Automate Your Lettering, Save Your Wrists!

NIB & INK FESTIVAL 2026

Sara Linsley

Why you should listen to me

Sara Linsley

- she/her
- Manga Letterer since 2012
- OGN Comics Letterer since 2022
- Font Designer since 2019
- Senior Software Engineer, Publishing Specialist at VIZ Media

Works

- *Dandadan* (lettering and logo)
- *Sweat and Soap*
- *39 Clues Graphic Novel #1: The Maze of Bones*
- *Fushigi Yugi: Byakko Senki*
- *Revolutionary Girl Utena: After the Revolution*
- *etc, etc*

Pain

- Lettered full-time for three years, and had to give it up because of shoulder pain :’)

Agenda

Automation Ideology

How to Pick Things to Automate

General Advice

InDesign-Specific Advice

Illustrator-Specific Advice

Questions & Answers

Slides: sara.pizza/nif2026

Automation Ideology

Time is Money

When you’re paid a flat rate, the less time you spend on a project, the better your wage.

Your computer is your assistant

It should be assisting you not slowing you down

Injury Prevention

Repetitive motions cause Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI).

Time is Time

The less time you spend on boring stuff, the more time you have to spend on aspects of lettering that you enjoy!

How to Pick Things to Automate

Tasks that feel boring, repetitive, or tedious

- Copying and pasting text from a script

Tasks that slow you down

- Manually applying font style to every text frame
- Clicking through two menus just to reflect an object

Tasks that are a pain in corrections

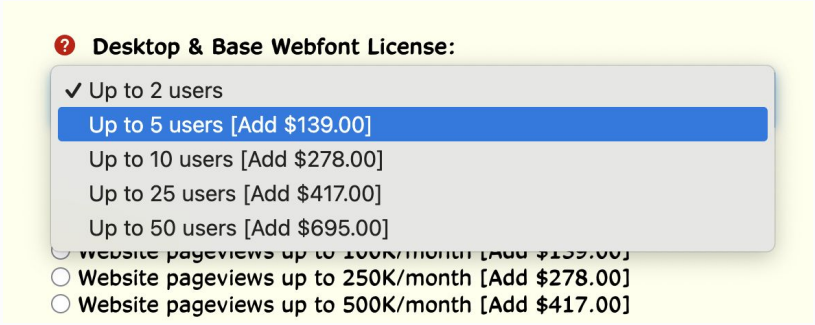
- “The art doesn’t quite go to the bleed. Can you scale all the art up 2%?”
- “Change all -- to em dash”

General Advice

Pick the Right Font

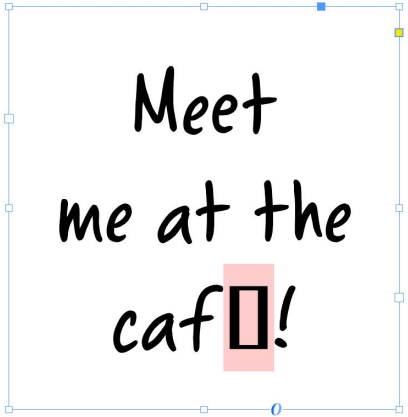
"smart quotes"

"straight quotes"



Swapping Fonts on a book is a huge waste of time

- Make sure the font has all the glyphs you need, like “smart” quotes and the crossbar-I
- If you’re having to manually add accents, fix kerning, etc, you need to pick a different font
- Figure out font licensing BEFORE you letter the book



Pick the Right Font

Comicraft:
- https://www.comicbookfonts.com/

Blambot:
- https://blambot.com/
- Some fonts are **free for indie use**!

My Fonts :)
- https://sara.pizza/fonts
- All completely **free** for commercial use

Fando Fonts
- https://fandofonts.com/
- Paid, pay-what-you-wish, and **free** fonts

Don’t make your own font to use as the main dialogue font
- Unless you’re very very confident in your type design skills!
- You’ll likely be wrestling with it more than you need to.
- Designing a font while meeting your deadline is like building the airplane while flying it

The Mouse is the Enemy

https://www.logitech.com/en-us/shop/p/m650-signature-wireless-mouse

- Dragging and dropping all day is stressful on your wrist, arm, and shoulder.
- Even “ergonomic” mice still force your dominant hand to do the same small motion thousands of times per day

The Keyboard is the Way

Pros:

- A single keypress is easier on your body than move, click, move, click, move, click.
- Stress can be shared equally between dominant and non-dominant hands
- Many common tasks already have keyboard shortcuts assigned to them!
- Pick a keyboard with low resistance for better results!
- For more buttons, you can connect your existing joycons to your computer!

Cons:

- ??? none probably

https://www.logitech.com/en-us/shop/p/pop-keys-wireless-mechanical.920-011233

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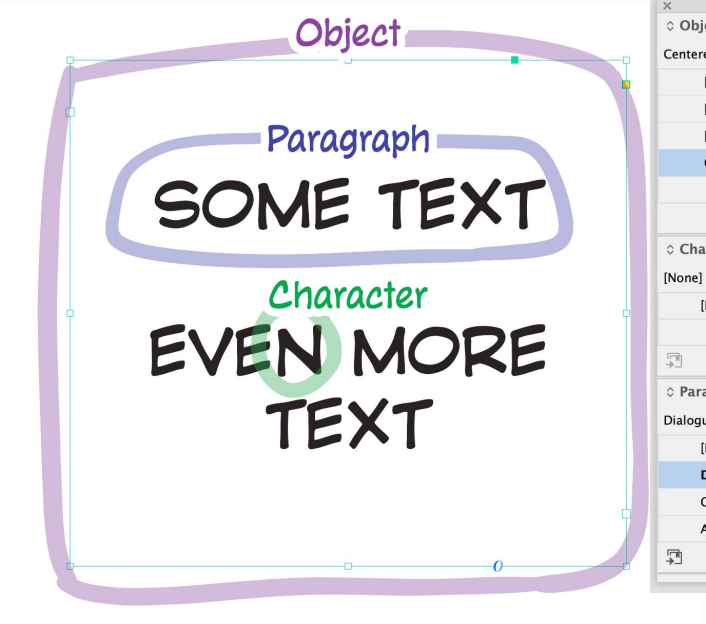
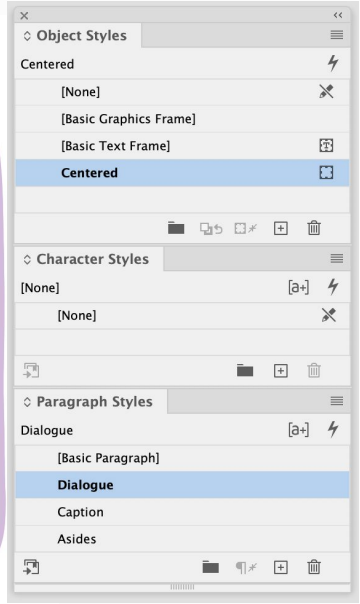
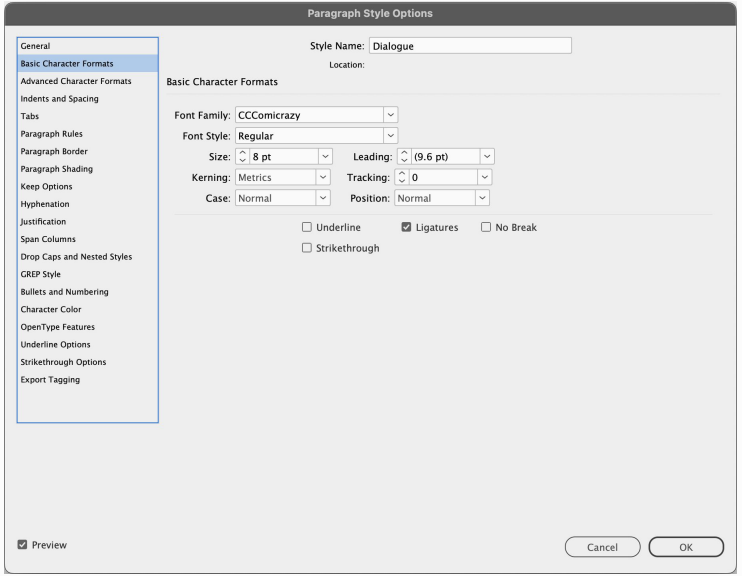
2026/05/16

InDesign Advice

Use Paragraph Styles

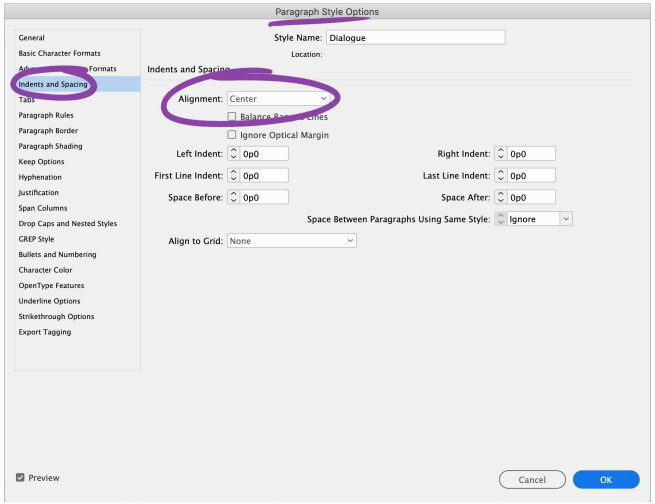




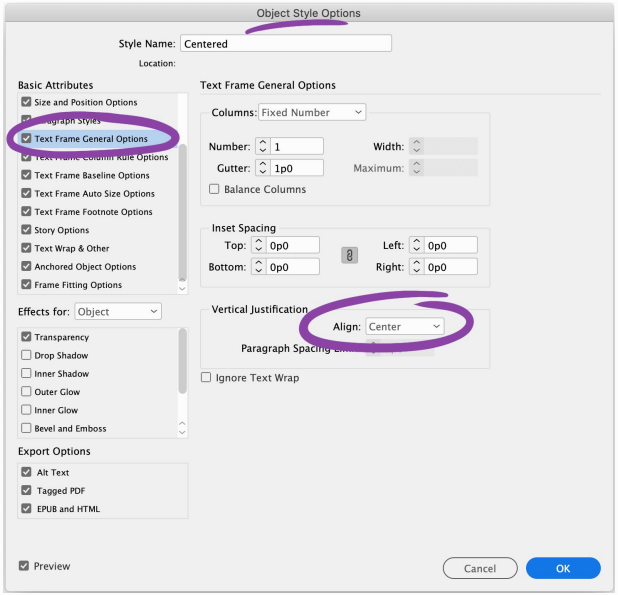


Use Paragraph Styles

Align text horizontally in Paragraph Styles

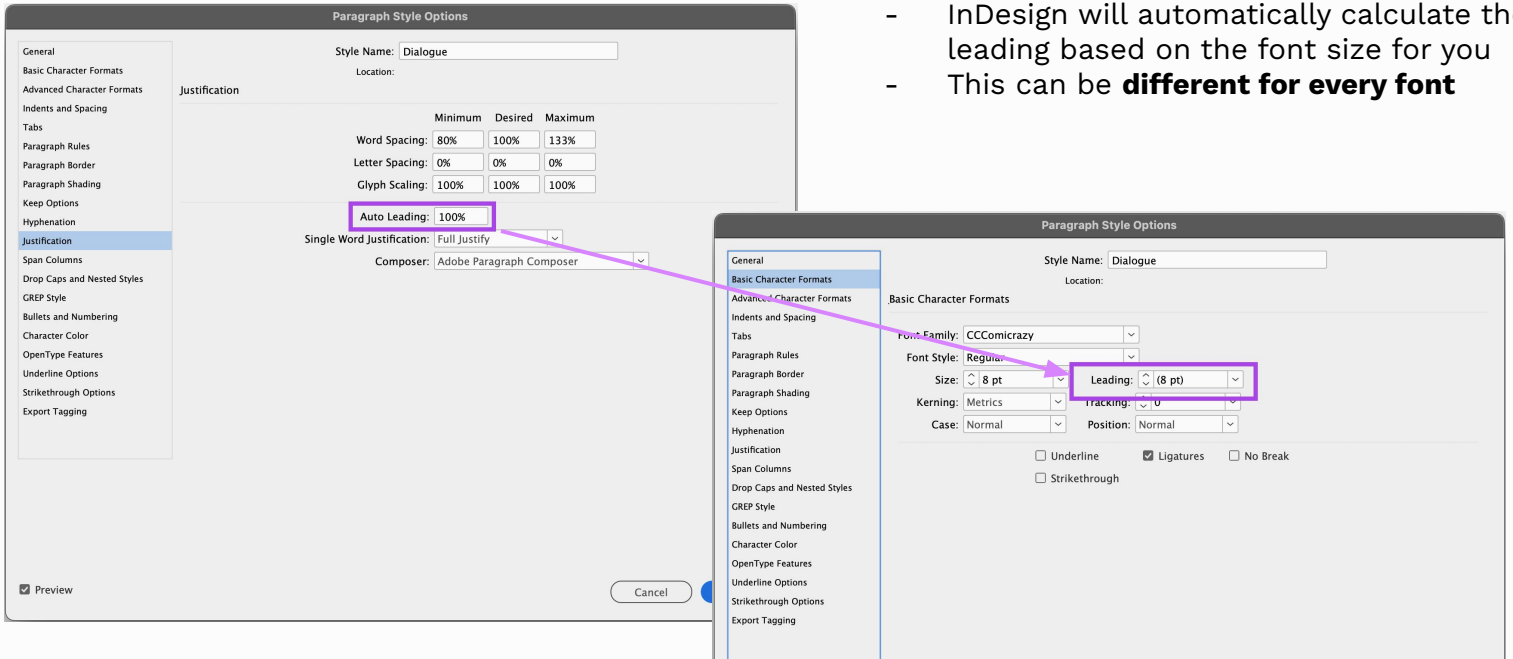


Align text vertically in Object Styles



Use Paragraph Styles

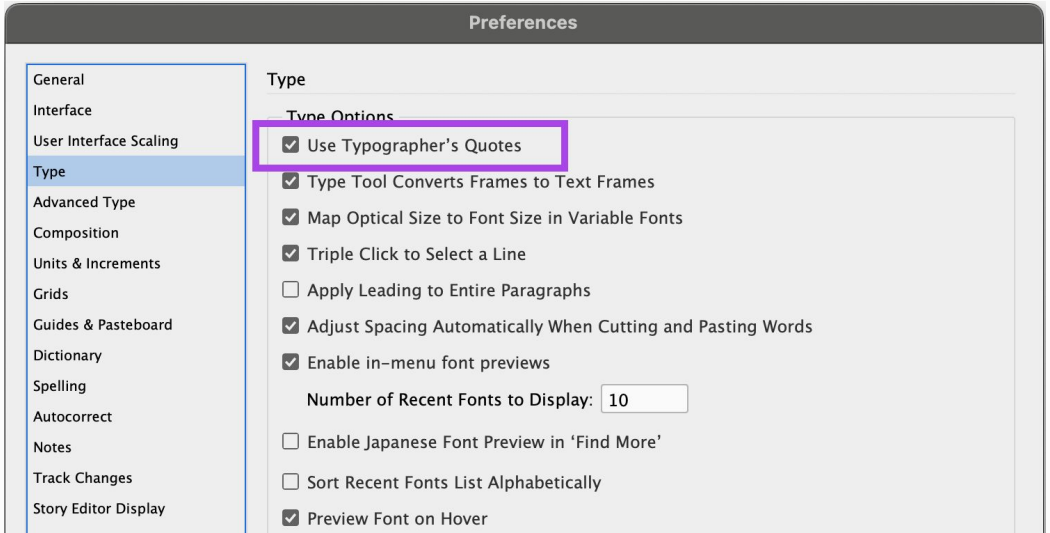
Set the automatic leading amount



- InDesign will automatically calculate the leading based on the font size for you
- This can be **different for every font**

Use Typographer's Quotes

- To get "smart quotes," go to Preferences > Type > **Use Typographer's Quotes**
- This will change all quotes to "smart" quotes that your editor is probably asking for
- This is a document-specific setting, so make sure it's turned on for each new document
- You can set your own default by closing all documents and changing the setting. This make your setting apply for **new** documents only.

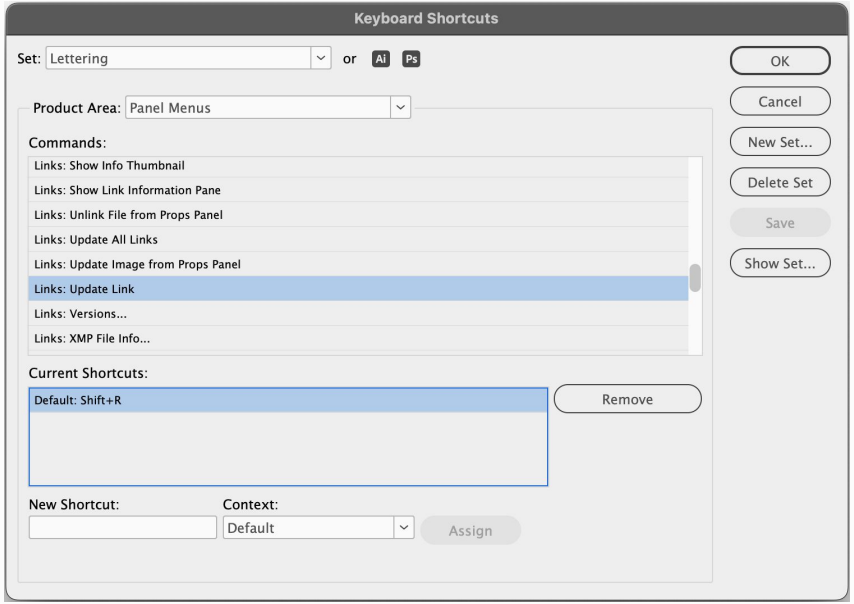


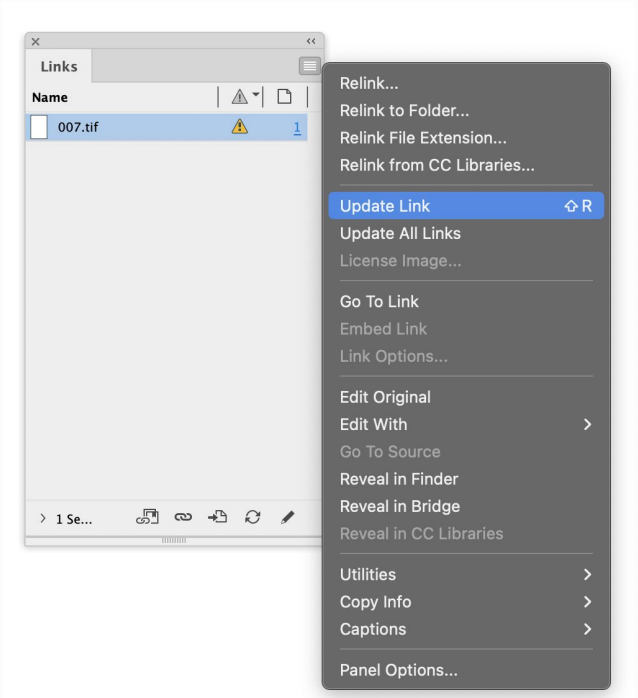
Use Keyboard Shortcuts

- Go to Edit > **Keyboard Shortcuts...** to see the full list of default shortcuts
- Go through this list here: https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/using/default-keyboard-shortcuts.html

- Some great default shortcuts:
  - **Quick Apply:** Cmd/Ctrl + Enter
  - **Go to Page:** Cmd/Ctrl + J
  - **Make text bold:** Shift + cmd/ctrl + B
  - **Select container of selected content:** Esc
  - **Decrease scale by 1%:** cmd/ctrl+,
  - **Increase or decrease point size:** Shift+cmd/ctrl+> or <
  - **Increase or decrease kerning and tracking:** Alt+Left Arrow/Alt+Right Arrow
  - **All caps (on/off):** Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+K

Set Custom Keyboard Shortcuts



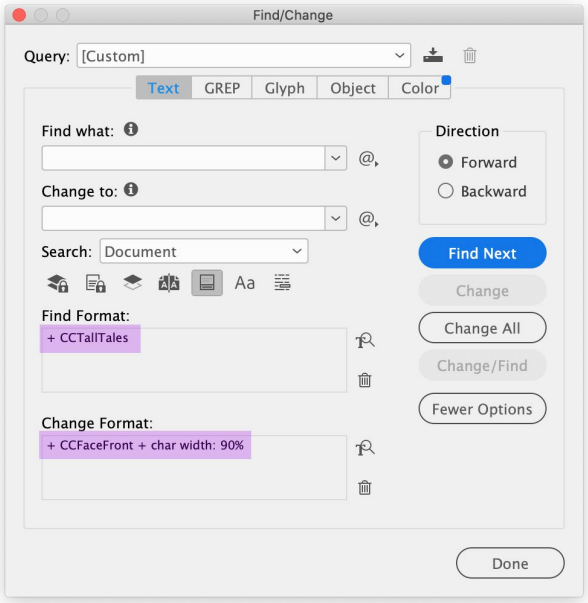


I have Shift + R set to Update Link from the Links panel because I use it constantly.

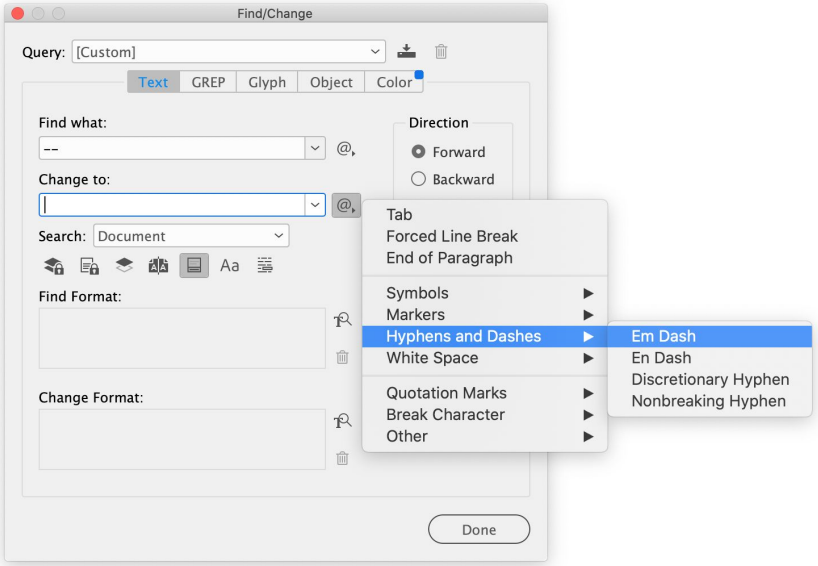
Many panel menu options like this are available to set as keyboard shortcuts

Use Find/Change

Replace one font with another



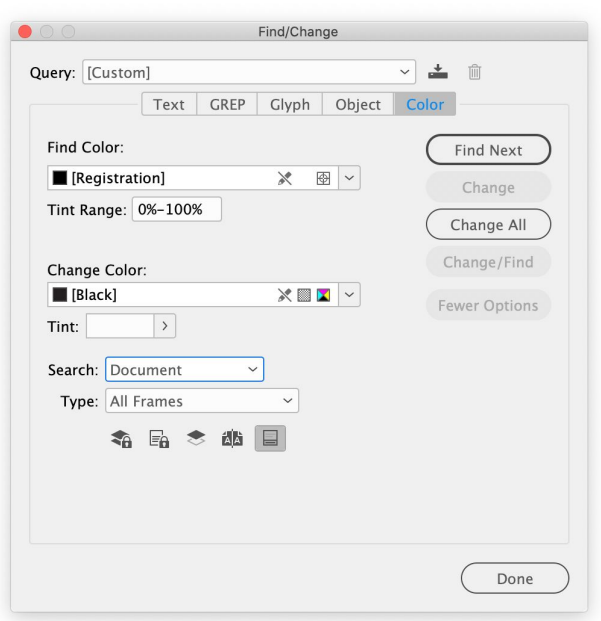
Replace all -- with em dash



Keyboard Shortcut: Cmd/Ctrl + F

Use Find/Change

Replace Registration with Black



Keyboard Shortcut: Cmd/Ctrl + F

Use Find/Change

https://github.com/saraoswald/lettering-tutorials/wiki/Text-Placement-and-Balancing

Description	Find what:	Change to:
Replace two hyphens with an em-dash	--	^_
Straight double quote to typographer's quote*	^"	"
Straight single quote to typographer's quote*	^'	'
Convert an ellipsis into three periods on three lines	(?<!.)(~e|...)(?!.)	.\n.\n.
Add a line break after an honorific	(-)((san)|(sama)|(kun)|(chan)|(senpai)|(sempai))	$1~b$2
Make capital I's at the beginning of a word lowercase	I(?=[\l\u-])	i
Convert uppercase I's in the middle of a word to lowercase	(\l?)(I)(\l)	$1i$3
Remove extra whitespace at the end of a text frame*	\s+$	

Keyboard Shortcut: Cmd/Ctrl + F

Use Scripts

When default features fail, turn to scripts!

InDesign doesn't have recordable Actions like other Adobe applications, so you'll need to do things like:

- Place text automatically from a text file
- Resize already-lettered pages
- Jumble characters randomly
- Add a stroke to outlined text
- Resize a text frame using key presses
- Place and size art in a document based on file names

I wrote a tutorial on how to install scripts here:
https://github.com/saraoswald/Manga-Scripts#how-to-use-scripts-in-indesign

Demo time!

Files: sara.pizza/nif2026files

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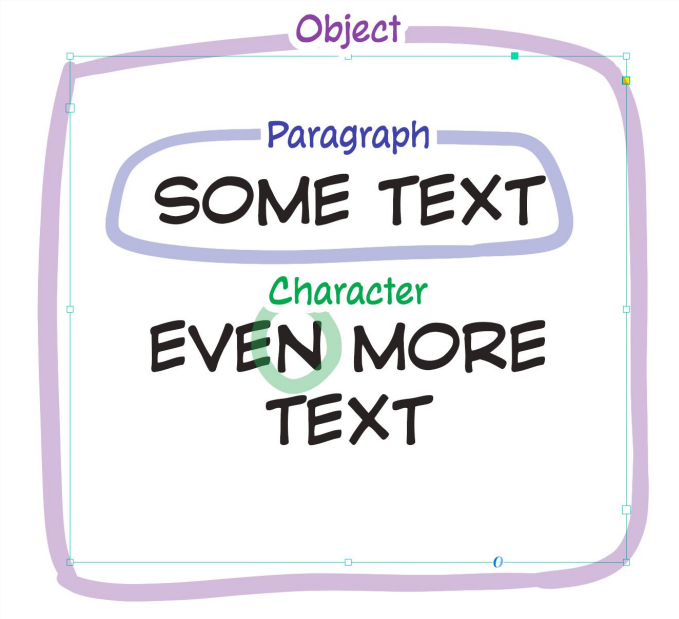
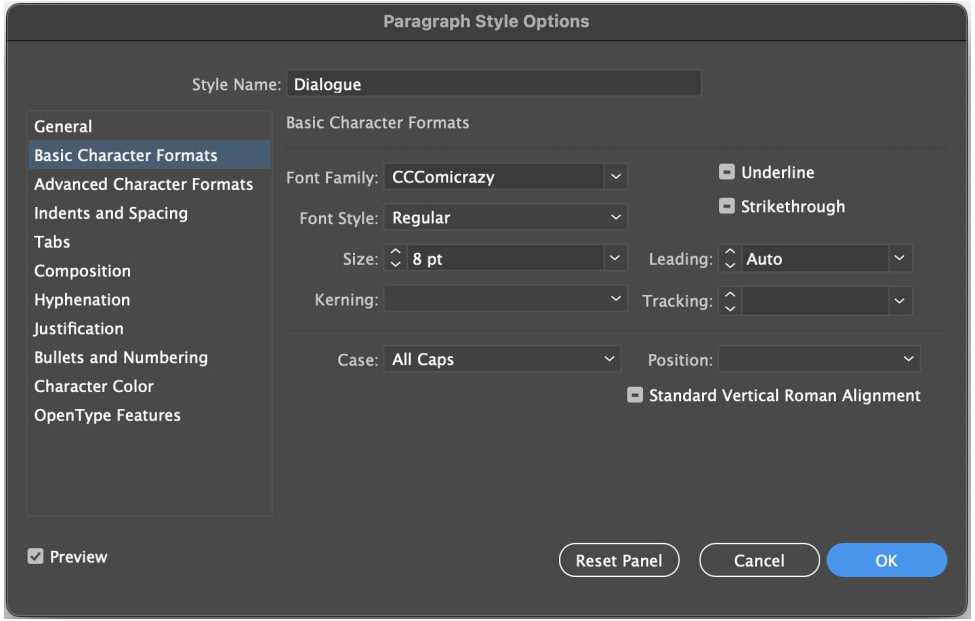
Illustrator Advice

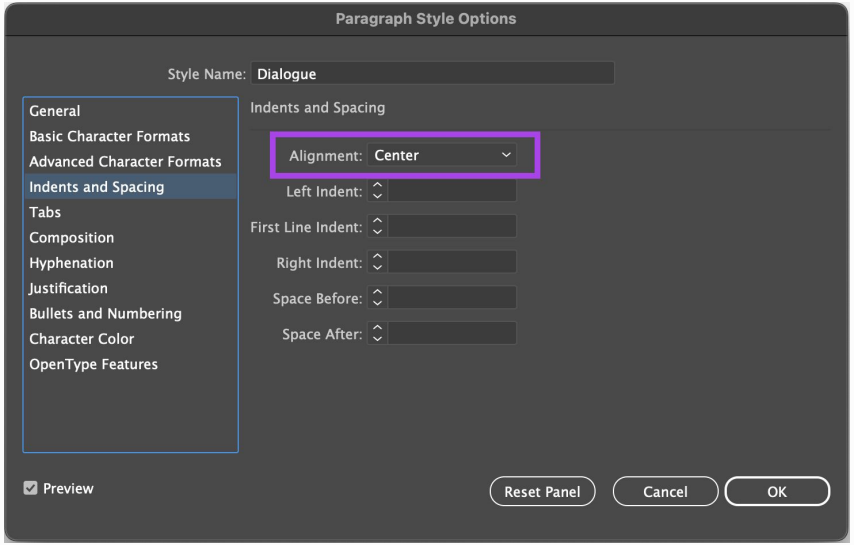
Use Paragraph Styles



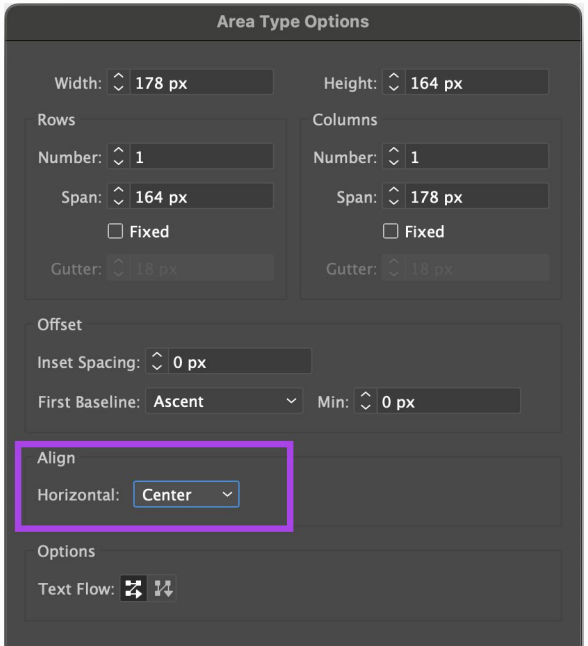


Use Paragraph Styles

Align text horizontally in Paragraph Styles



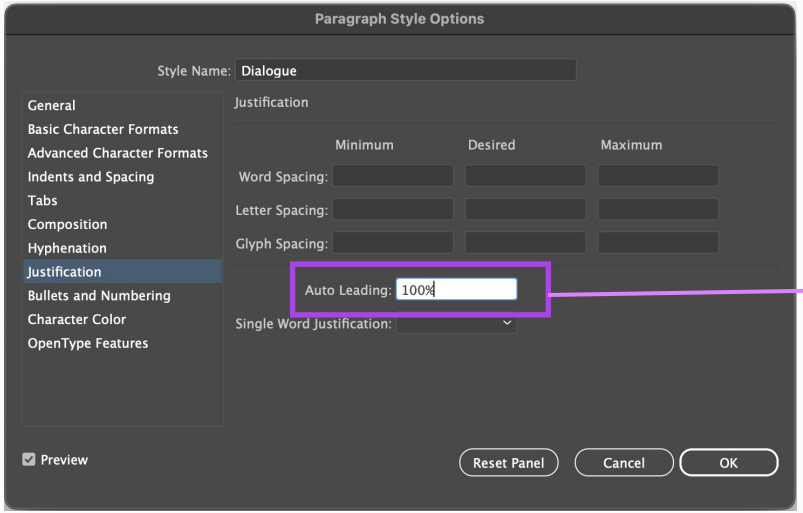
Align text vertically in Type > Area Type Options



“Horizontal” is an error ¯_ (ツ)_/¯

Use Paragraph Styles

Set the automatic leading amount



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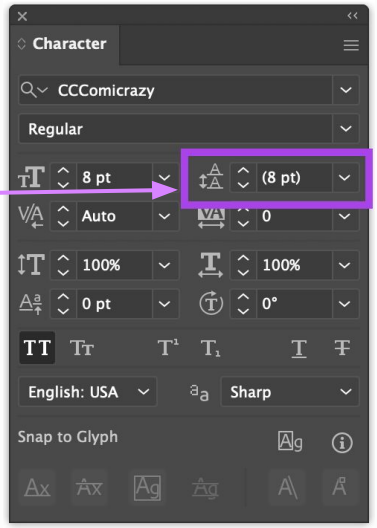
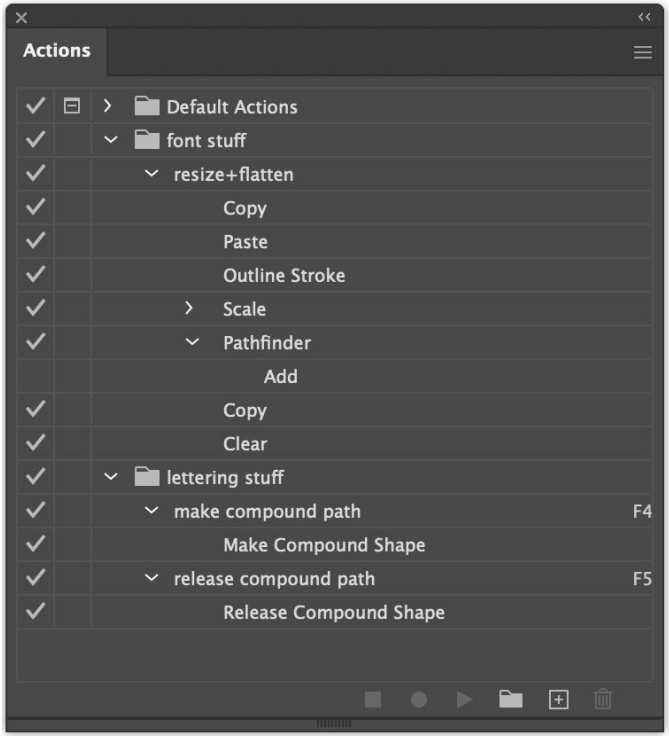


Use Actions



- Record actions and reuse them!
- You can only bind these to function keys :/

Main Takeaways

Small adjustments to your workflow add up

Mouse is the enemy

Automation can be as simple as a keyboard shortcut, and as complex as a script

Additional Resources

- (Tutorials, Scripts, Fonts) My website: sara.pizza
- (Book) The Essential Guide to Comic Book Lettering by Nate Piekos
- (Website) Blambot's Lettering Tips
- (Course) Manga Lettering with Adobe Suite - Beginner to Professional
- (Scripts) Paul Starr's InDesign Scripts
- (Scripts) Madeleine's InDesign Scripts

Questions?

Thank you!