

Wireframing using **InDesign**

by peterpixel

InDesign?

Whilst not exactly the first application that comes to mind when you are making a wireframe, InDesign is a great tool for doing exactly that. There are four basic features that enable you to make wireframes in InDesign.

Masters

Masters are templates that you can use throughout your document. Use them to define the outline of your document. They should contain elements that are on each and every page, such as page numbers or the outline of your wireframe. Things that belong in the Master are typically found in the same place with the same design on every page.

Paragraph Styles

Like HTML and CSS we can define certain styles and apply them throughout the document, to keep things consistent but also to change a lot of things all at once. I encourage you to always define paragraph styles, it saves a lot of time in the long run.

Nested Documents

A powerful feature of InDesign, enabling us to design commonly used elements and nest them inside our Interaction Design Document so that we can edit them all at once. The best use of nested documents are for elements with the same design but located on different places and not on every page.

Libraries

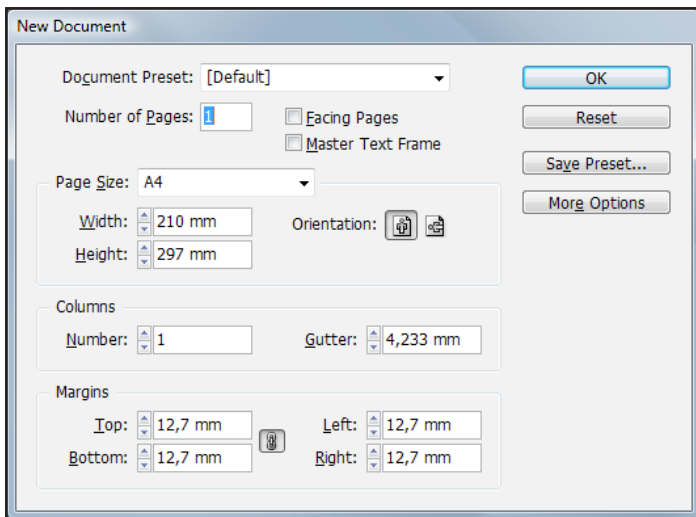
Libraries make life a lot easier for us since we can download a library with commonly used elements such as icons or cursors and re-use them throughout our document. You can best use libraries for more detailed elements such as icons.

The Basics

Before we start we need to get the basics done. To make a new Interaction Design Document in InDesign:

Click **File > New > New Document**

Make sure you select A4 size, have the correct Orientation and that Facing Pages is not turned on.



Masters

Now that we have a new document it is time to set it up a bit.

Click the **Window > Pages** and select the **A-Master**

The A-Master should contain the basic structure for most of the pages of your Interaction Design Document. It is an important page and it is important that you define what you want to have in it. For our purposes we want a title and a page number text box. To achieve this, we select the **Type Tool** (located in the left panel) and drag a text box big enough to contain our page titles.

For our page number we do exactly the same thing. Take note of the blue lines around the text boxes: they are dotted, indicating that they are in the Master.

To get an automatic page number on each page, select the **Type Tool** and click on the text box where you want your page number to appear. You should see the blinking cursor.

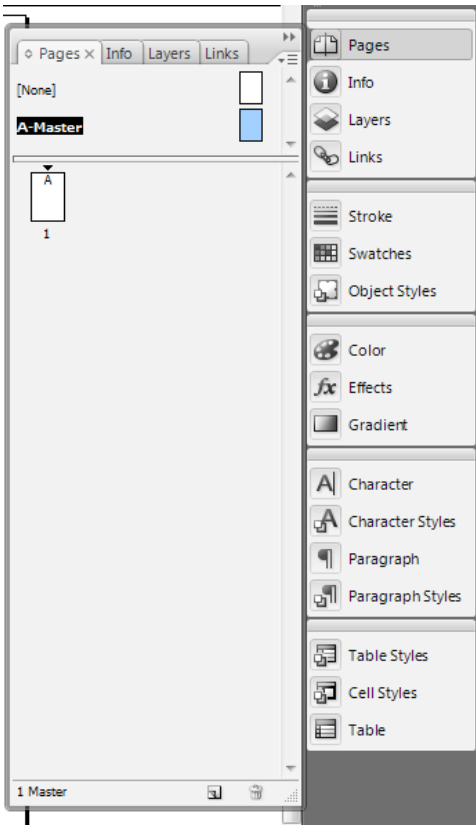
Go to **Type > Insert Special Character > Markers > Current Page Number**

You should see that the text box has been filled with a character, in this case an A, indicating the page we are one namely the A-Master.

To see page numbers in action once again go to your Pages (**Window > Pages**) and double click the first page. Please note: we are not working with Masters anymore; we are on the canvas.

If you have done it correctly, you should see that the page you selected has a **1** in the corner, indicating the page number.

Paragraph Styles



Just like HTML and CSS we can define paragraph styles. This is a handy way of making sure all the font sizes are the same for different elements and it gives you the ability to change it all at once.

Let's go back to our Master again and by double clicking the A-Master in the Pages palette.

With the Type Tool selected, selected the page number (in our case the **A**).

Go to **Window > Type & Tables > Paragraph Styles**

You should see the Paragraph style palette appear. Click the New Paragraph Style and right click the new Paragraph Style and then we can proceed to edit it. Make sure however that your page number is still selected on the A-Master.

Now we are seeing the Paragraph Style Options dialogue box. Here we can define our Style Name (Page Number), Font Family, Size, etc. Play around a little until you find the right font and size. With the Preview Button ticked you can see you changes as you make them.

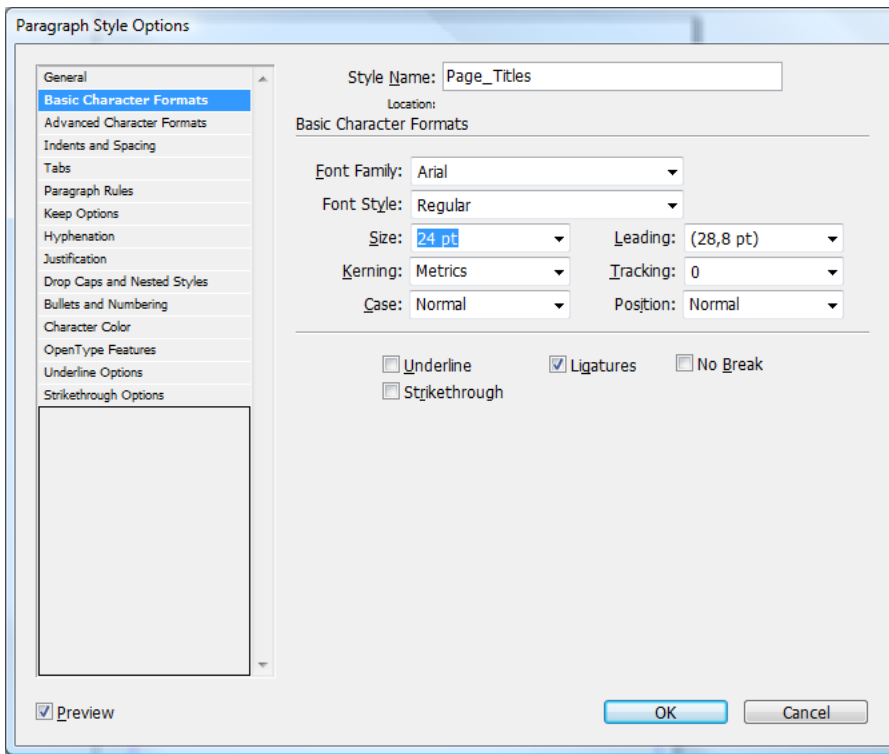
Now we are going to define the Default Paragraph Style for our page titles. Create a new Paragraph Style, go to the Paragraph Style Options of that style (make sure your page number is deselected) and make a Paragraph style that would be good for titles.

When you have done that, and selected **OK**, click inside the text box (with the Type Tool selected) that we want to use for our page titles and then click our newly created Paragraph Styles. What this had done is make sure that all the text inside that particular text box will have that style applied to it.



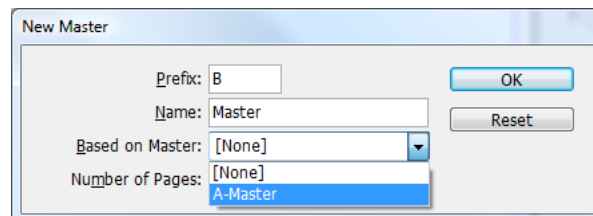
When we go to the canvas and select the first page, we can add text to the title text box. **CTRL + SHIFT + Click** (Windows) or **CMD + Shift + Click** (Mac) the title box. This will "lift" it up from out of the Master and make it editable. Whatever you do though, **do not move it around at all**. This will remove it completely from the Master and will result in you not being able to edit it in the Master and have the changes reflect in all your pages.

You should be able to type a page title now, and if everything has been done correctly, the paragraph style we defined earlier should be applied automatically. If that is not the case, simply go back to your **A-Master**, click the text box with the **Type Tool** selected and select the appropriate paragraph style.



Another Master

We have seen how to make Paragraph Styles and Masters but now it is time that we start doing some wireframing. To start off, let us build another Master. This is done by right-clicking in the **Pages** palette, above the divider between the Masters and the Pages and select **New Master**. Make sure your new Master is based on the A-Master.

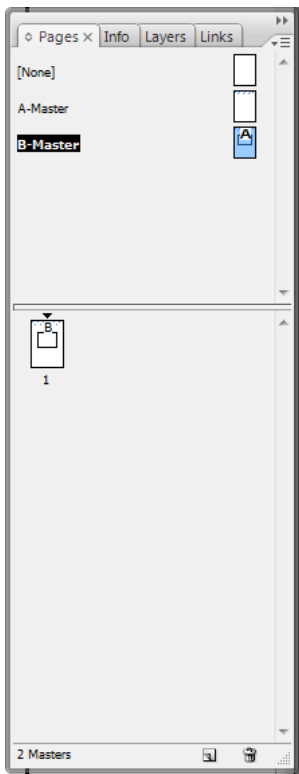


You should see a new Master Page appear that looks identical to your A-Master. This is because it is based on the A-Master and the B-Master has effectively been layered on top of the A-Master.

With the B-Master selected we can draw the outlines of our wireframe (for our purposes a mobile device), with the Rectangle Tool, located on the panel on the left.

With that done we will go and apply this new B-Master on the first page of our canvas. This is done by dragging your B-Master onto your first page. Or any page for that matter.

The beauty of this is that you can now simply drag our Master onto any other

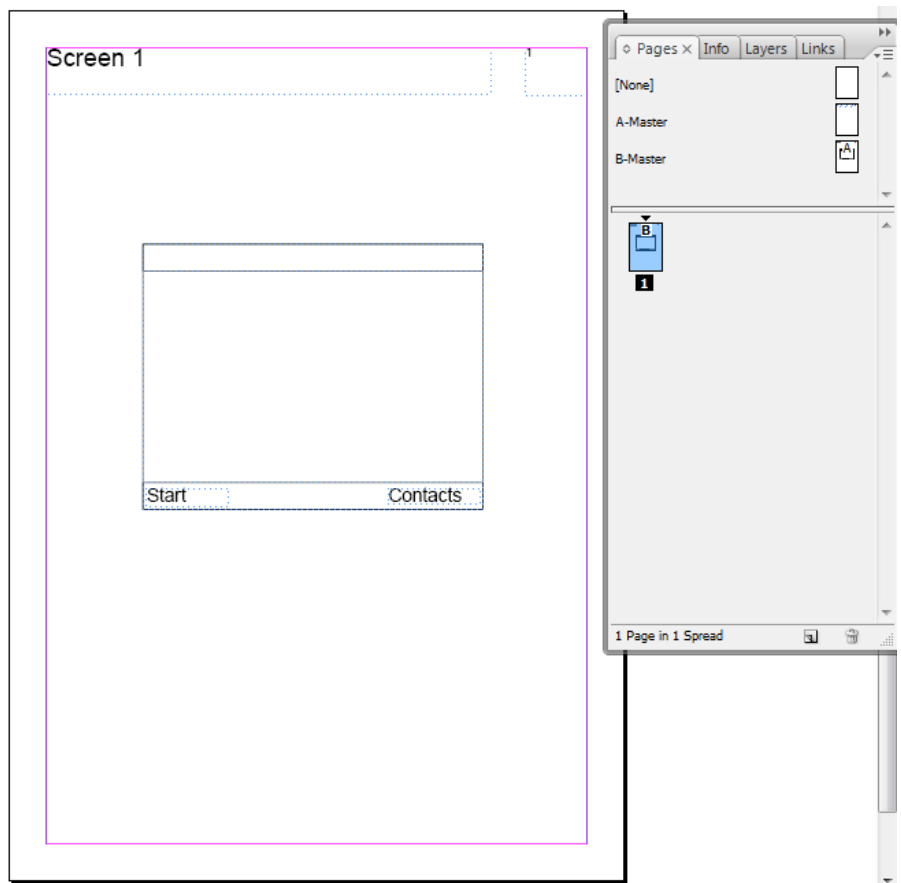


pages that require the outline of the wireframe. We can also go back to the Master and edit the wireframe to add or remove elements that reappear in every screen, which saves a lot of time.

To see this in action, let's edit the **B-Master** by adding a bar at the top of our mobile application screen and a menu at the bottom, with some labels. Once again, take note of the dotted lines: this indicates that you are working with an element that is part of a Master or that you are inside a Master. When making the labels for your menu items, make sure to apply paragraph styles to them.

You should see the changes made in the **B-Master** reflected on the first page. Changes made to your **A-Master** will be seen on your **B-Master** and all the pages with a the **B- or A-Master** applied.

To add new pages to your document, simply click the Add New Page button on your **Pages** palette. For us it should contain the **B-Master** template but you can also just drag your **A-Master** on top of it to apply a different master.



Nested Documents

By now we should have a few paragraph styles defined and some basic wireframe. Next we are going to use a really simple but powerful feature of InDesign and that is the ability to nest documents. For this we open a new document, in this case the size does not matter.

File > New > New Document

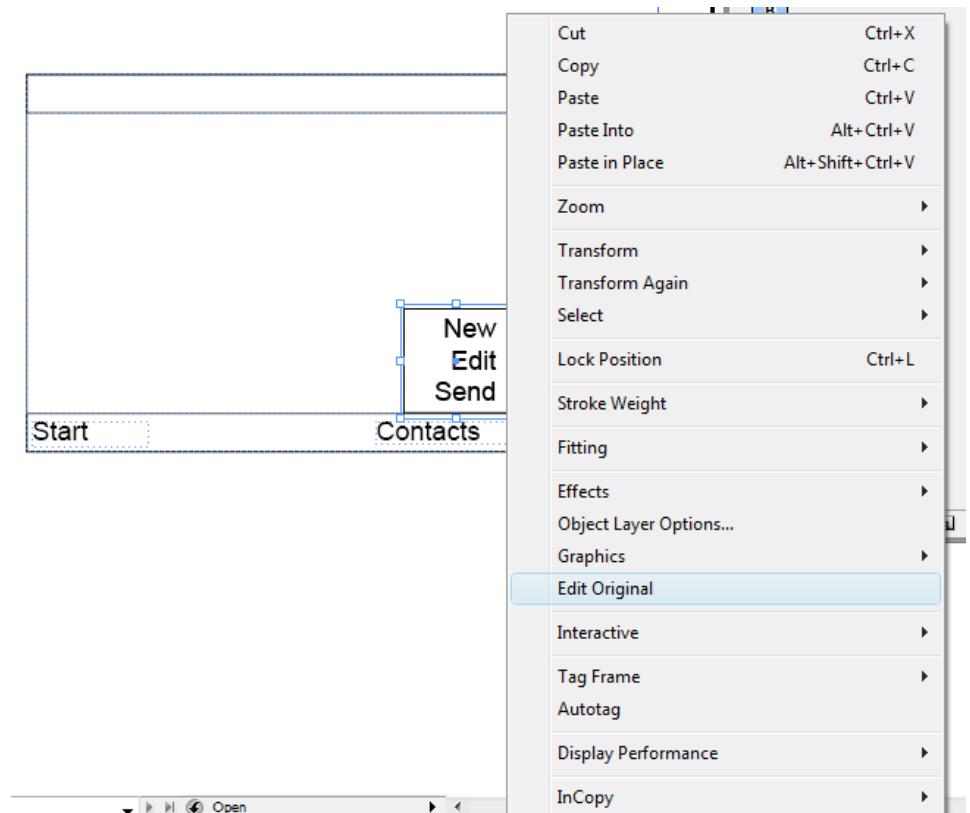


New
Edit
Send

Next we are going to make a menu that will be used by us frequently throughout the application, the Contacts Menu. The same rules apply: make use of paragraph styles once again. Save this document and give it a name that is consistent with whatever naming scheme you want use, for Instance e01, or Element01.

Close this newly created document. Now locate it on your computer and drag it inside your Interaction Design Document. You will notice that this newly created element, once dragged onto your canvas, is quite large. Simply resize it and put it where the Contacts menu should be located. Once created and inside your document we can always edit the original. We can do this by right clicking the element and selecting **Edit Original**.

If, for instance, you decide that each and every contacts menu should not have the menu label Edit but Delete instead, you can achieve this quite easily by editing the original. In e01, make your changes and close the document. You should see these changes reflected in your original document containing the element. Nested elements can be viewed by clicking **Window > Links**. This gives us an overview of all of the elements we nested inside our document.



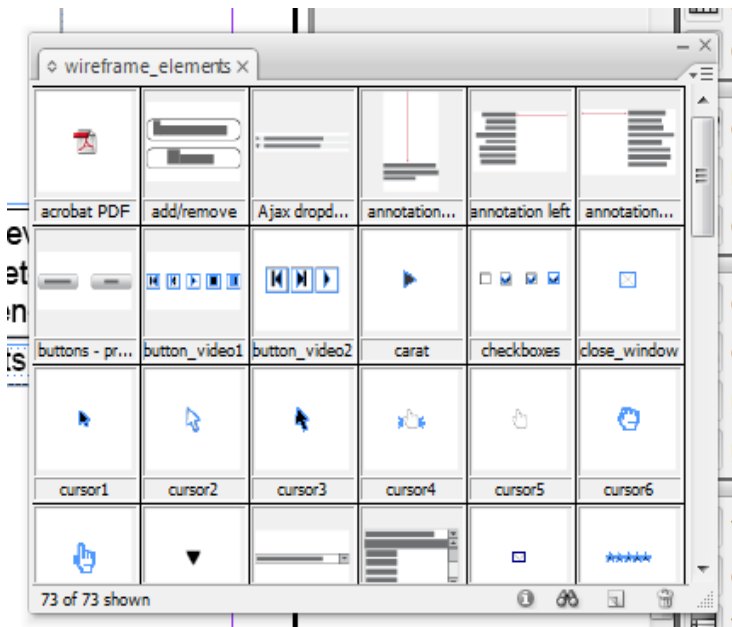
Libraries

We have created external documents, nested them inside our Interaction Design Document, created Paragraph styles and seen how Masters work. Now we can take a look at Libraries. They can be very powerful in saving you a lot of time while creating wireframes and there are a lot of them available for download.

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/34j5fd> and download the library wireframe_elements.indl. Once downloaded, double click it and it will open up in InDesign.

These libraries usually contain common objects, such as icons, symbols, etc. They save you time, so you don't have to create these icons yourself. To see them in action, we will once again go to our **B-Master** and drag the mobile phone icon onto our status bar.

Once again, if done correctly, this element will appear on the first page of our document, with a dotted outline, indicating it's status as a master element.



Big Picture

With these 4 features of InDesign, Masters, Paragraph Styles, Nested Documents and Libraries, it is possible to create quite large Interaction Design documents. The ability to add external documents and use Library elements means you can change hundreds of things at once. With Masters you don't have to waste time designing every page and paragraph styles make it easy to change all the text at once.

Some Resources

An overview of InDesign CS3 Shortcuts:

<http://www.nobledesktop.com/shortcuts-indesigncs3-mac.html>

Joel Lauman's Presentation on Wireframing:

<http://www.slideshare.net/piksels/wireframes-and-interaction-design-documents-presentation/>

The what, when and why of wireframes:

<http://userpathways.com/2008/06/26/the-what-when-and-why-of-wireframes/>

InDesign for Interactive Design Wireframing

<http://indesignsecrets.com/indesign-for-interactive-design-wireframing.php>



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