

CREATING A GRID

WHY USE A GRID?

A grid is the blueprint for your publication's architecture. Think of it as space planning. Grids are used for all design disciplines—architecture, product, industrial and graphic.

Upon first hearing about grids, students tend to view them as constraints. Grids are simply guides and organization. They are organic, growing out of the nature of the project, the decisions the designer makes and finally the audience the work is intended for.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT?

Before you create a grid, you must know what you are trying to convey. Say you are creating a grid for a publication. Is it hard news, conservative, edgy, fashion - oriented, writer-centered, you have to know your content, and the audience it is intended for.

Example:

You are a friendly community paper that covers local news. Your stories are 10-15 inches long, they are not generally hard news, you have quality photography and printing. You are in a growing suburb with young families.

WHICH TYPEFACE?

Now that you know who you are, and who your audience is, you can comfortably make your type selections. The nuances of a grid comes from the face, it's size and leading.

Example, cont.:

You choose Myriad 9pt. with 12 leading and tracking set at 12. Based on experience, you know you will improve readability by having some extra space between columns.

Once you have this information and have fomed some early design iterations, you are ready to construct your grid.

PAGE SIZE: BROADSHEET

DIMENSIONS: 11.8 X 21.4 INCHES

THE BASELINE OR HORIZONTAL GRID

Your baseline grid will mirror the points of leading in your text type. For this example, we will use 12 pt. leading.

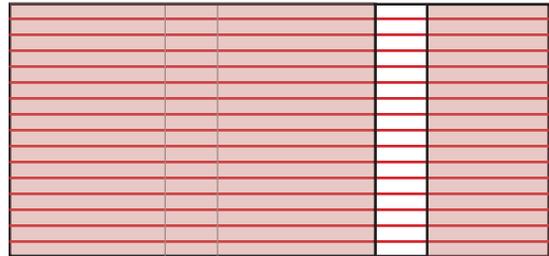
In InDesign, these settings are located in Preferences > Grid.

TIP: For more flexibility and better spacing, divide the leading by two.

Example: 12 pt. leading divided by 2 = 6 pt.

Enter 6 pt. as your setting, InDesign will automatically adjust over to the document's Units.

6 pt. baseline (horizontal) grid



LOCKING THE BASELINE GRID

Locking type to the baseline grid is a key step in improving consistency and sophistication. It also saves you a tremendous amount of time - all of your text will always line up. There is no need to set any more alignment keys for the text in this document. You are guaranteed clean consistent spacing throughout.

Type set on the baseline:

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InDesign has this in the Paragraph Styles window, under the 'Indents and Spacing' tab. In the drop-down menu, choose "All Lines" to match this example.

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COLUMNS AND GUTTERS

You have already decided to expand the space between the columns to make the gutters wider. A rule of thumb to start with is to use 3 units of the baseline grid. In our example, one unit equals 6 pts, so 3 units = 18 pt. or 1 pica and 6 points.

With InDesign, you can set your columns when you set up the document, or by altering Master Pages in the Layout > Margins and Columns window. For a straight 5-column grid, simply choose 5 columns and the gutter size (in this case, 1p6). The program automatically sets the columns.

The example to the right is a 5-column grid broken down into half units, or 10 columns.

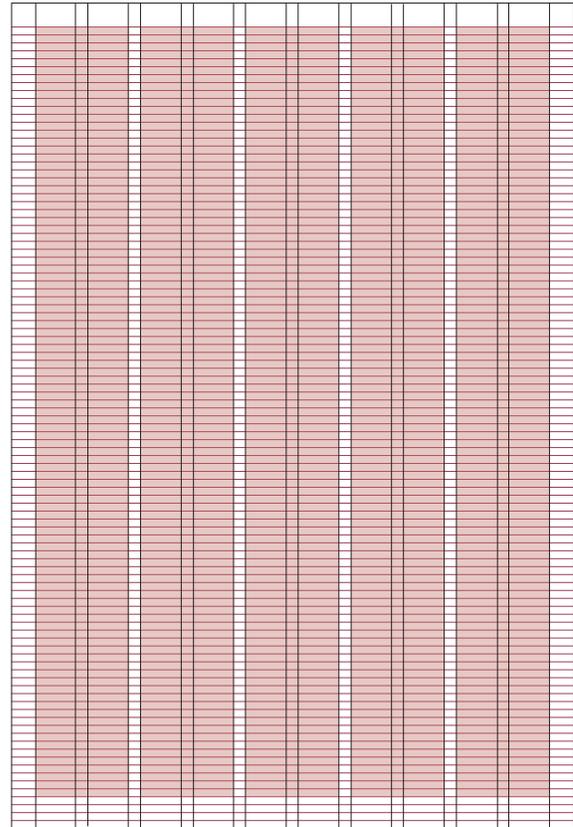
The half-column units provide more layout options, and can be used to determine the size and placement of small or unusual photos, graphics, tables, etc. in the layout.

MULTIPLE VERTICAL GRIDS IN ONE DOCUMENT

Because advertising is generally based on a 6-column grid in broadsheet publications, you will often see two or more vertical grids employed in one publication. You could use the 5-column grid for the cover and 6-column grids for pages with ads.

Always keep the baseline (horizontal) grid consistent throughout your document.

If you want type to flow outside the baseline (for headlines or for creative purposes), simply create a new Style that is not locked to the baseline grid.



EXAMPLE: 5-COLUMN GRID WITH BASELINE GRID

Since this is only one example of how to create a grid, it's important to learn as much as possible about grids and how to use them.

The more you know, the more confident you will feel about creating, using, and transforming grids.

RESOURCES:

"Grid Systems in Graphic Design"
Josef Muller Brockman
(Arthur Niggli; Bilingual edition, 1996)

"Grid Systems: Principles of Organizing Type (Design Briefs)"
Kimberly Elan
(Princeton Architectural Press August, 2004)

"Grid: A Modular System for the Design and Production of Newspapers, Magazines, and Books"
Allen Hurlburt (Wiley, 1982)