

Adobe InDesign

Level: 3

Career Cluster: Media Arts, Digital Technology

Program: Design and Digital Arts, Information Technology

Pathway: Graphic Design, Web Design

Course Catalog Description

Students develop advanced page layout and publication design skills using Adobe InDesign to create professional-quality print and digital documents through hands-on projects and industry-aligned workflows.

Summary

Introduces students to InDesign, a page layout program which integrates seamlessly with other Adobe design programs. InDesign delivers creative freedom and productivity to DTP. Class discussions and independent projects supplement hands-on classroom work. This guide is based on the 2021 version of *Print and Digital Media Publication Using Adobe InDesign*. <https://certifiedprofessional.adobe.com/indesign#ExamGuide>

Notes

The updated course reflects a significant shift from a primarily software-focused, foundational desktop publishing course to a more comprehensive, industry-aligned program. The original course emphasized basic InDesign functionality, including document setup, text and image handling, and print production concepts within a traditional desktop publishing framework. In contrast, the revised course expands beyond technical skills to incorporate structured learning strands such as portfolio development, leadership, work-based learning, and a final project assessment, along with stronger emphasis on professional communication, collaboration, and career readiness. Additionally, the updated version integrates modern workflows, digital and interactive publishing considerations, and clearer alignment to postsecondary pathways and industry expectations, better preparing students for certification and real-world design environments.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Working in the Design Industry

Objective: Covers critical concepts related to working with others as well as crucial legal, technical, and design-related

- 1.1) Identify terminology and interpret communication relating to the purpose, audience, and audience needs for preparing publications.
 - a. Determine whether content is relevant to the purpose, audience, audience needs, user experience, and has an appropriate design for target devices.
 - b. Identify requirements based on how the design will be published.
 - c. Demonstrate knowledge of techniques for communicating about design plans with peers and clients.
 - d. Demonstrate knowledge of basic project management concepts.
 - e. Demonstrate knowledge of accessibility standards and best practices for publications.
- 1.2) Assess the type of copyright, permissions, and licensing required to use specific content.
 - a. Determine legal and ethical considerations for using third-party content.
 - b. Determine when and how to obtain permission to use images, audio, or video.
- 1.3) Demonstrate an understanding of key terminology related to publications and knowledge of design principles and best practices.
 - a. Demonstrate knowledge of publication and graphic design terminology.
 - b. Demonstrate knowledge of how color is used in publications.
 - c. Understand and use key terms related to layouts.
 - d. Communicate visually by using the elements and principles of design and common design techniques.
 - e. Identify and use common typographic adjustments to create contrast, hierarchy, and enhanced readability.

2. Project Setup and Interface

Objective: Covers the interface setup and program settings, creating and configuring documents, and knowledge about importing digital assets.

- 2.1) Create a document.
 - a. Configure document settings for printed or digital publications.
 - b. Create and use document presets.
- 2.2) Configure the application workspace.
 - a. Identify and manipulate elements of the InDesign interface.
 - b. Organize and customize the workspace.
 - c. Configure application preferences.
- 2.3) Use non-printing design tools in the interface to aid in design or workflow.
 - a. Navigate a document.
 - b. Use rulers.
 - c. Use guides and grids.
 - d. Use views and modes to work efficiently.

- 2.4) Import assets into a project.
 - a. Add assets to an InDesign document.
 - b. Place text from an existing document.
- 2.5 Manage colors, swatches, and gradients.
 - a. Apply fill and stroke color.
 - b. Create and customize gradients.
 - c. Create, manage, and edit swatches and swatch libraries.

3. Organizing Documents

Objective: *Covers document structure, such as layers and pages including parent pages.*

- 3.1 Use layers to manage design elements.
 - a. Use the Layers panel to modify layers.
 - b. Manage and work with multiple layers in a project.
- 3.2 Manage and modify pages.
 - a. Create, edit, and arrange pages in a document.
 - b. Create and apply parent pages.

4. Creating and Modifying Text and Tables

Objective: *Covers text, paragraph and character styles, text wrap and flow, and tables.*

- 4.1) Add and manipulate text.
 - a. Use type tools to add text.
 - b. Use appropriate character settings.
 - c. Use appropriate paragraph settings.
 - d. Manage text wrap and flow.
 - e. Use tools to add special characters or content.
- 4.2) Create, modify, and apply paragraph and character styles.
 - a. Distinguish between paragraph and character styles and how to use them.
- 4.3) Use editing techniques to manipulate document content.
 - a. Use various tools to revise and refine project content.
- 4.4) Create and edit tables.
 - a. Create and edit tables

5. Adding and Modifying Visual Elements

Objective: *Covers tools that affect the visual appearance of elements.*

- 5.1) Use core tools and features to lay out visual elements.
 - a. Create, select, and modify frames.
 - b. Place and/or manipulate graphics.
- 5.2) Transform graphics within a publication.
 - a. Modify frames and frame content.
 - b. Transform individual frames or content.
- 5.3) Modify the appearance of elements.

- a. Use effects to modify images or frames.
 - b. Create, edit, apply, and save object styles.
 - c. Adjust the appearance of objects, frames, or layers.
- 5.4) Add interactivity.
 - a. Add interactive elements and behaviors.
- 5.5) Use InDesign's artificial intelligence (AI) features to generate and modify graphics.
 - a. Create graphics using text to image
 - b. Modify graphics using Generative Expand

6. Publishing Documents

Objective: *Covers publishing and packaging.*

- 6.1) Prepare documents for publishing.
 - a. Check document for errors and project specifications.
- 6.2) Export or save documents.
 - a. Save in the native file format for InDesign (.indd).
 - b. Export using appropriate formats and settings
 - c. Print proof copies before publishing.
 - d. Package an InDesign project.

7. Career Exploration and Postsecondary Opportunities

Objective: *Students will analyze career pathways in graphic design by exploring industry roles, workplace expectations, required education, certifications, professional organizations, and postsecondary opportunities available in Colorado in order to make informed academic and career decisions.*

- 7.1) Identify employment opportunities in various fields with a focus in the area of graphic design
 - a. Recognize the work typically performed, tools and technology used, and nature of work environments
 - b. Identify potential certifications within the careers
 - c. Find membership organizations associated with the careers
 - d. Understand the necessary education associated within the careers
- 7.2) Define professionalism within the context of graphic design
 - a. Criticism and evaluation
 - b. Presentation
 - c. Assessment
- 7.3) Recognize laws, regulations, and ethics significant to the fields of graphic design
- 7.4) Identify postsecondary opportunities offered in the state of Colorado
 - a. Technical college, community college, 4-year institutions
 - b. Certificates, associates, bachelor, and advanced degree opportunities

8. Portfolio Development

Objective: *Students will develop and refine a professional publication design portfolio that demonstrates layout, typography, and visual communication skills.*

- 8.1) Select and curate InDesign projects that demonstrate a range of publication design skills, including multi-page layouts, typography, grids, and branding applications.
- 8.2) Organize and sequence portfolio artifacts for digital and/or print presentation, ensuring clarity, consistency, and audience awareness.
- 8.3) Refine portfolio work using critique, feedback, and professional design standards to improve layout accuracy and visual communication.
- 8.4) Develop written project descriptions and reflections that explain design intent, layout decisions, typography choices, and production processes.
- 8.5) Evaluate portfolio quality based on industry expectations, technical precision, readability, and overall presentation effectiveness.

9. Leadership

Objective: *Students will demonstrate leadership skills in publication design environments through communication, collaboration, and professional responsibility.*

- 9.1) Demonstrate responsibility, initiative, and accountability in individual and collaborative publication design tasks.
- 9.2) Apply effective communication skills during critiques, presentations, and client-based discussions using appropriate design vocabulary.
- 9.3) Collaborate with peers to plan, produce, and evaluate publication projects using shared workflows and design processes.
- 9.4) Apply problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies within team-based publication design environments.
- 9.5) Reflect on personal leadership strengths and areas for growth in creative, technical, and collaborative contexts.

10. Work-Based Learning

Objective: *Students will apply InDesign skills in authentic professional environments to demonstrate career readiness.*

- 10.1) Apply publication design skills to authentic workplace tasks such as editorial layouts, brochures, magazines, or client-based projects.
- 10.2) Demonstrate workplace expectations including professionalism, time management, organization, and effective communication.
- 10.3) Analyze how layout requirements, audience needs, publishing platforms, and client expectations influence design decisions and outcomes.
- 10.4) Document work-based learning experiences through reflections, presentations, or portfolio evidence demonstrating applied skills.
- 10.5) Evaluate personal career readiness based on technical skills, employability behaviors, and feedback from instructors, peers, or clients.

11. Final Project Assessment

Objective: *Students will synthesize course knowledge and technical skills through a comprehensive publication design project.*

- 11.1) Plan and develop a final publication project with a defined purpose, audience, format, and design specifications.
- 11.2) Apply advanced InDesign tools and techniques to produce a polished, multi-page publication or digital document.
- 11.3) Integrate layout principles, typography, imagery, and visual hierarchy into a cohesive and professional final product.
- 11.4) Present and justify design decisions using appropriate design and production vocabulary supported by process documentation.
- 11.5) Evaluate the final project using criteria related to technical accuracy, visual communication, organization, and professional quality.

12. Career and Technical Student Organizations

Objective: *Using the CTSO Resource Document, chapter activities will provide some of the best opportunities CTSO members will have to learn by doing. A successful program of work creates a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. CTSO members learn how to accept responsibility, work as a team, manage a budget, and handle success and failure. Per the CTE Admin Handbook, CTSOs are embedded into curriculum.*

Professional Development

Prepare each member for entry into the workforce and provide a foundation for success in a career. Becoming a professional does not stop with acquiring a skill, but involves an increased awareness of the meaning of good citizenship and the importance of labor and management in the world of work.

Community Service

Promote and improve goodwill and understanding among all segments of the community through services donated by CTSO chapters, and to instill in its members a lifetime commitment to community service.

Business and Industry Connections

Increase awareness of quality job practices and attitudes, and increase the opportunities for employer engagement and eventual employment.

Financial Leadership

Plan and participate in activities to allow all members to carry out the chapter's projects. Educate members on their own personal finance for current and future success.

Public Relations

Make the general public aware of the good work that students in career and technical education are doing to better themselves and their community, state, nation, and world.

Social Activities

To increase cooperation in the school and community through activities that allow CTSO members to get to know each other in something other than a business or classroom setting.

Academic Standards Alignment

Colorado CTE courses are required to integrate academic and essential skills into course content. The following academic standards have been identified as aligned to this course and should be integrated throughout instruction.

[CO CTE Academic Standards Resources](#) (Rubrics, integration strategies, etc)

[CDE Colorado Academic Standards Online](#) (Online standards lookup tool)

Note: Mathematics and Science standards will be added in the future. Visit the [Colorado Academic Standards](#) page for the most current version.

Reading, Writing and Communicating Crosswalk

Course: Adobe InDesign

Colorado Academic Standards – Reading, Writing and Communicating

Standard	Prepared Graduate Competency	Description	Course Evidence / Alignment
Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening	Prepared Graduate 1 – Collaboration	Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully; pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others; and contribute ideas to further the group's attainment of an objective.	Students collaborate during layout projects and critiques, listen to feedback, and contribute ideas to improve document design and visual communication.
Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening	Prepared Graduate 2 – Oral Presentations	Deliver effective oral presentations for varied audiences and varied purposes.	Students present layout concepts and explain typographic, layout, and design decisions for specific audiences and purposes.
Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes	Prepared Graduate 4 – Informational Texts	Read a wide range of informational texts to build knowledge and to better understand the human experience.	Students read and apply informational texts including design briefs, publication

			standards, software tutorials, and layout guidelines.
Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes	Prepared Graduate 5 – Language in Context	Understand how language functions in different contexts, command a variety of word-learning strategies to assist comprehension, and make effective choices for meaning or style when writing and speaking.	Students apply appropriate design, typography, and publishing vocabulary in both written and spoken communication.
Standard 3: Writing and Composition	Prepared Graduate 7 – Informational Writing	Craft informational/explanatory texts using techniques specific to the genre.	Students write layout rationales, production notes, reflections, and documentation explaining design choices and workflows.
Standard 3: Writing and Composition	Prepared Graduate 9 – Writing Process	Demonstrate mastery of their own writing process with clear, coherent, and error-free polished products.	Students revise and refine written explanations and visual layouts to produce polished, professional-quality publications.
Standard 4: Research Inquiry and Design	Prepared Graduate 10 – Research and Ethics	Gather information from a variety of sources; analyze and evaluate its quality and relevance; and use it ethically to answer complex questions.	Students research publication styles, layout conventions, and reference materials; evaluate sources; and apply ethical practices including copyright and attribution.

Free Resource Links

7. Career Exploration and Postsecondary Opportunities

- Adobe Certified Professional – InDesign Exam Guide (Certification, Career Readiness)
<https://certifiedprofessional.adobe.com/indesign#ExamGuide>
- AIGA Design Careers (Graphic Design Careers, Industry Roles)
<https://www.aiga.org/resources/design-careers>
- O*NET Graphic Designer Profile (Job Outlook, Skills, Work Environment)
<https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/27-1024.00>
- Colorado Community College System Programs (Postsecondary Pathways, Colorado Programs)
<https://cccs.edu/programs/>

8. Portfolio Development

- Adobe Portfolio Guide (Digital Portfolio Development, Presentation)
<https://helpx.adobe.com/portfolio/get-started.html>
- Behance Portfolio Platform (Portfolio Examples, Industry Standards)
<https://www.behance.net>
- Canva Portfolio Guide (Portfolio Organization, Layout & Branding)
<https://www.canva.com/learn/portfolio/>
- Wix Portfolio Creation Guide (Online Portfolio, Personal Branding)
<https://www.wix.com/blog/how-to-create-a-portfolio>

9. Leadership

- Indeed Career Guide – Leadership Skills (Professional Communication, Workplace Skills)
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/leadership-skills>
- MindTools Leadership Resources (Leadership Development, Teamwork)
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_LDR.htm
- Edutopia Collaboration Resources (Collaboration, Team-Based Learning)
<https://www.edutopia.org/topic/collaboration>

10. Work-Based Learning

- NAF Work-Based Learning Continuum (Work-Based Learning, Career Readiness)
<https://naf.org/work-based-learning/>
- Trello Project Management Guide (Workflow, Project Organization, Collaboration)
<https://trello.com/guide>
- Adobe InDesign Tutorials (Applied Skills, Real-World Projects)
<https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/tutorials.html>
- Indeed Career Guide – Soft Skills (Professionalism, Workplace Behavior)
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/soft-skills>

11. Final Project Assessment

- Adobe Creative Cloud Learn (Project-Based Learning, Design Process)
<https://creativecloud.adobe.com/learn>
- Google Design Sprint Kit (Project Planning, Design Thinking)
<https://designsprintkit.withgoogle.com/>
- Canva Design Principles Guide (Design Evaluation, Visual Communication)
<https://www.canva.com/learn/design-elements-principles/>
- Rubistar Rubric Maker (Assessment, Project Evaluation)
<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>



Technology Student Association – National Competitive Events

Promotional Design

Objective: *Students will design, produce, document, and present promotional materials that meet TSA Promotional Design requirements for branding, visual communication, production quality, and portfolio documentation.*

- Research the annual TSA Promotional Design theme, target audience, required products, and branding expectations.
- Develop a consistent visual identity using typography, layout, color, imagery, hierarchy, and design principles.
- Create required promotional materials using page layout, text frames, graphic elements, grids, guides, and production-ready formatting.
- Use digital publishing tools to prepare clean, professional, and usable final products for print or digital presentation.
- Document the design process through sketches, drafts, layout revisions, production notes, references, and required portfolio materials.
- Prepare final promotional products for submission or display according to TSA event procedures.
- Evaluate the final entry using TSA criteria for creativity, consistency, production quality, communication, and theme alignment.

Resources

- Technology Student Association – Promotional Design competition guidelines
<https://tsaweb.org/competitions-programs/tsa/themes-problems>
- Adobe InDesign – Page layout and publishing tools
<https://www.adobe.com/products/indesign.html>
- Adobe Express – Promotional graphics and design tools
<https://www.adobe.com/express/>
- Canva – Branding, layouts, and promotional design templates
<https://www.canva.com/>



Technology Student Association – National Competitive Events

Children's Stories

Objective: *Students will write, illustrate, design, document, and present an original children's story that communicates a STEM concept in alignment with TSA Children's Stories competition requirements.*

- Research the annual TSA Children's Stories theme and identify an age-appropriate STEM concept for the story.
- Develop a story concept with characters, setting, plot, vocabulary, and message appropriate for the target audience.
- Create a page layout that uses typography, images, spacing, hierarchy, and visual rhythm to support readability.
- Combine text and illustrations into a finished storybook or digital story product that follows TSA submission requirements.
- Revise the storybook based on feedback related to clarity, age appropriateness, visual design, and theme connection.
- Document the writing, illustration, design, revision, and production process.
- Present the story to judges and explain the theme connection, design choices, audience decisions, and educational purpose.

Resources

- Technology Student Association – Children's Stories competition guidelines
<https://tsaweb.org/competitions-programs/tsa/themes-problems>
- Adobe InDesign – Book layout and page design tools
<https://www.adobe.com/products/indesign.html>
- ReadWriteThink – Story mapping and writing resources
<https://www.readwritethink.org/>
- Canva – Storybook layout and presentation tools
<https://www.canva.com/>