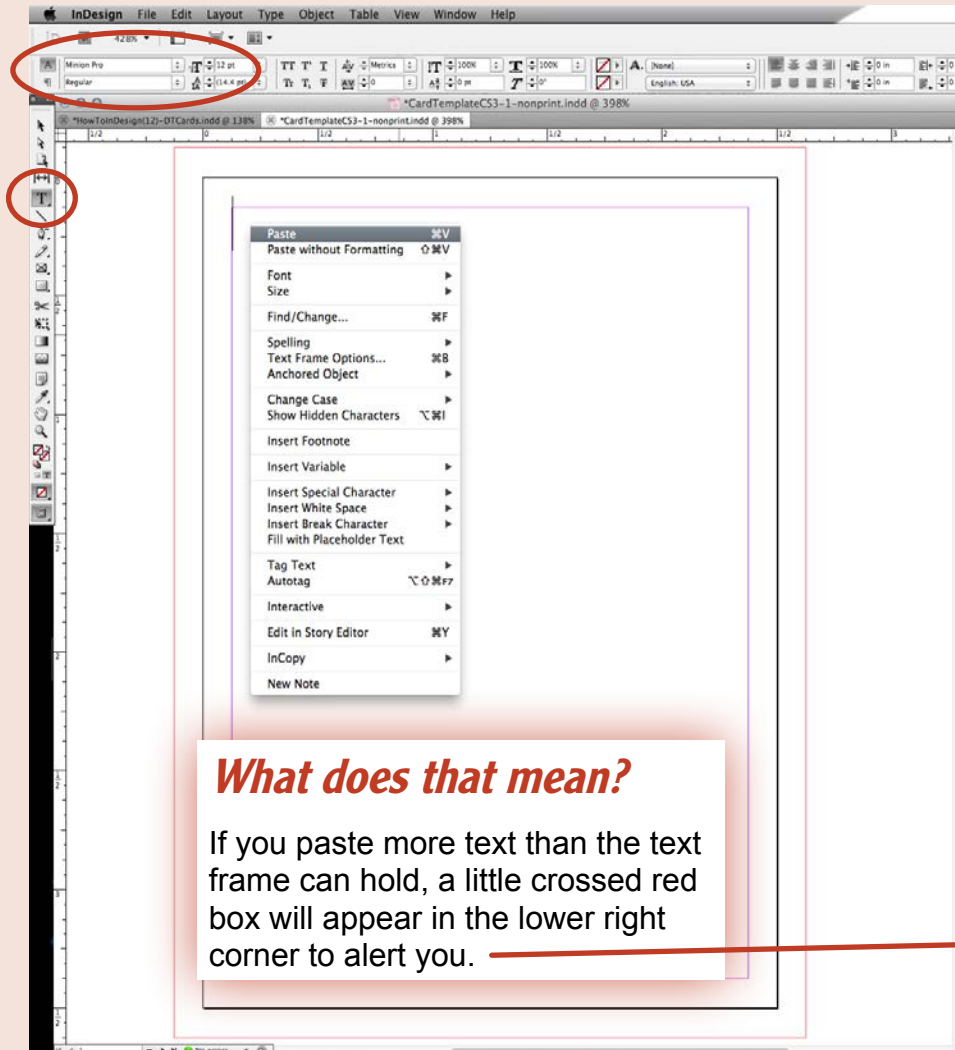toolbar

palettes

pasteboard
This is the area outside of the page and bleed.

As you become familiar with your needs, you'll be able to hide, show, or combine the palettes most relevant to your production process.

4. Adding Text

First, click to select and use the Rectangle Frame Tool in the Toolbar. Your cursor will become crosshairs. Click and drag on the page to place a text frame on your master page. You can set the size and frame properties in the Control Bar, or you can manually resize it by clicking and dragging the blocks or handles on the Frame box edges.

handles

Here's a tip!

If you select Snap to Guides from the View menu, under Grids & Guides, the box you draw should automatically align (or snap) right to the guides already set up in the template for the safe area, trim, or bleed.

4. Adding Text (continued)

Then, select the Type Tool from the Toolbar and click into the frame on the page. Your cursor will become a blinking text cursor inside the box. Now, you'll also notice the Control Bar has changed to reflect your use of the Type Tool. Paragraph and Character Formatting options are now available.

To place text, open the file with your text content, select the text you want to place, and copy it. Go back to your InDesign file and click inside the text box, right-click or control-click and then choose Paste to import and place all of the selected text. (Paste with Formatting may be an available option, but it's not advisable.)

Paste with Formatting? Why not?

Paste with Formatting doesn't work with all text sources. It also only copies local, "hard" formatting. It's better to format text using style sheets in InDesign. This will allow you to make document-wide, "global" changes later with one simple command.

What does that mean?

If you paste more text than the text frame can hold, a little crossed red box will appear in the lower right corner to alert you.

4. Adding Text (continued)

Another way to place text, which is helpful if you have a lot of text to import, is to use the Place command under the File pull-down menu. You can import Word documents, text files, and rich text files. Navigate to the document you'd like to import. Make sure Show Import Options is checked at the bottom of the dialog box.

The dialog box that appears next will give you some control over how the imported text is handled. Make sure Typographer's Quotes are turned on. Although you can preserve the styling on the imported text, it's better to remove them and reassign those attributes in InDesign.
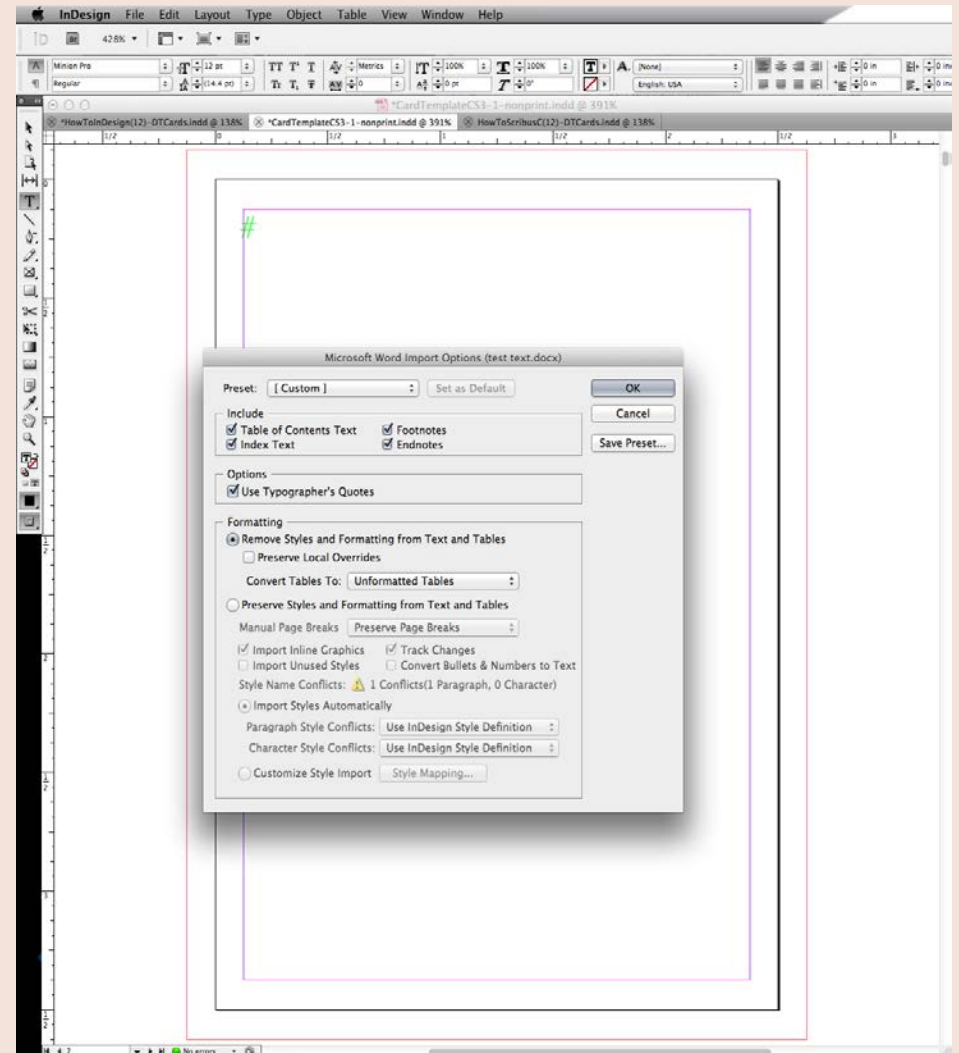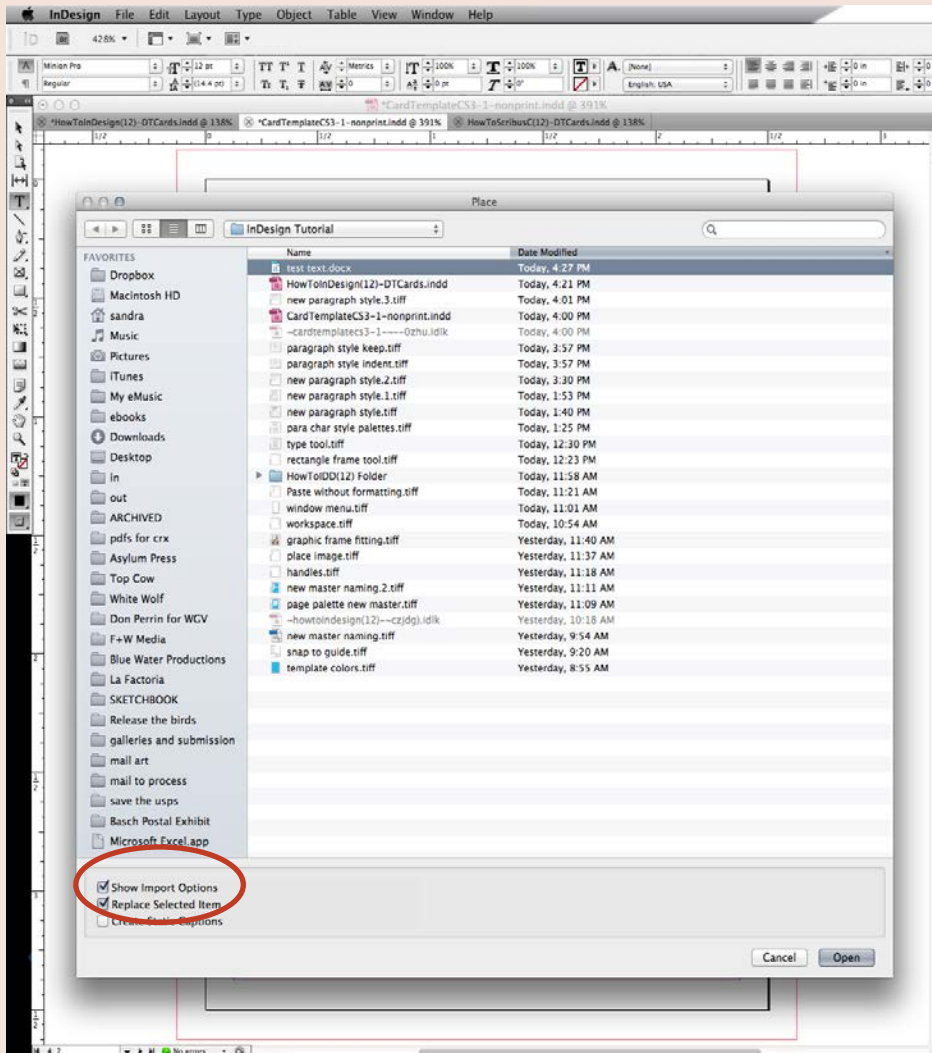
4. Adding Text (continued)

If the amount of text you have imported is too much for the frame to contain, first click Selection Tool. Then, if you click that crossed red box icon in the lower right-hand corner and then click outside the frame, a new text box is added and the overflow text will appear in it. To view the link threads between these boxes, turn on Show Text Threads under Extras in the View pull-down menu.
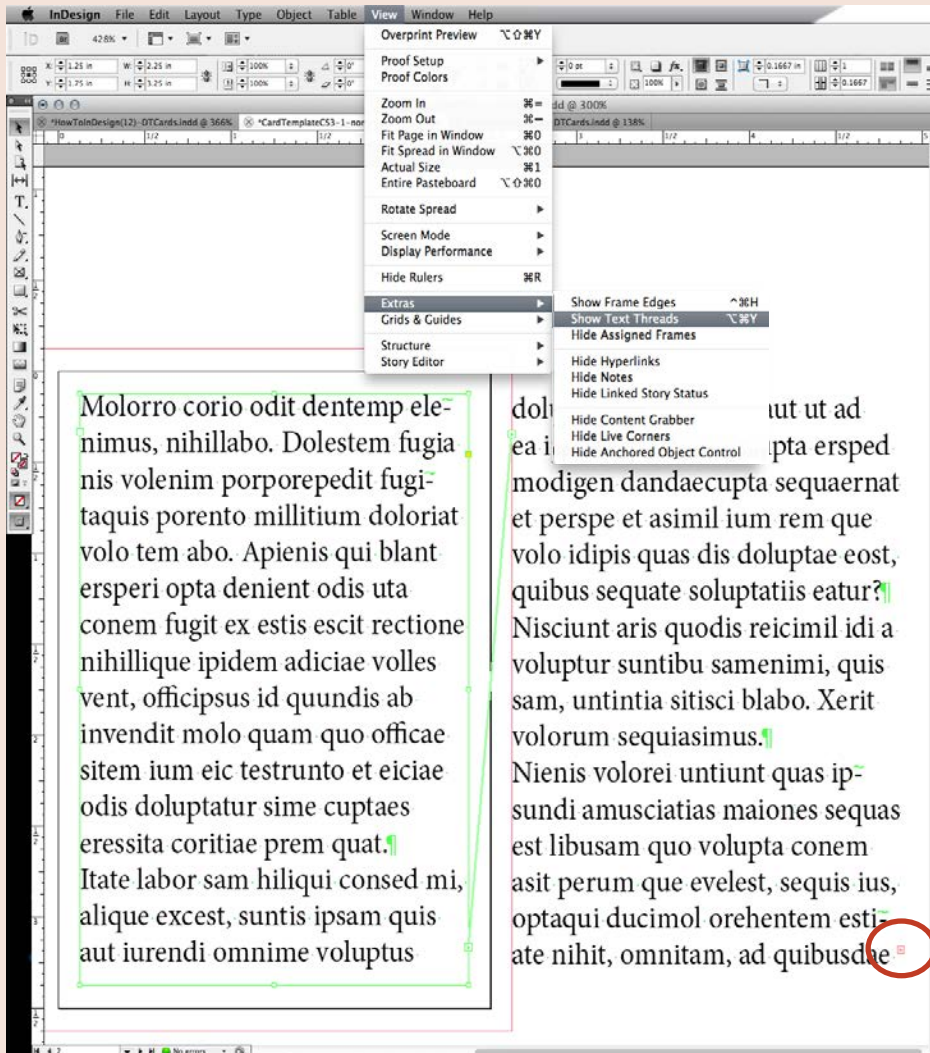
5. Formatting Text and Making Style Sheets

Style sheets are templates for fonts and their formatting. You can create styles with specific attributes, save them, and then apply them document-wide with a few mouse clicks. InDesign lets you specify both Paragraph and Character Styles; Paragraph Styles can be applied to a paragraph or a range of paragraphs, while Character Styles are applied to single words or a string of words.
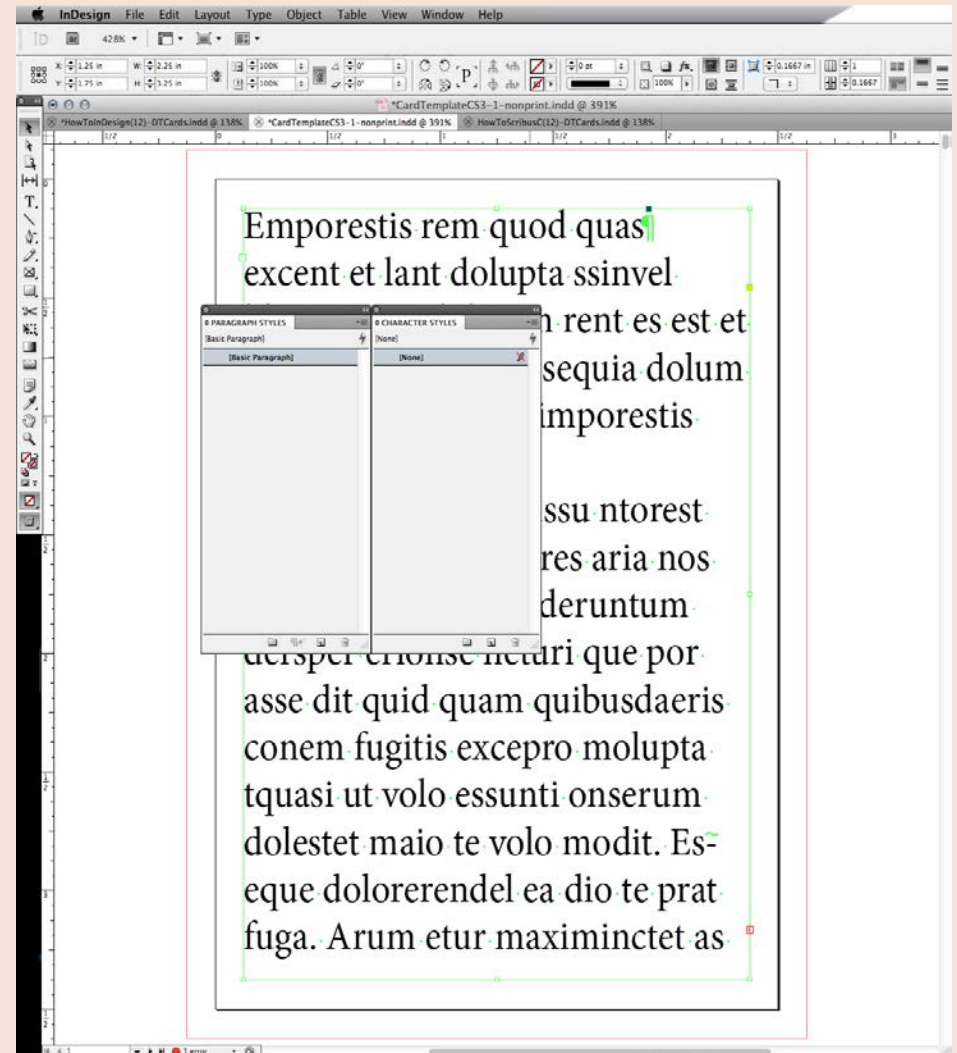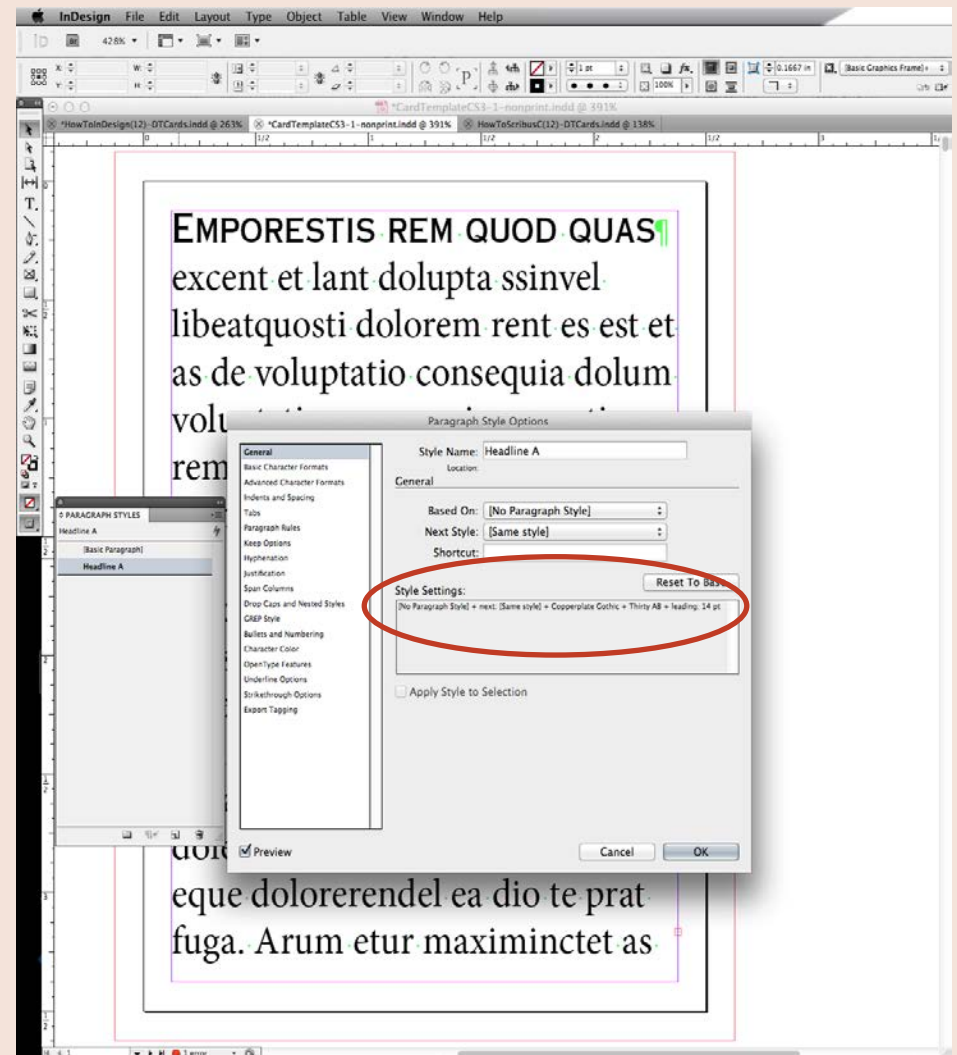
5. Formatting Text and Making Style Sheets (continued)

First, we'll tackle Paragraph Styles. Select the text you would like to change. You can style the text initially in the Control Bar using options available through the Character and Paragraph icons. When it's close to how you would like it, select the text you have just altered, and then expand the icon in the upper right-hand corner of the Paragraph Styles palette, and choose New Paragraph Style.
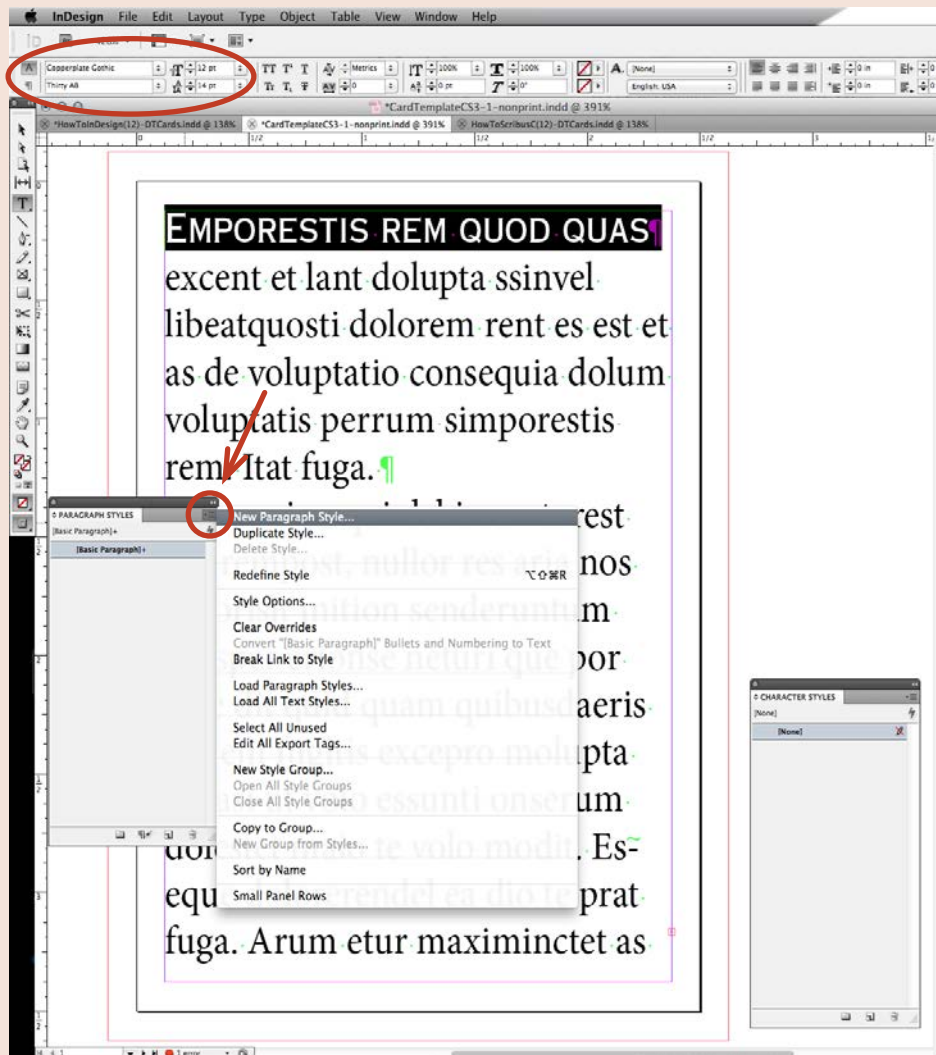
Name the Paragraph Style something that will easily identify it later. Now look at the Style Settings. You'll notice it has already picked up the attributes of the text you fixed and selected. You can further alter the current Paragraph Style in this dialog box. When you're done, click OK to save it. Afterward, make sure to apply this style to your altered paragraph when the style is saved.

5. Formatting Text and Making Style Sheets (continued)

Similarly, Character Styles may be made, saved and applied. Use this to italicize or bold words, make words a different color, or underline certain words.

To change fonts or attributes, just update your Style Sheets. The changes will be made globally throughout your document.
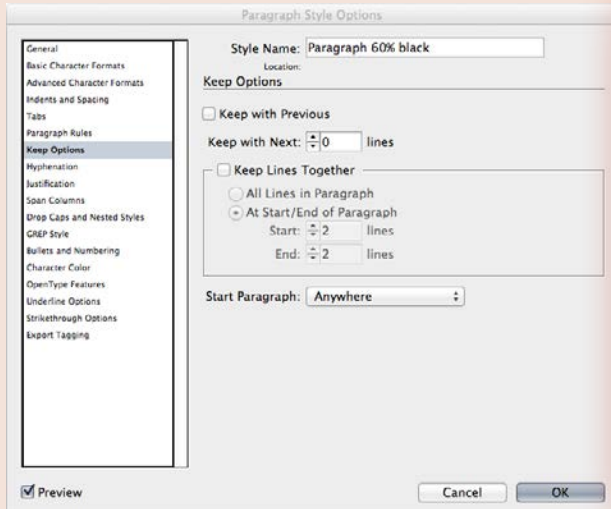
Things to avoid as you style text in your document:

- Widows: One single word or line at the bottom of a column of text
- Orphans: One single word or line at the top of a column of text
- Hyphens between columns of text
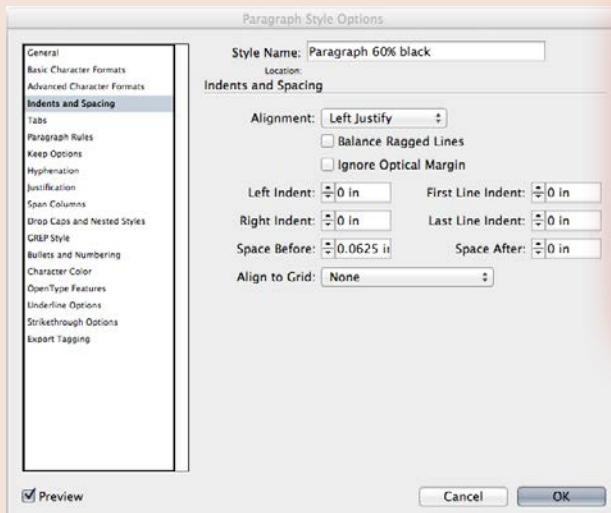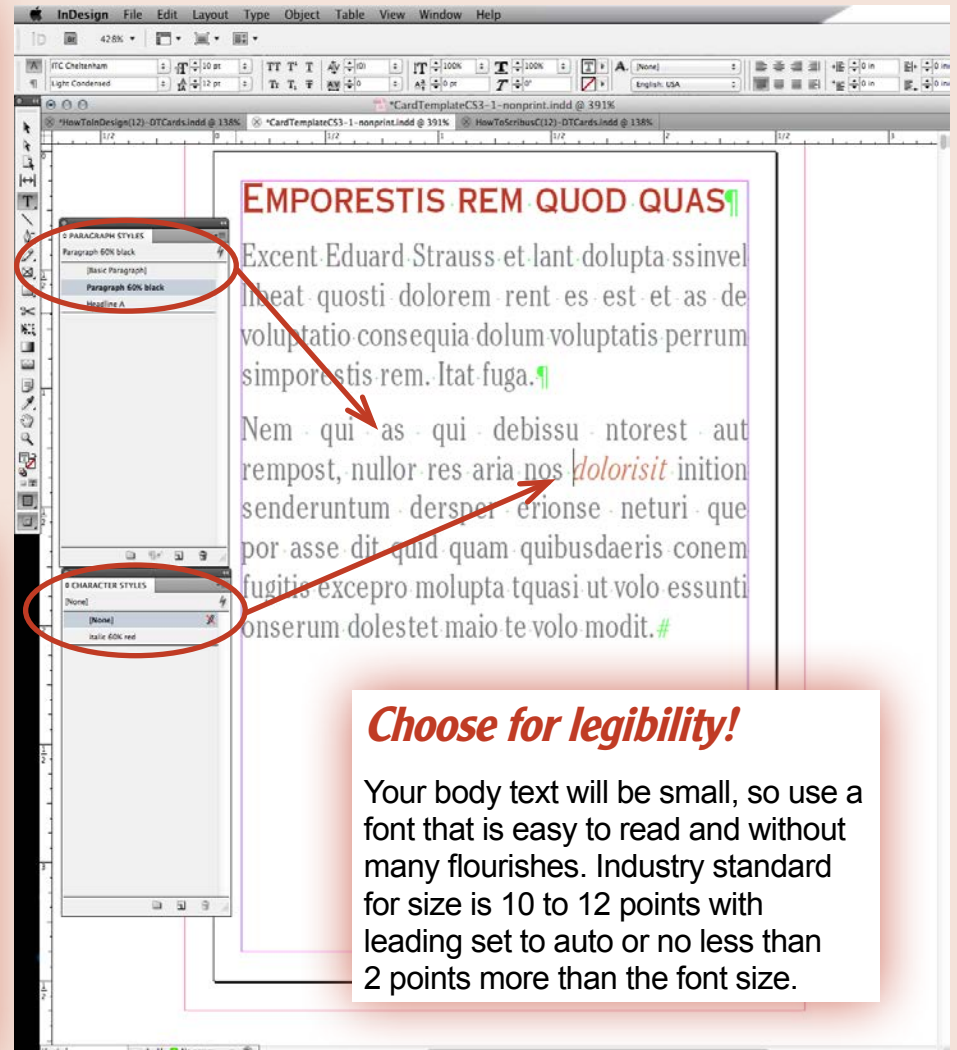
Suggested Paragraph Style attribute:

Choose Left Justify under Indents and Spacing

Suggested Paragraph Style attribute:
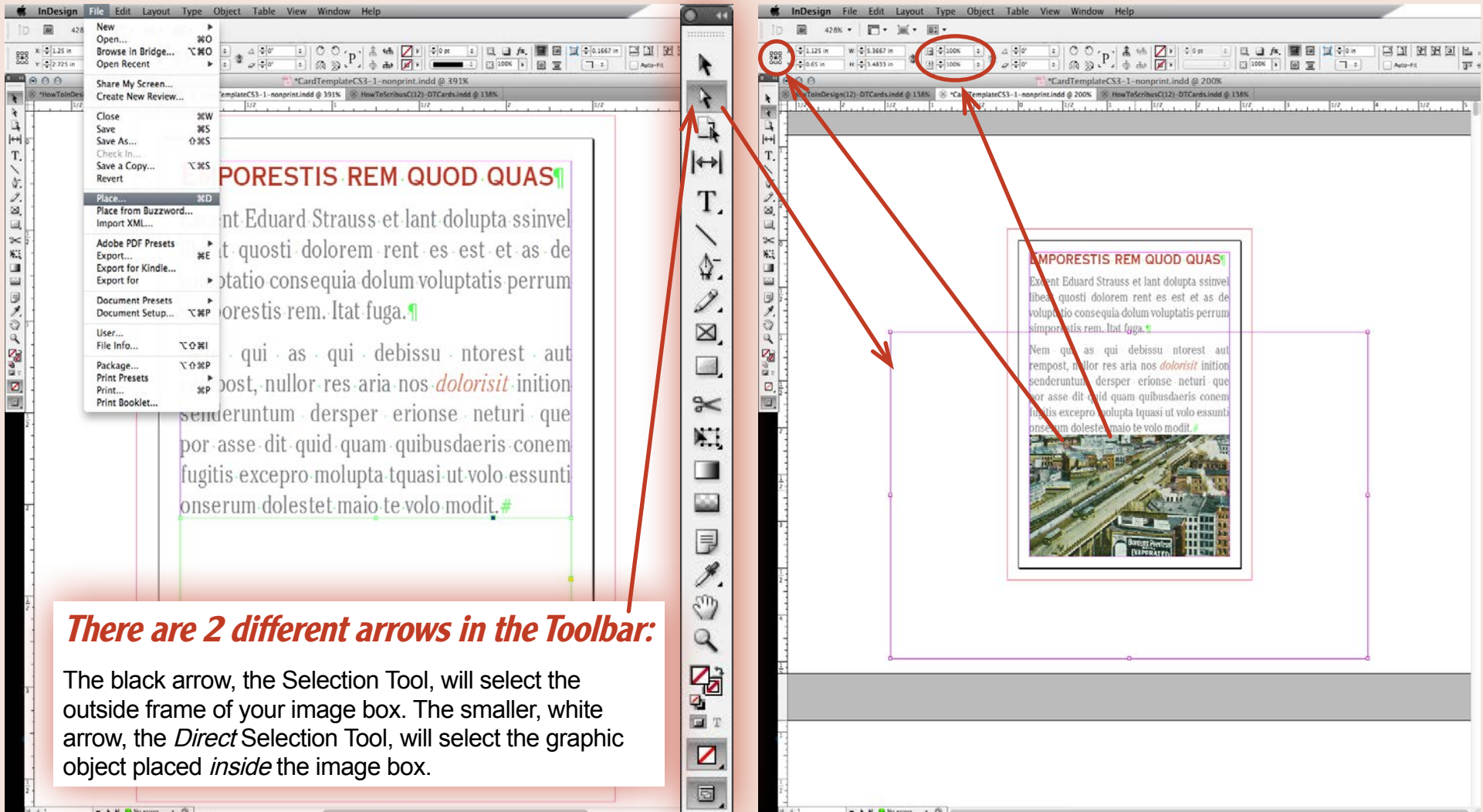
Specify Keep with Next: 2 Lines under Keep Options.

This will help you avoid widows and orphans in longer text passages.

Choose for legibility!

Your body text will be small, so use a font that is easy to read and without many flourishes. Industry standard for size is 10 to 12 points with leading set to auto or no less than 2 points more than the font size.

6. Adding Art

Start by adding a Rectangle Frame the same way you did when you previously added a frame for text. To turn this frame into an Image Frame, click to select the frame using the black arrow, or Selection Tool, from the toolbar. Then, open the File drop-down menu and select Place. Navigate to the location of the image you would like to insert on the page.

If you take a look at your Control Bar, you can see that the image was imported at 100% of its size and was placed in the center of the Image Frame. It was placed in the center because this was the Reference Point assigned to it in the Control Bar. Most of the imported image is outside of the Image Frame's viewable area, so now we're going to fix that by scaling the picture to the box.

There are 2 different arrows in the Toolbar:

The black arrow, the Selection Tool, will select the outside frame of your image box. The smaller, white arrow, the *Direct* Selection Tool, will select the graphic object placed *inside* the image box.

6. Adding Art (continued)

Fill Frame Proportionally: Under the Object pull-down menu, if you choose Fitting, then Fill Frame Proportionally, the image will autofit in in proportion to the *largest* measure of the box. See the outline of the image in the Image Frame below.
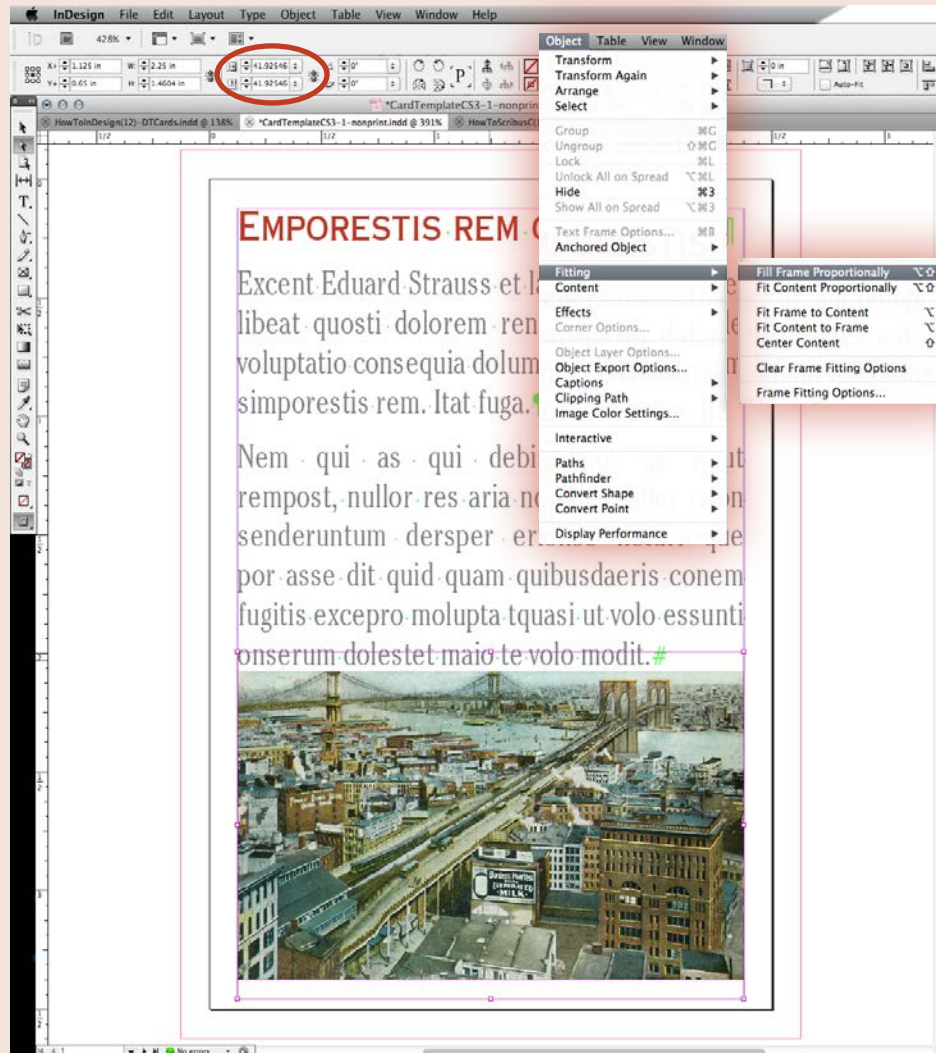
Fit Content Proportionally: Under the Object pull-down menu, if you choose Fitting, then Fit Frame Proportionally, the image will autofit in proportion to the *smallest* measure of the box. If you choose to use this, use the Fit Frame to Content command next. Your image frame will autofit to the size of the newly scaled graphic image.
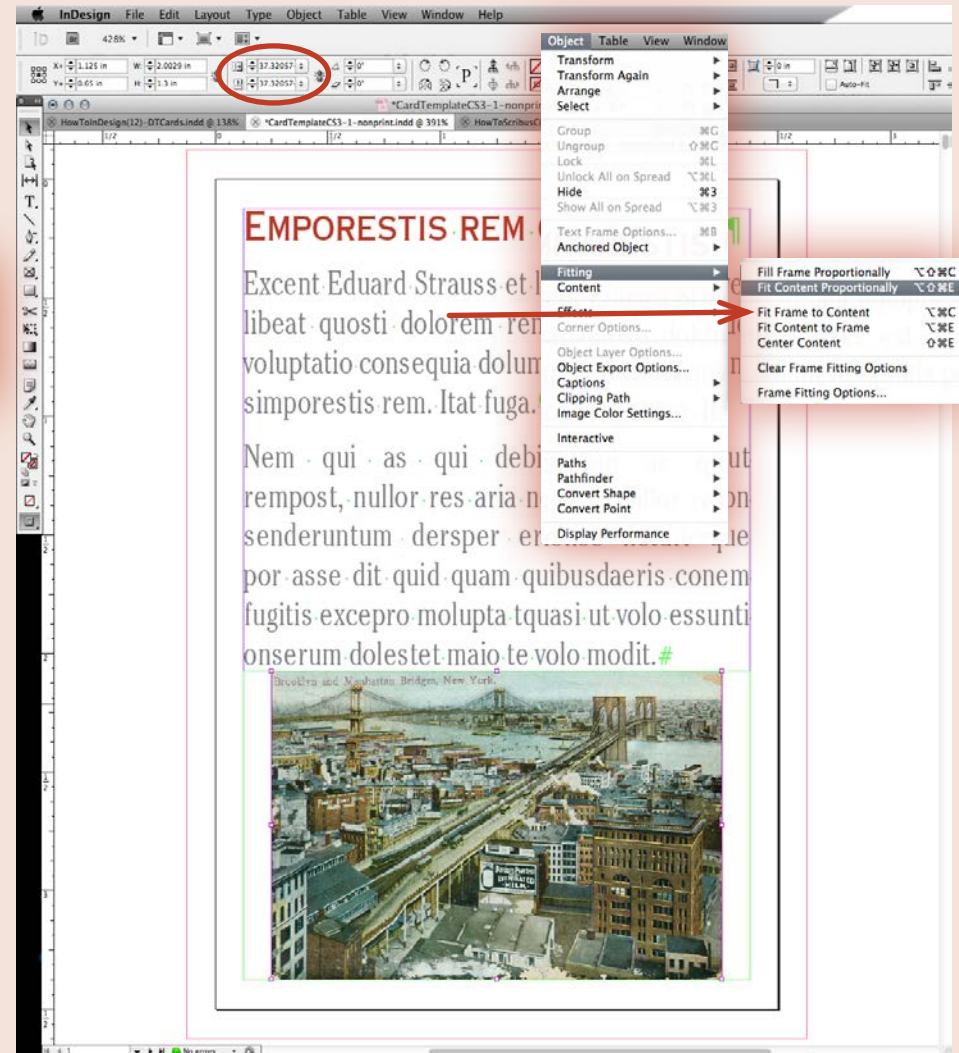
6. Adding Art (continued)

Fit Content to Frame: If you choose Fit Content to Frame, the image will autofit *out of proportion* to the measurements of the box. It is not recommended to scale your images out of proportion more than 2%, especially when the images are people or figures. They will look noticably stretched.

Here is an example of a graphic stretched out of proportion. You'll notice the broken chain icon to the right of the proportion fields in the Control Bar. This lets you know that if the image is scaled, it will not be constrained proportionally.
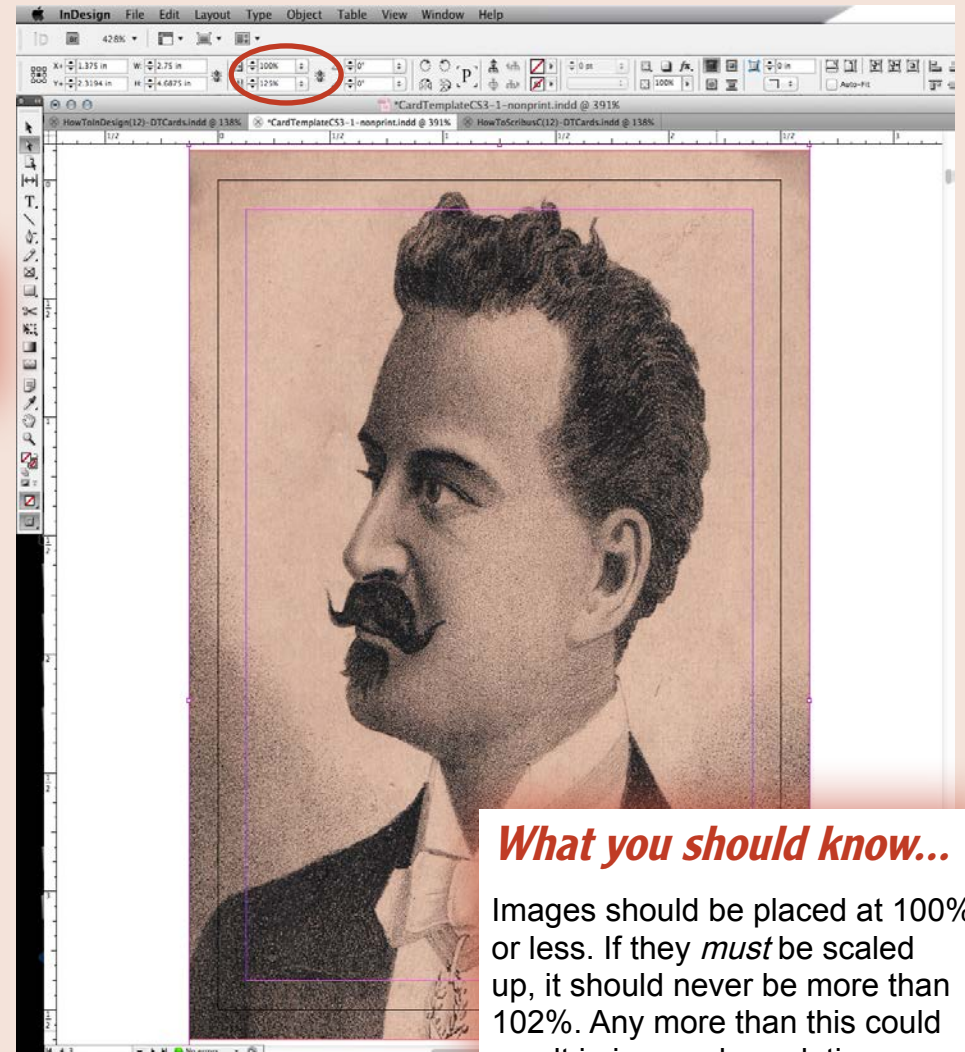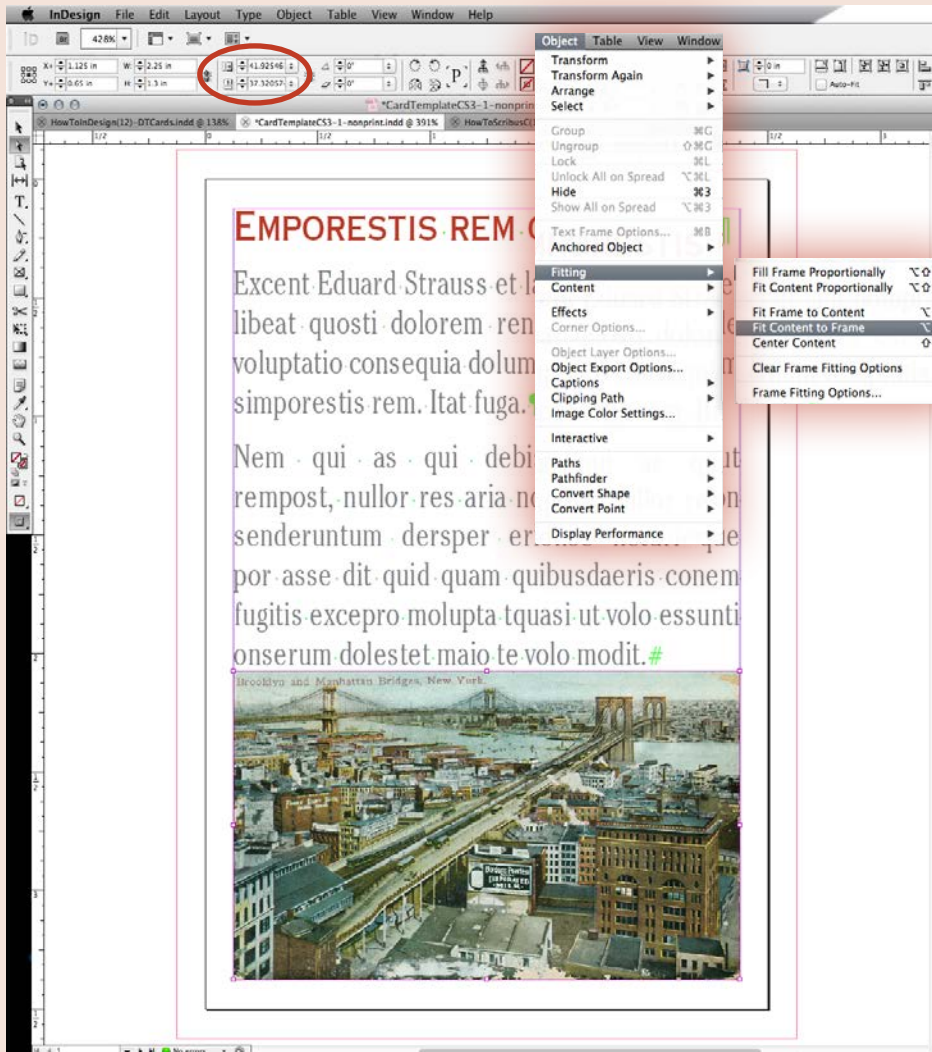

What you should know...

Images should be placed at 100% or less. If they *must* be scaled up, it should never be more than 102%. Any more than this could result in image degradation.
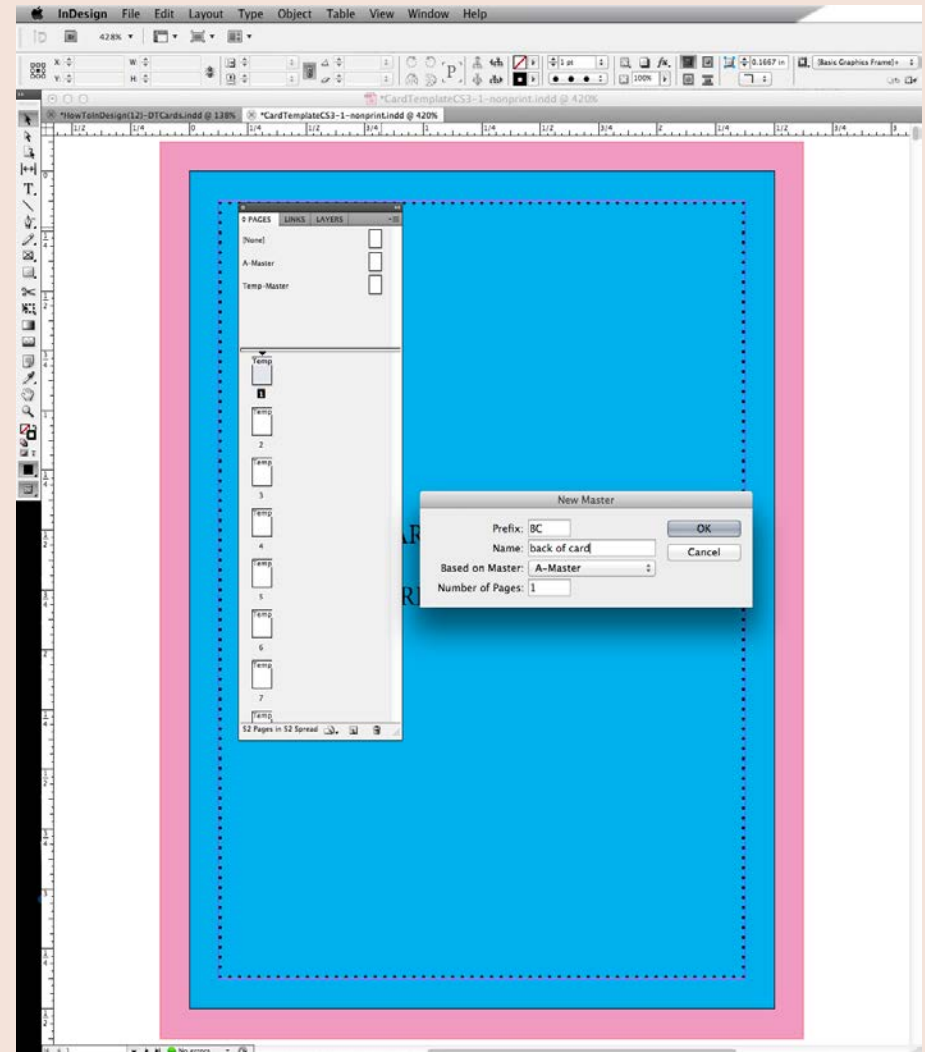
7. Creating Master Pages with InDesign

Master Pages allow you to place borders, text and other information just once in the file. Then those elements will appear on all of the pages you select, in the exact same spot. It's very useful for recurring items, like repeating card backs.

First, open your Pages Palette and select New Master.
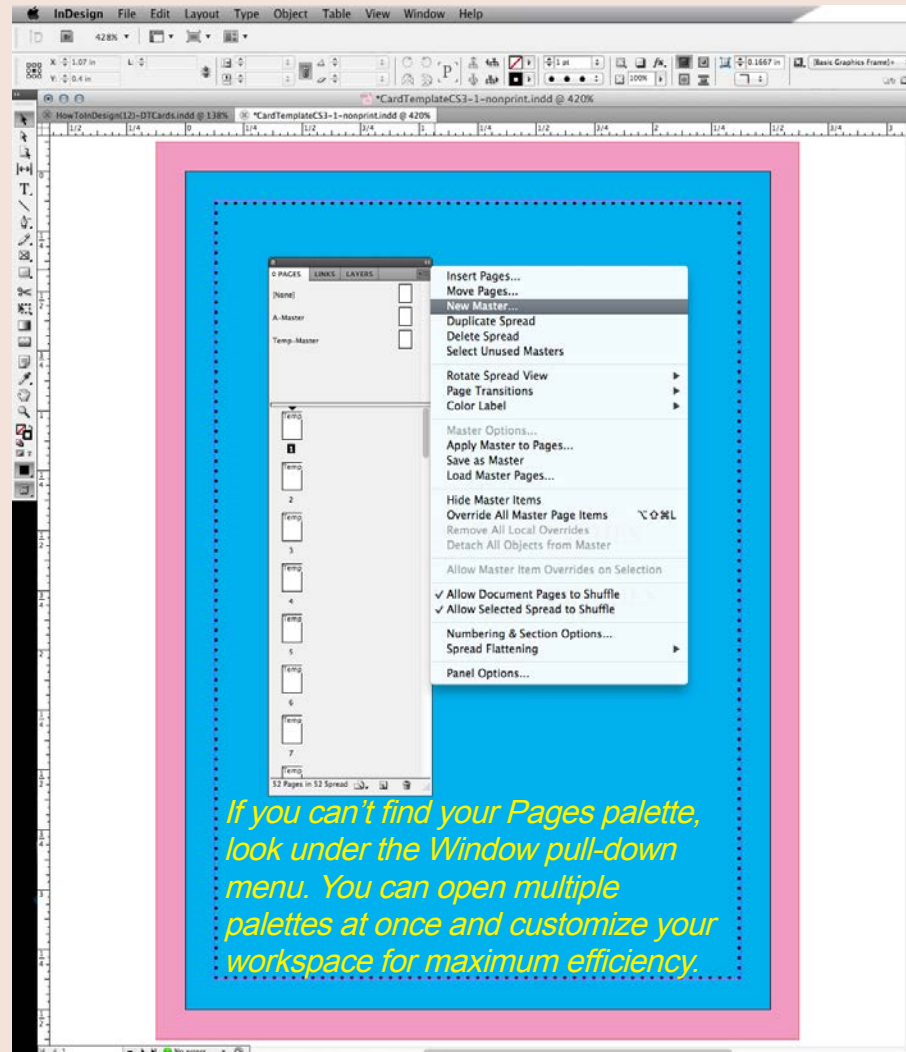
Then, name your new Master something easy to recognize. Make sure to select Based on Master: A-Master when you make a new Master Page in your downloaded template document. This way, the correct measurements for the safe area are applied to your new Master Page.

If you can't find your Pages palette, look under the Window pull-down menu. You can open multiple palettes at once and customize your workspace for maximum efficiency.

7. Creating Master Pages (continued)

Click on the Master Page you just made to make sure you're actually working on that page. It will highlight in the Pages Palette. Now, begin your work by adding text, images, or graphics. When you are done, you'll be ready to apply this template page to your document.

With your Master Page highlighted in the Pages Palette, expand the pull-down menu from the icon in the upper right-hand corner. Select Apply Master to Pages.

*If you're not sure what page you're on, this corner will tell you.*
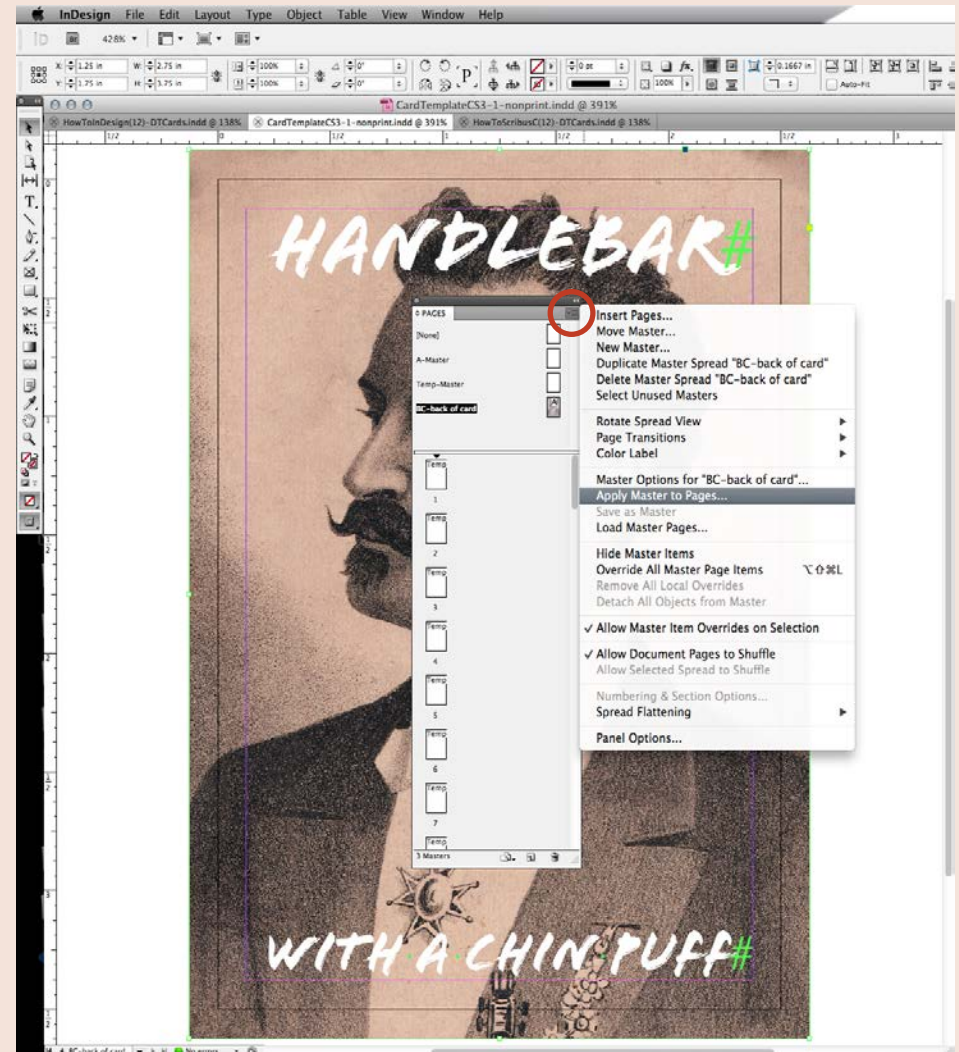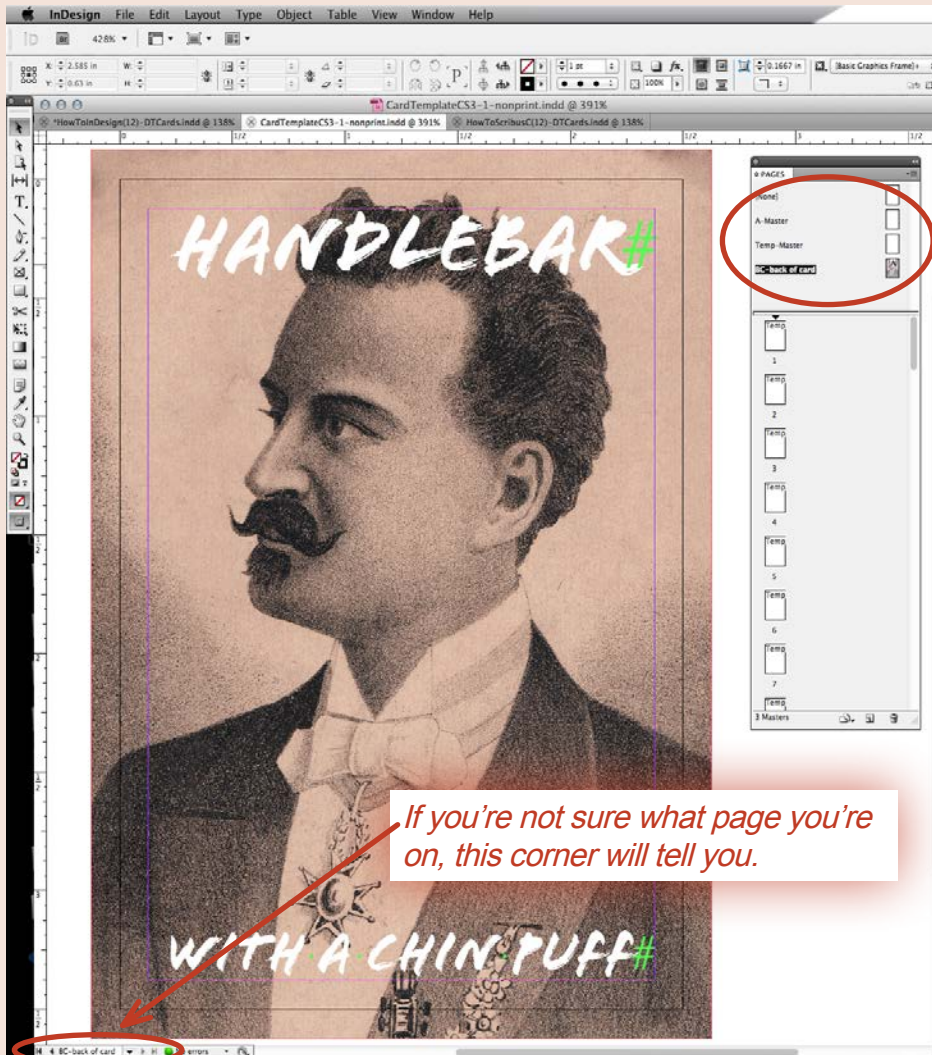
7. Creating Master Pages (continued)

In the dialog box that pops up, you can list the page numbers you would like to apply this Master Page to.

Alternately, with your Selection Tool, you can grab the Master Page icon from the Pages Palette and drag it on top of the page you wish to apply it to. It will automatically apply the Master to that one page.

Now, as with text Style Sheets, if you need to make changes to recurring elements in your document, you can just update your Master Page. The changes automatically update throughout your document, on all of the pages styled with that Master.
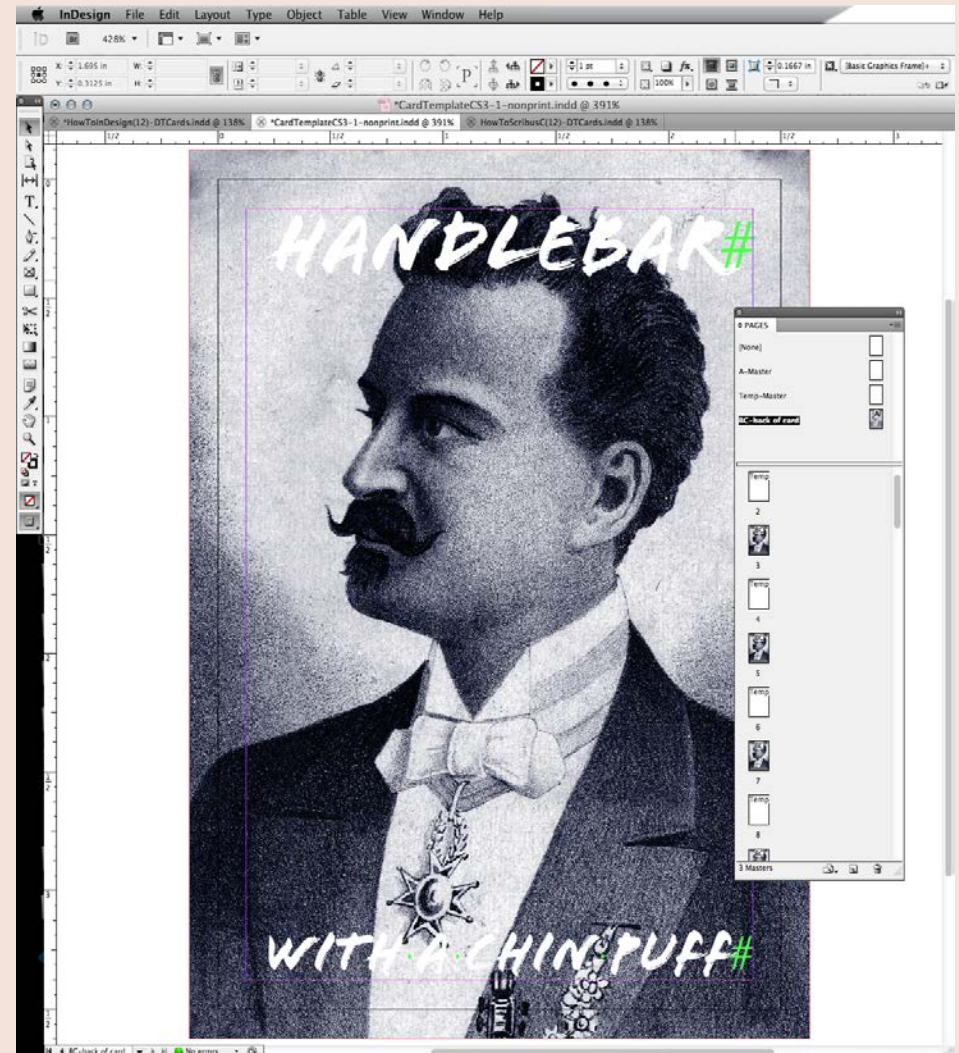
8. Exporting Your InDesign File as a Print-Ready Color PDF

When your work is complete, do a quick check to make sure there are no errors in the document, like missing fonts or broken image links. Look at the lower left-hand corner of your workspace. Preflight will automatically give you the number of errors that will need fixing. Double-click to open the Preflight panel and correct any errors.

After you've fixed your document, you're now ready to export your InDesign file as a print-ready PDF.
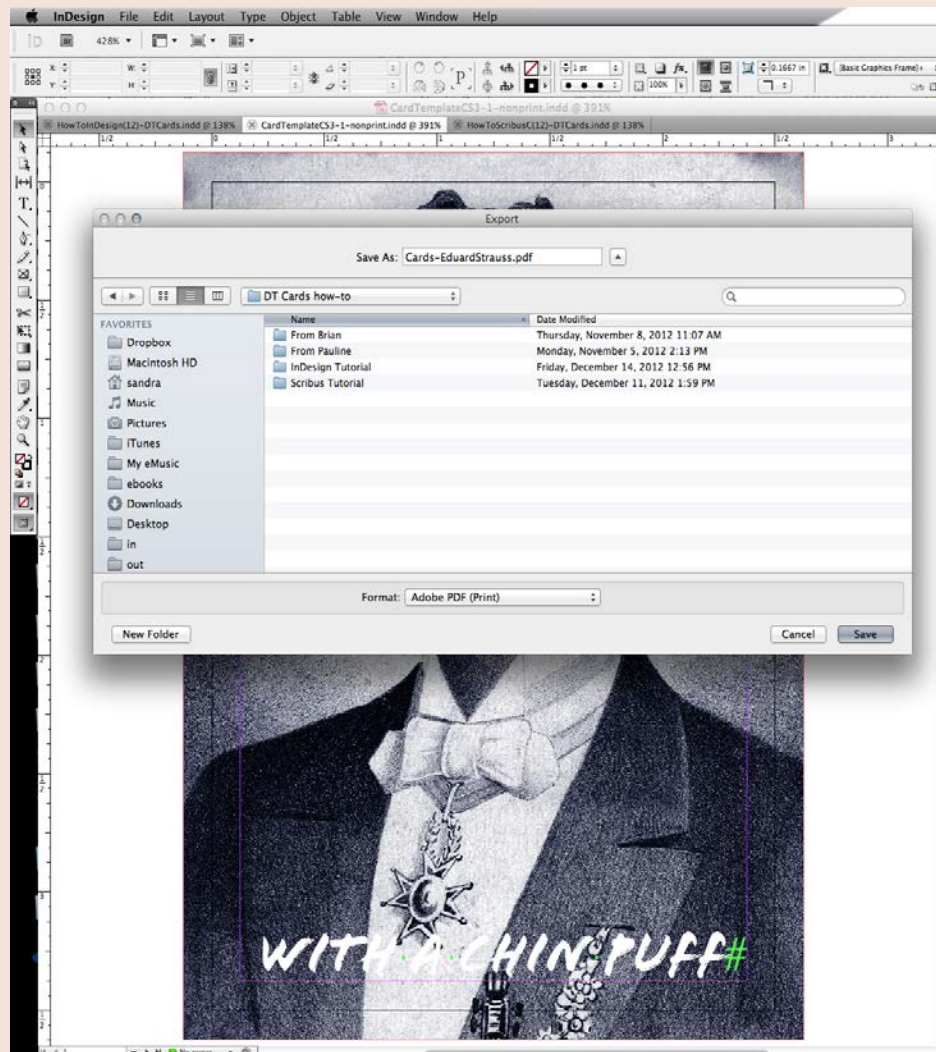
Go to the File pull-down menu and select Export.
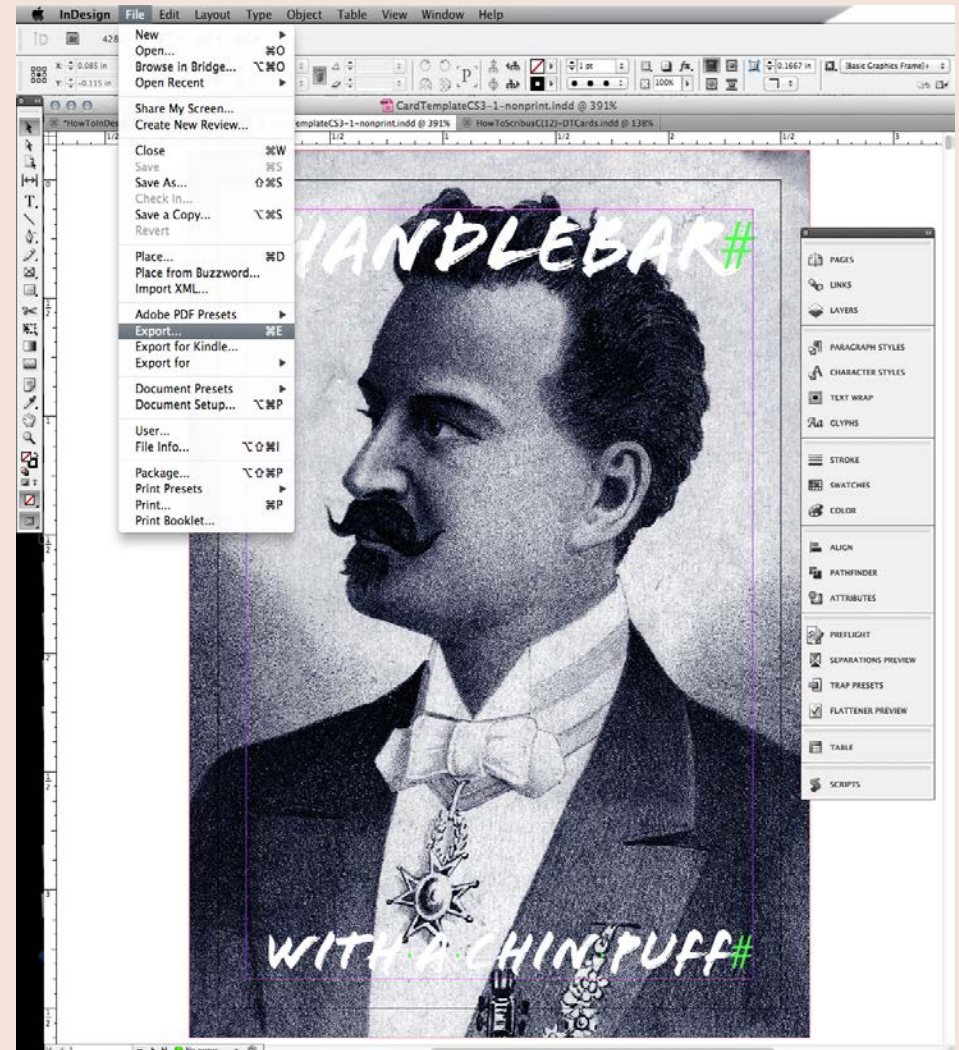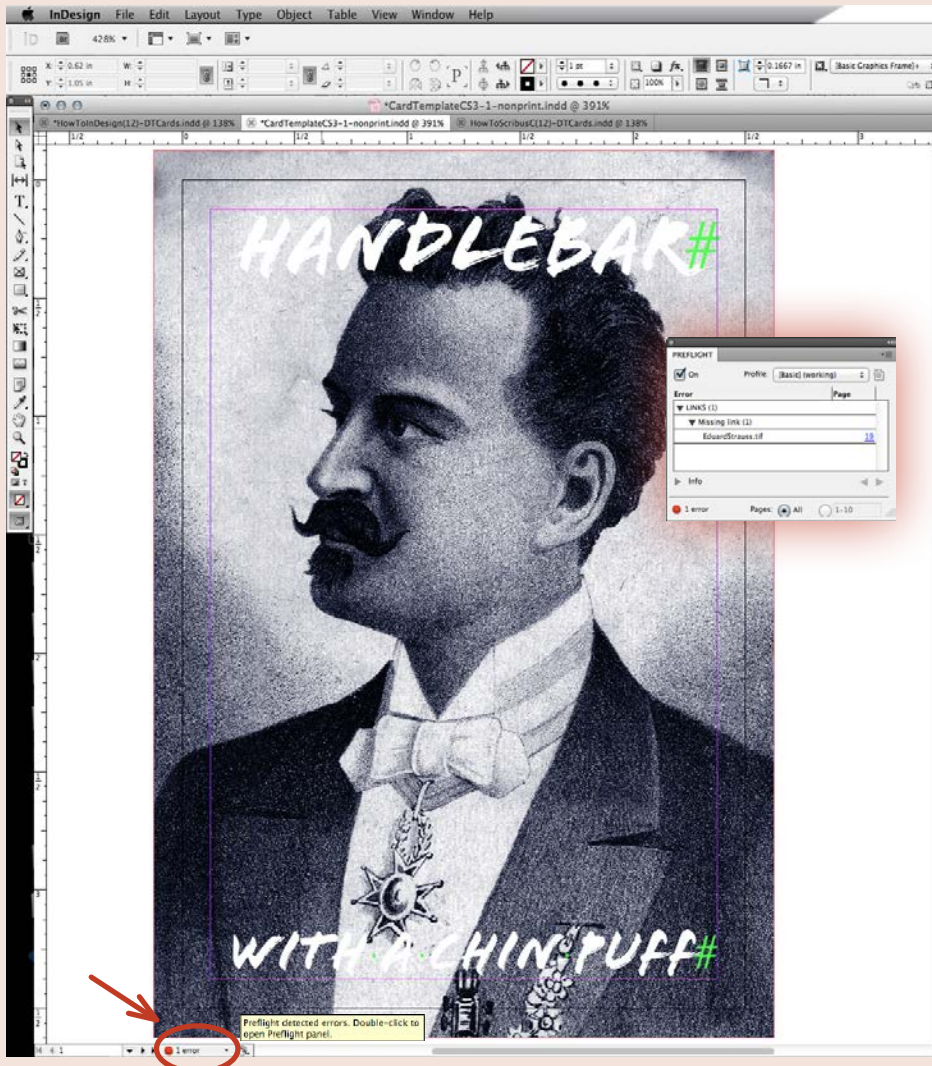
8. Exporting as a Print-Ready Color PDF (continued)

Next, in the Export dialog box, name your PDF and then choose a place to save it. Click the Save button.

Make sure the Adobe PDF (Print) format is selected.

The Export Adobe PDF dialog box will open next. The default view will be the General options tab. Click the Adobe PDF Preset pull-down menu and select PDF/X-1a:2003. This sets the PDF standard to PDF/X-1a:2003 for print. Modify this preset by checking the box next to Optimize for Fast Web View under Options.
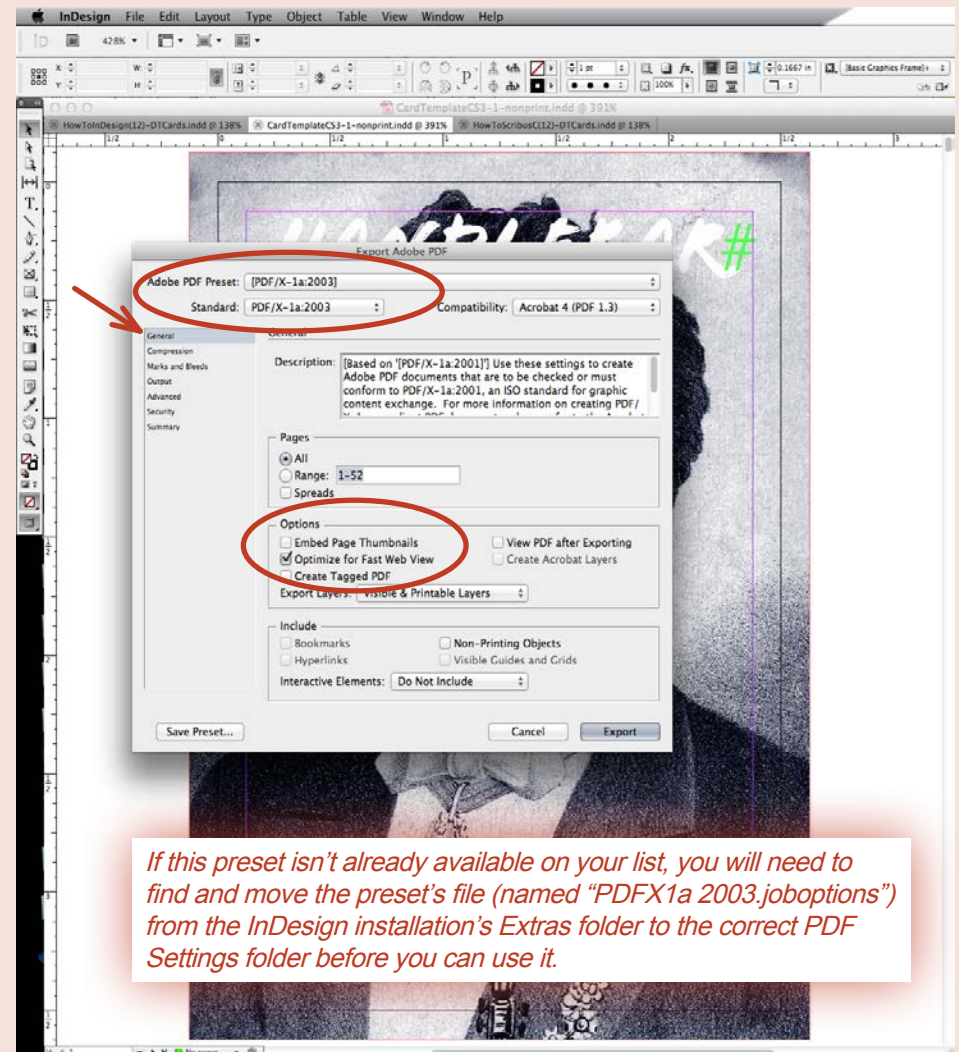
If this preset isn't already available on your list, you will need to find and move the preset's file (named "PDFX1a 2003.joboptions") from the InDesign installation's Extras folder to the correct PDF Settings folder before you can use it.

8. Exporting as a Print-Ready Color PDF (continued)

This next step is very important. Please follow it carefully.

Click the Marks and Bleeds tab in the Export Adobe PDF dialog box to view the options. Click to select Use Document Bleed Settings. Make sure the bleeds are set to 0.125" on all four sides. *Do not check any other boxes or fill out any other information on this page.*

Next, click the Export button to make your PDF. It will be processed and saved to the location you have indicated.

That's it! You have created a print-ready color PDF of your card deck!

What do I do next?

Once you have your finished print-ready PDF of your entire card deck, it's time to upload them! Go to the CARD PRINTING section of your Publisher Hub on the Publish page at DriveThruCards. Use the "Upload and manage printed card files" tool. This tool will walk you through the process of uploading your print PDF file and ordering a physical proof of your cards.

When you are done with your card layout and have made and uploaded your PDF, you may also want to Package your file for archiving. This is a very good idea because it collects all of the linked images and file fonts into one tidy and convenient file. If you ever have to go back for updates or alterations later, you won't have to search for missing linked images or fonts.
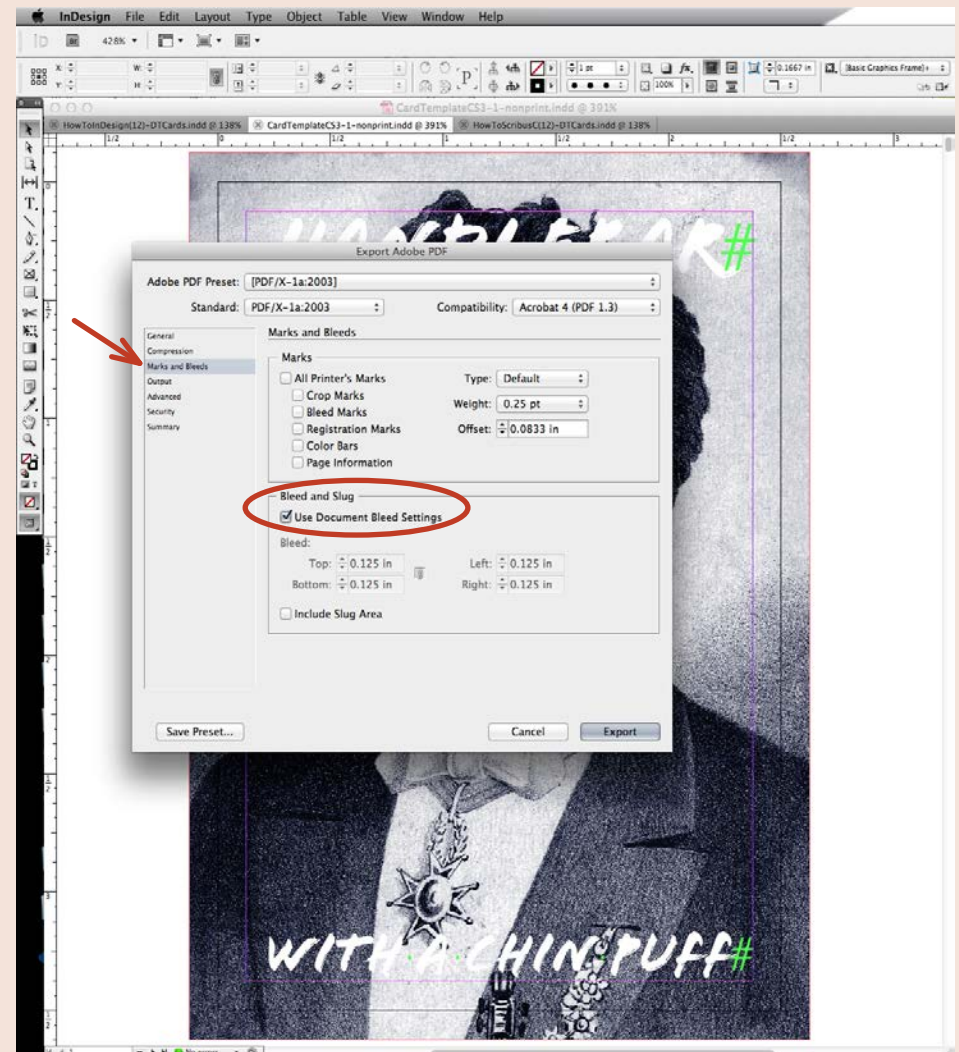
9. Preparing your Tuckbox for Press

Tuckboxes are full color (4/0), printed on 130# silk card stock (14.7-pt. thickness, 350gsm), and finished with a low-gloss UV coating. Tuckboxes are shipped with decks inserted. We currently offer tuckboxes for:

- 54-, 72-, 90-, and 120-card poker-sized decks
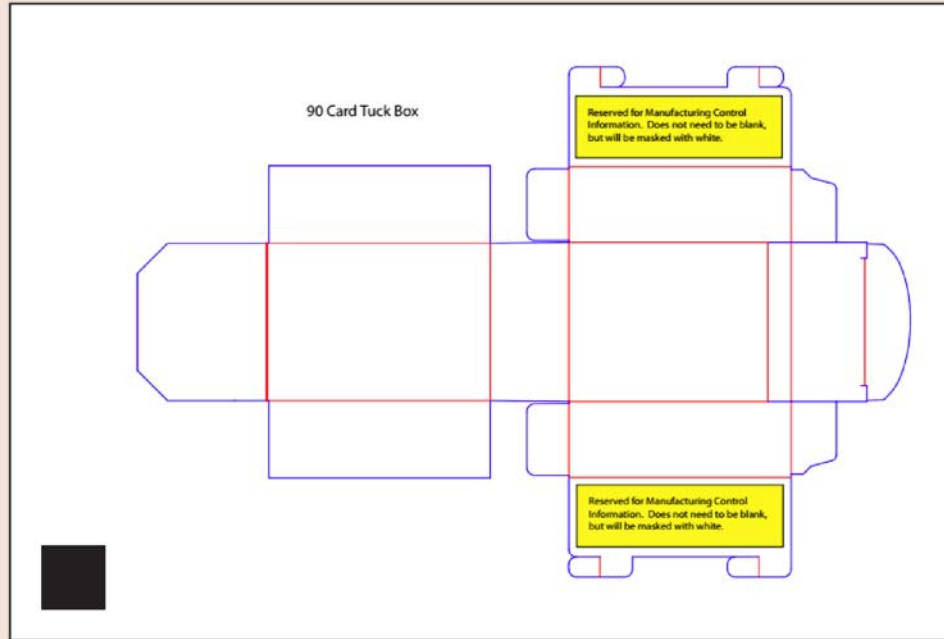- 80-card tarot-sized decks.

Required Specifications

You will need to prepare your tuckbox PDF using InDesign or Illustrator, due to some of the required specifications. We offer templates for both. You must adhere to these specifications:
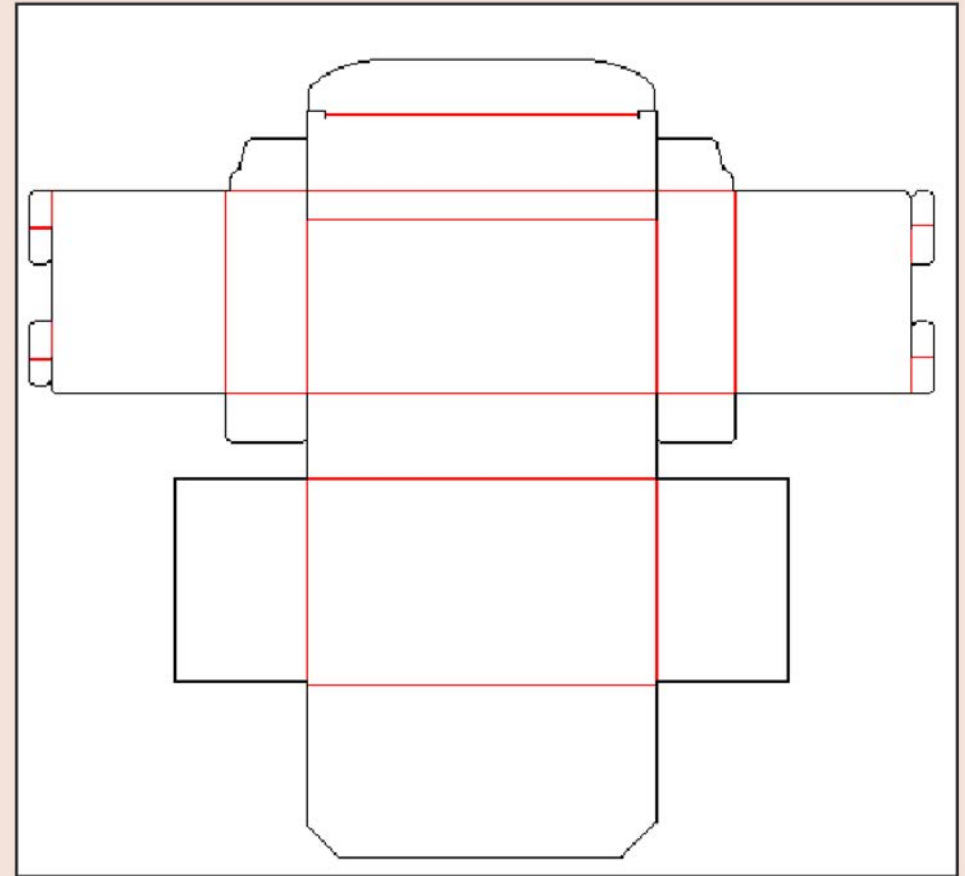
- On the sample, note the areas banded in red lines. These indicate the areas within which your artwork will print. Ensure that your artwork is placed within the proper areas.

- On the templates, red lines are scores, blue or black lines are cuts.

- **IMPORTANT:** Regarding the score and cut lines on the template's Guides layer: Output the print-ready PDF *after* turning off the Guides layer. *If you can see the die (score) lines in the design, they will appear on your finished tuckboxes.*

- **Leave the Alignment layer intact.** It may be labeled "Top Layer Do Not Hide." This contains a positioning box with a white background that helps the printer verify alignment.

- Images contained in your file should be 300 dpi.

- File needs to be PDF/X-1a:2003 (or PDF/X:1a:2001) compliant with all fonts embedded.

- Files must be CMYK with your ink coverage not exceeding 300%. However, for best results, try to keep your ink coverage to 240% or less.

- *Do not place any text closer than 1/8" from any finished edge or fold.*

- *A bleed of 1/8" (.125") past/across all edges of the box design is required.*

- *Do not include printer/crop marks.*

- *We discourage drastic changes in background color on score lines.*

- *The final PDF page size is 15" x 10" for poker tuckboxes. The final PDF page size is 19" x 13" for tarot tuckboxes.*

10. Sample Tuckbox Templates

Poker Tuckbox

90 Card Tuck Box

Reserved for Manufacturing Control Information. Does not need to be blank, but will be masked with white.

Reserved for Manufacturing Control Information. Does not need to be blank, but will be masked with white.

Tarot Tuckbox

11. Packaging Your Work for Archiving

First, make sure your file has no errors in the Preflight panel in the bottom left-hand corner of your workspace. Then, select Package from the File pull-down menu. The Package dialog box will open next. The Summary tab gives you an overview of your file. It also lists anything missing, or modified but not updated. Click the Package button, and then click past the next few windows.
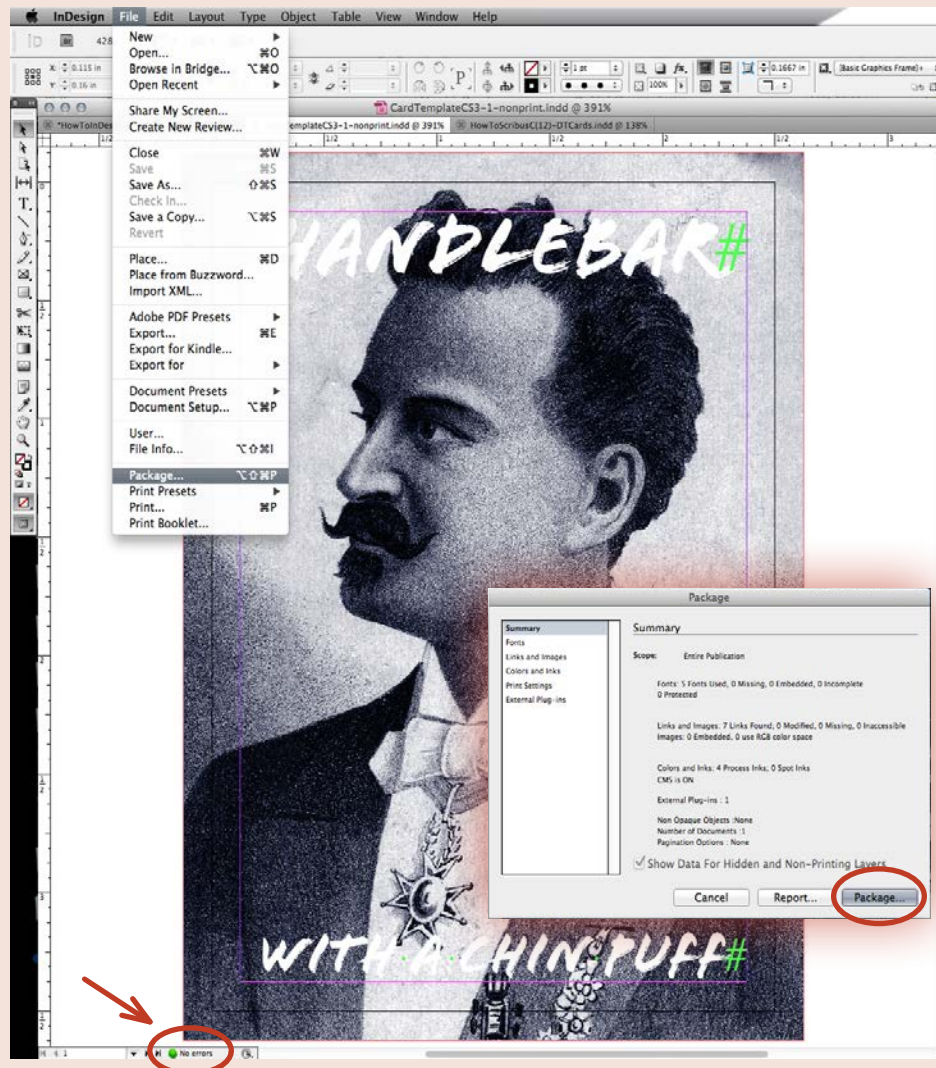
When the Create Package Folder dialog box appears, choose a location to save your package. Rename the folder, if you choose to. Make sure Copy Fonts, Copy Linked Graphics, and Update Graphic Links are all checked. Then, click the Package button in the lower right-hand corner of the dialog box. InDesign will collect all of your file bits into one place for you.
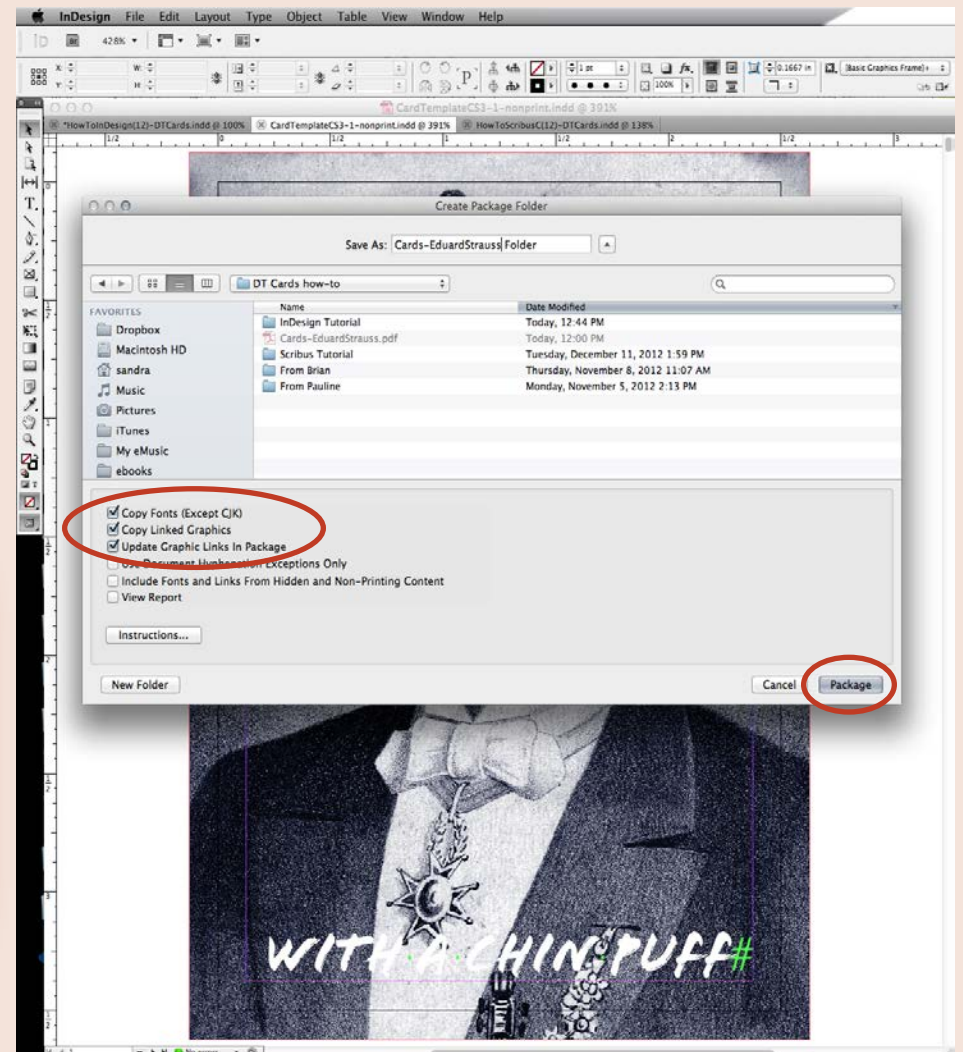
12. Tips and Things to Remember
About Specifications

- Press-ready PDF files must be PDF/X-1a:2003 compliant. In a pinch, PDF/X-1a:2001 is also acceptable.

- All images must be 300 dpi/ppi resolution. The physical size of the image should at least be the size as it appears on the card.

- All images should be CMYK. Do not use RGB or Lab colors. The colors may shift unpredicably during the export to print-ready PDF process.

- Preferred image formats are TIFF or EPS files. Refrain from using JPG or PNG files, which are more suitable for web publishing.

- Header fonts shouldn't be ridiculously large. The optimal range is 24 pts to 14 pts. Body Fonts should be 10 pts to 12 pts. Line spacing or leading is usually 2 points more than the font size.

- In making your text fit into small spaces, avoid Tracking your text more or less than 20%. It will look too squished or too loose.

- Avoid widows and orphans: leaving a single word at the end of a paragraph or a single line at the top or bottom of a column of text.

- Black text should be made with a 100% black swatch, with total CMYK values of 0% Cyan (C), 0% Magenta (M), 0% Yellow (Y), and 100% Black (K).

- Black elements should NOT be built in "Registration" black or with the 100% black swatch used for text. They should be built using "Rich" black. For best results, we recommend the CMYK values of 60% Cyan (C), 40% Magenta (M), 40% Yellow (Y), and 100% Black (K). CMYK total value should not exceed 300%.

- Text should be at least 0.125" from the trim edge.

- Embed all fonts used in the document (all font families used, including all screen and printer fonts).

- Do not add information or printer marks such as crop marks, web-press comments, etc.

13. I Need More Help!
I have questions that aren't covered here...

To contact Publisher Services, please email brian@onebookshelf.com.

Brian will do his best to help you and answer any questions you have that are not covered in this tutorial. Your questions will help us improve this tutorial, so it answers more questions for everyone.

If you have decided that you don't care to do your own file layout, you can find people with professional skills and contract them to create your print files. The cost of this work depends on how much of the work you do yourself before handing it over.

We can recommend someone for layout if you would like. Please contact Publisher Services for details.

You can also find freelance layout professionals at sites like www.elance.com.