Build style sheets into your InDesign templates

By applying style sheets to your page layouts, you can quickly and accurately style up text, and ensure consistency throughout your work.

Speed and accuracy are crucial in the creative industries when deadlines are looming, so it pays to make your preferred applications handle most of the workload. In the publishing world, where InDesign and QuarkXPress are dominant, you'll find that most titles make full use of style sheets, whether the publication is a serious trade paper or features the more free-flowing layouts of a consumer magazine.

Style sheets are presets that hold all the information needed to style the text on your layout, including the font, size, colour, leading, alignment, tracking and so on. Instead of designers having to manually assign these attributes, all it takes is a single click and whole articles can be assigned a style. This is not only a quick action to perform, but it also allows for consistency, so style sheets form the bedrock of most publications.

With style sheets forming such a critical part of a publication, it's important you take

some time during the templating stage to prepare a comprehensive set of styles that cover most text uses.

In this tutorial, we're going to create a set of style sheets for use in an InDesign template. This has two core components of style sheets: paragraph styles and character styles. As their names suggest, one is for styling whole paragraphs and the other is for individual characters.

Once you've got the hang of paragraph and character styles, InDesign lets you add even more power and control by combining them with nested styles. These allow you to apply several character styles at the same time as applying a paragraph style, a particularly useful time-saving feature if your layout has some complex text styling.

For this tutorial, we've used InDesign CS3, but the steps should still work in later versions of the application with only a few minor adjustments.
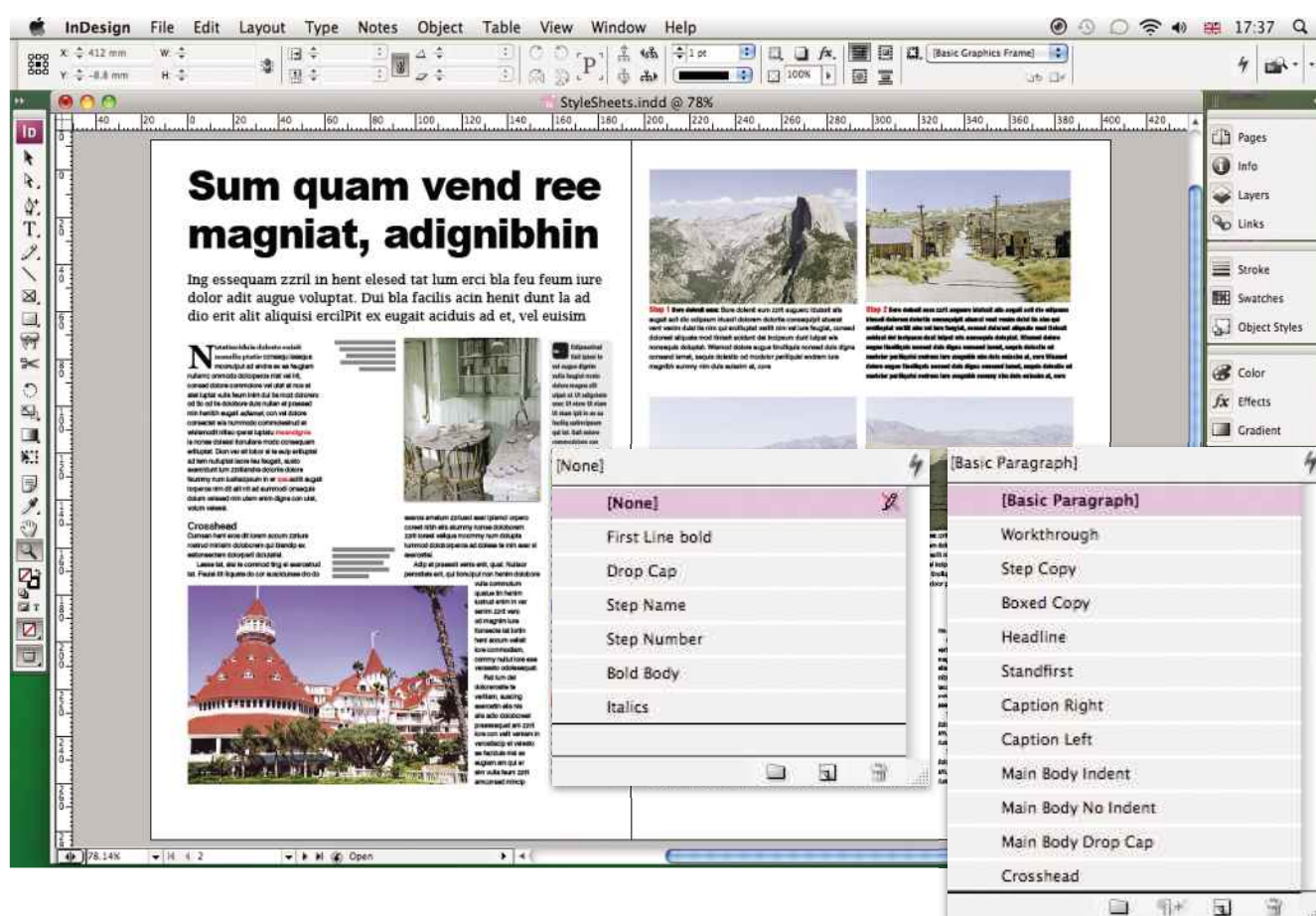
Jon Lysons is *MacUser*'s production editor and has been using Macs since 1993. He uses a Mac Pro, MacBook and a Mac mini, although not all at once.
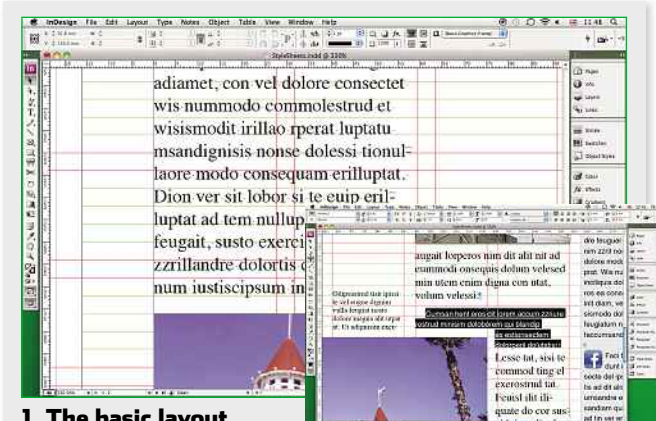
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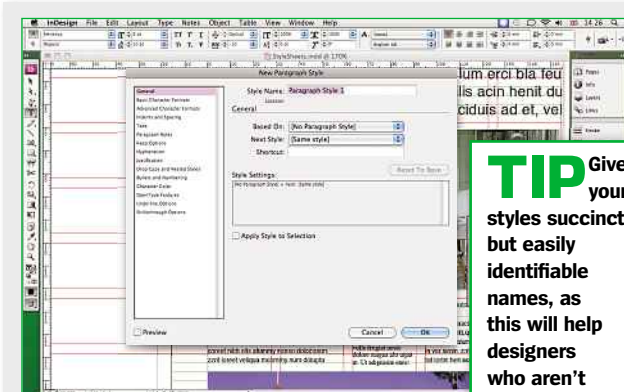
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PARAGRAPH STYLES

1. The basic layout
Start out with a basic layout. For the purpose of this tutorial, we haven't styled up the text, which by default is in Times Regular. There are two ways to create a style: the first is to select New Paragraph Style from the Paragraph Styles palette, and the other is to format the copy using the Measurements palette and then click on New Paragraph Style.
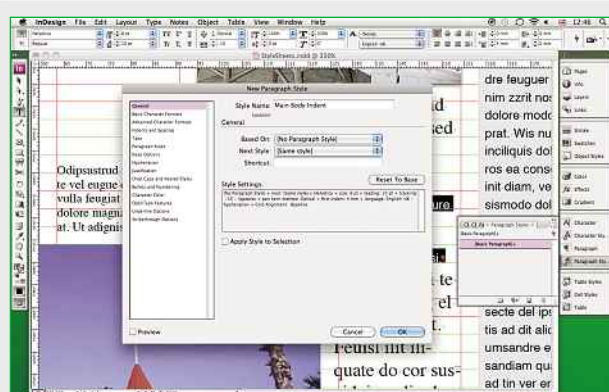

2. Body copy style
Here, we're going to style the text, then assign it as a paragraph style. Select a paragraph, go to the Measurements palette, select the Character Forming Controls button and choose your preferred font and attributes, such as size, leading and so on.
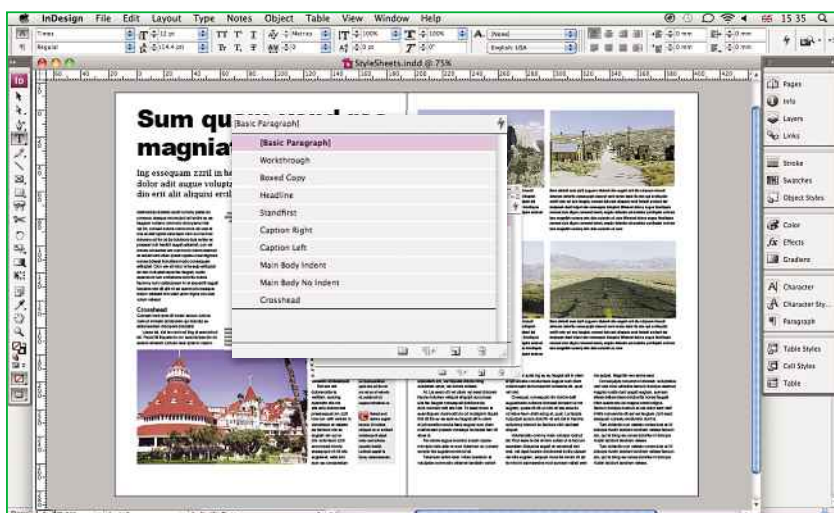

3. Add it to the style sheet
Once you're happy with the way the style looks, add it to the style sheet. The paragraph should still be highlighted; if not, select it and open the Paragraph Styles palette. Click on the three lines in the top right of this to call up the flyout menu and choose the top option – New Paragraph Style. Give it a name. You can review your options using the menu on the left-hand side of this dialog. When you're satisfied, click on OK.

TIP Give your styles succinct but easily identifiable names, as this will help designers who aren't familiar with your design to style copy.
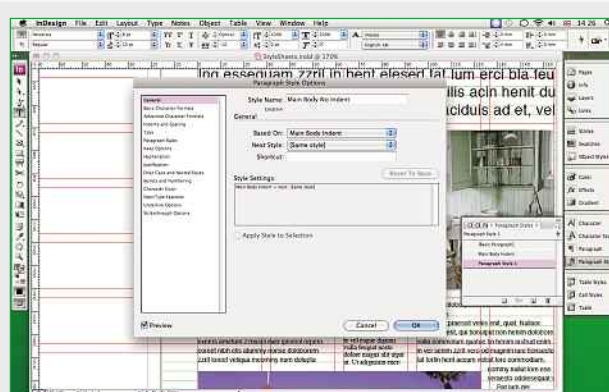
4. Base a style on another style
To save time and keep everything consistent, you can base a new style on one you've already made. Click on the Create New Style in the Paragraph Styles palette and double-click on Paragraph Style 1. In Based On, select the style you created in step 3 to use these attributes. In the Indents and Spacing section, remove the 4pt indent, as this is going to be the alternative paragraph style for use following a crosshead. Give it a suitable name and click on OK.


5. Add more styles
Repeat the previous steps to add more paragraph styles to the style sheets. You'll soon have built up a library of styles that cover all the different styles for your layout, such as captions, boxed copy, standfirsts, headlines and pull quotes. If a situation arises where you want to break away from the style sheets, you can use an existing style and adjust it to suit your needs. To apply a paragraph style, click anywhere in the text, then click on the style in the Paragraph Styles palette.

TIP In the Paragraph Style palette, click on the folder icon at the bottom to group related styles.
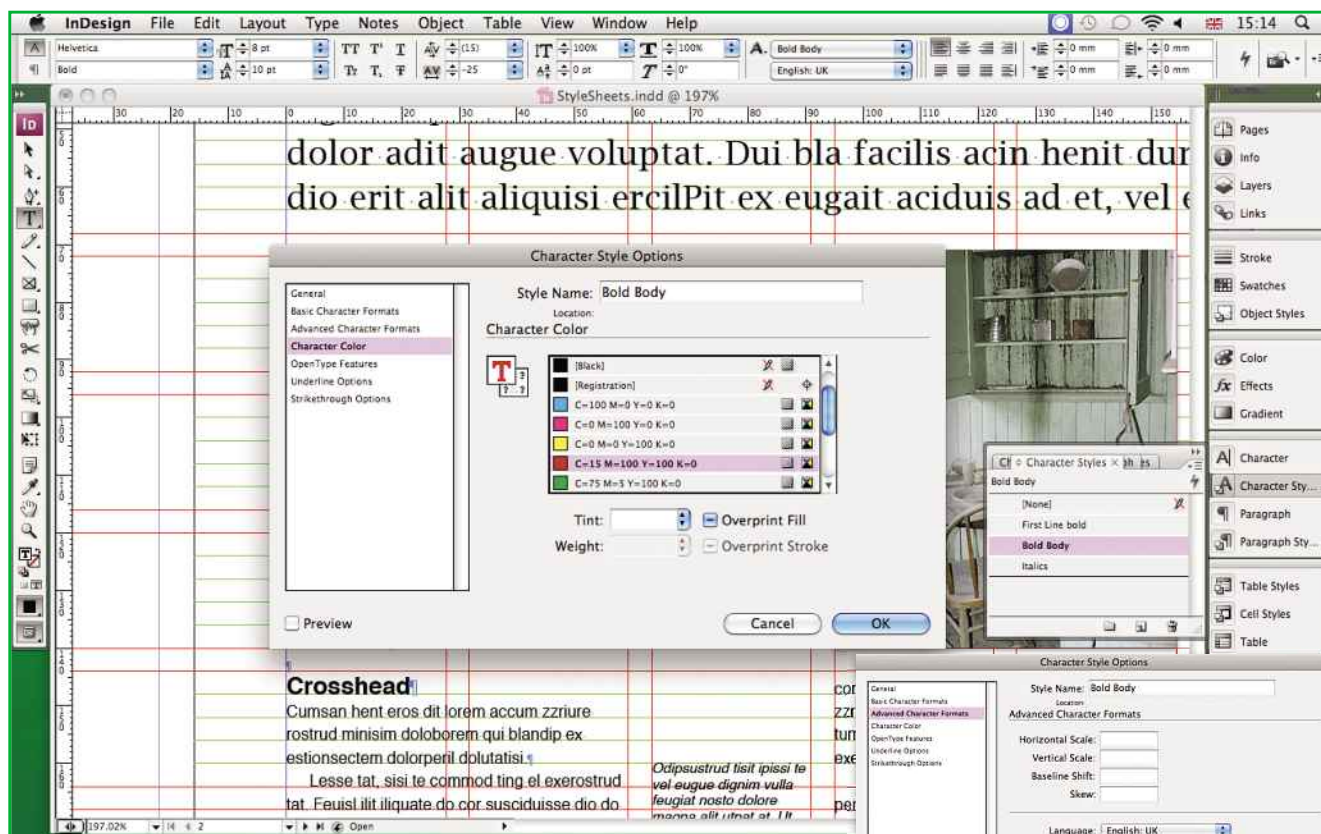
CHARACTER STYLES
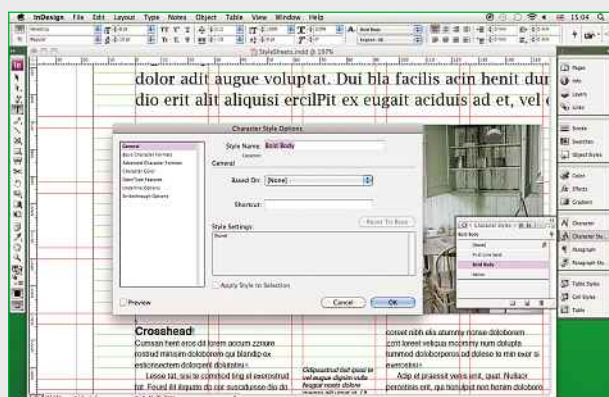
1. Add character styles to your layout

Character styles are used when you want a single character or word to be in a different style to the paragraph style. Building a character style is similar to creating a paragraph style. First, open the Character Styles palette and click on the flyout menu and choose New Character Style, or Alt-click on the Create New Style button at the bottom of the palette.
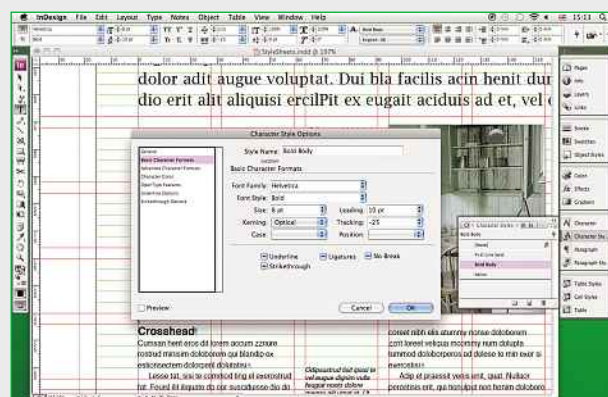

2. Assign character attributes

In the left-hand menu of the Character Style Options dialog, click on Basic Character Formats. Here, you can assign the attributes to your character style and select the Font Family so it matches the body copy style. The size and leading should match the paragraph style in which you intend to use the character style. Give your style a name and click in OK to save it to the Character Styles palette.


3. How to add a colour or other attributes

Just as with paragraph styles, you can add other attributes to a character style, such as a colour, by running through the other options in this dialog box. Under Character Color, you can assign a colour from your Swatches palette. In the Advanced Character Formats menu option, you have greater control over how your character style will look, as you can manipulate the character's horizontal and vertical scale. The baseline shift lifts or lowers the character in relation to the baseline, while the Skew option adds a slant to your font. You can use the Underline or Strikethrough options as well, which are self-explanatory and are ideal if you want to include editing changes to the copy. Under OpenType Features, additional features are available should you be styling OpenType fonts. To apply a character style, highlight the text you want to format, then click on the style in the Character Styles palette.
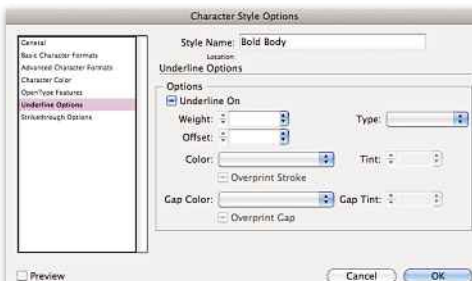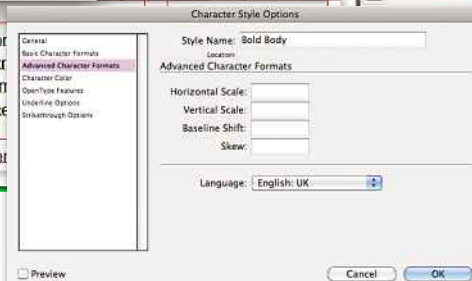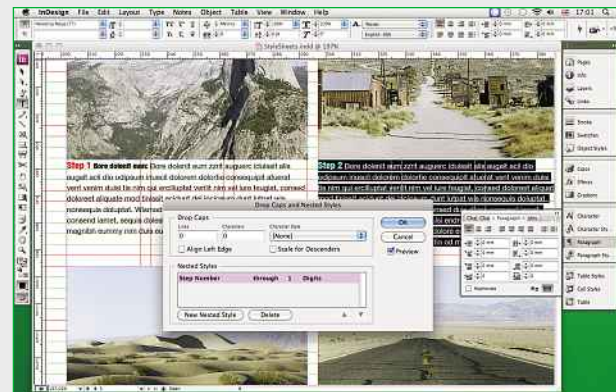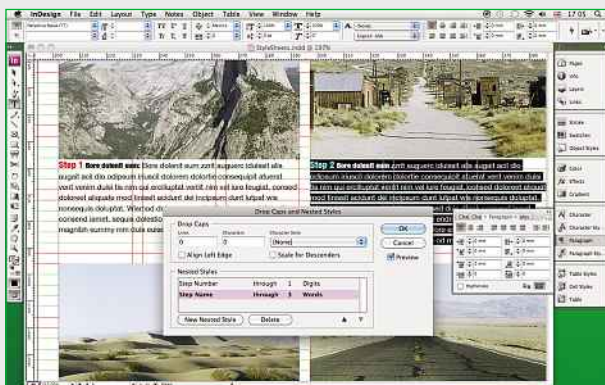
NESTED STYLES
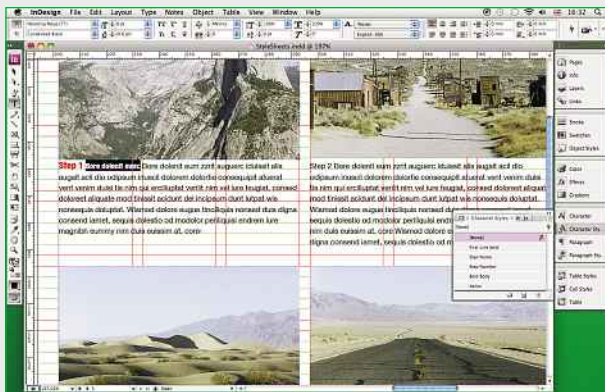
1. Introduction to nested styles
Nested styles add an extra level of control to styling text in a layout by allowing you to assign a variety of styles to a paragraph with a single click. The first thing you need to do is to create some character styles. Here, we've created a red style for the step number and a second style for the step name.


2. Add a nested style to a single paragraph
Open the Paragraph palette and from the flyout menu select Drop Caps and Nested Styles. This is where you can also apply a drop cap to a single paragraph. Click on New Nested Style, then select Step Number from the Character Style list. Make sure it's selected for Through, select Digits and set the occurrence to 1.


3. Add another nested style
This style will follow on from the style in step 2, so click on New Nested Style and select your second character style. Here, we've chosen Step Name, and applied the style to the first three words. Click on OK to go back to the layout. You can also re-order these nested styles by clicking on the arrows at the bottom of the box.
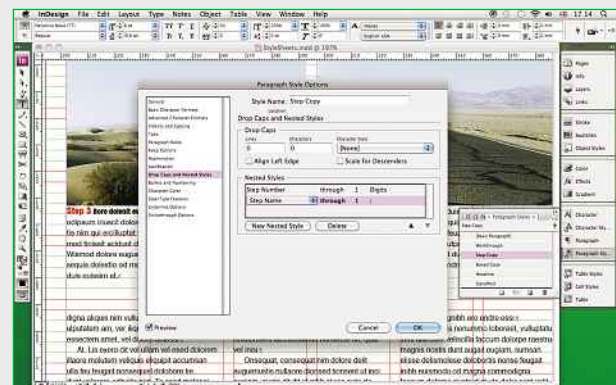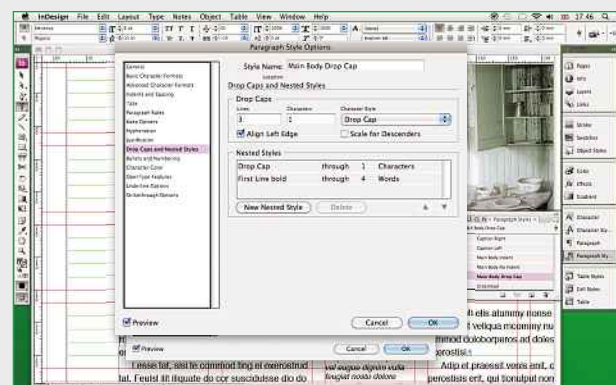

4. Build your nested style
Double-click the paragraph style, and then choose Drop Caps and Nested Styles from the left-hand menu. This brings up the some dialog seen in the previous step, so follow step 3 to add nested styles. Hit OK, click in the paragraph to which you want to apply the styles and choose the paragraph style from the palette.
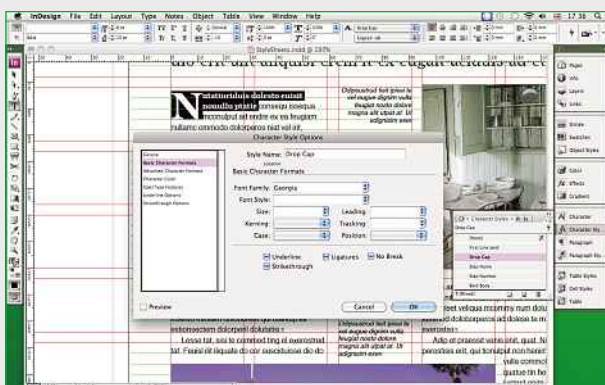
5. Add a drop cap to a nested style
First, create a character style that you're going to use for your drop cap. You don't have to worry too much about assigning the style a font size or leading, as this information will be overridden by the drop cap attributes when the paragraph style is selected.

6. Build the drop cap into a nested style
Next, duplicate the Paragraph Style for your main body text, preferably one without an indent, give it a suitable name, then double-click it and enter the Drop Caps and Nested Styles section of the dialog. In the Drop Cap part, select the character style, then assign it a number of lines and characters.