

[← Get started /](#)

## Explore design files

In this guide, we'll cover the basics of working with Figma design files. You can come back to this guide any time you need a refresher.

To keep it simple (and reduce our word count 😊), we'll call them **design files** in this guide.

Want to learn more about the difference between design files and FigJam files? Check out our [What is Figma](#) guide.

## What are design files?

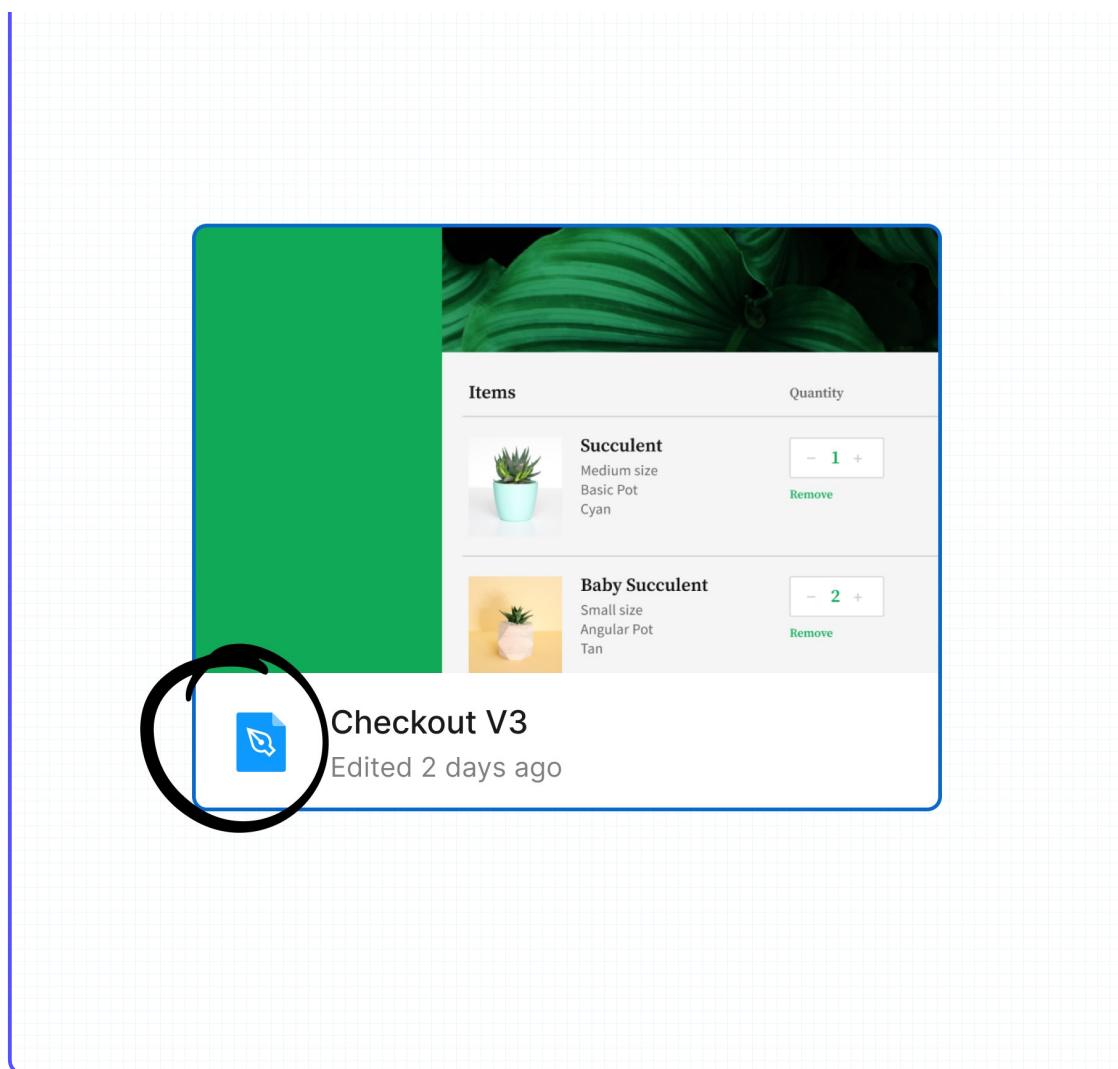
Design files give you the tools you need to create, share, and test your designs. Design files are popular with designers, product managers, writers, and developers. But anyone who wants to create or communicate visually can use them!

Create design files to explore specific problems, or manage the entire design process. You can sketch out your ideas on your own, or share them with others to create together and get feedback.

Figma files are live and always up-to-date, so people can work on the same file at the same time. Having one live file gets everyone on the same page without the need to save, download, or pass documents back and forward.

Every file has its own [version history](#), where you can track the evolution of your designs. Explore previous iterations, or create new versions to capture different ideas.

[Help](#)

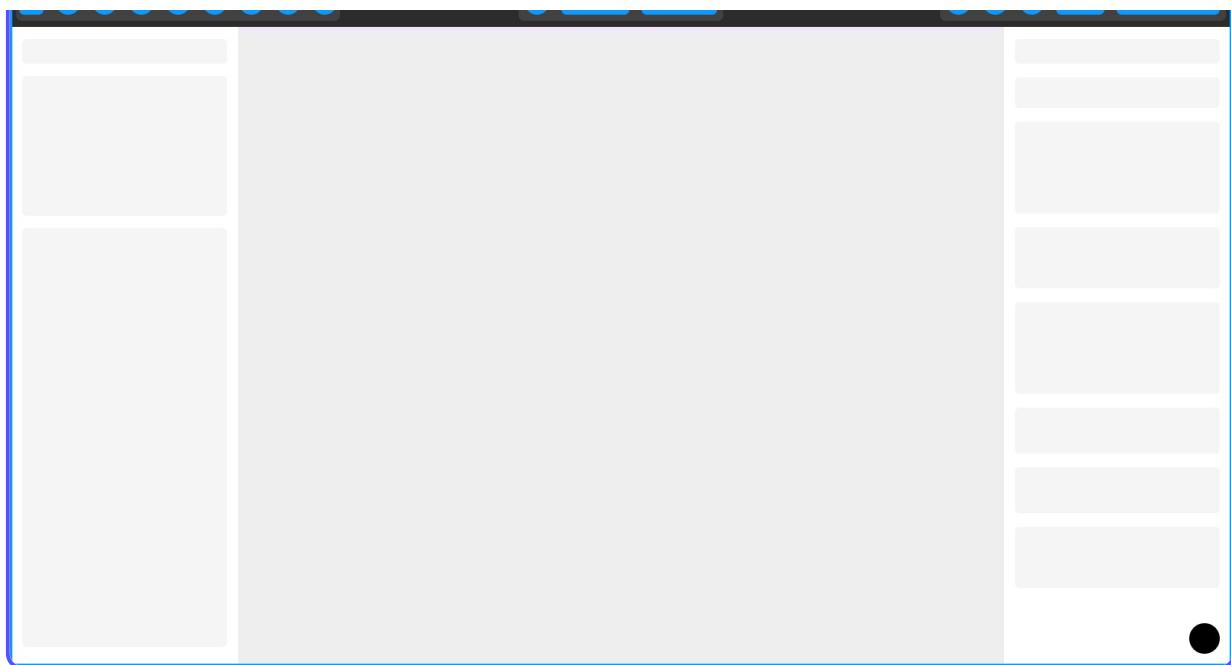


You can identify Figma design files in the file browser by the icon  on the file card.

## Find your way around

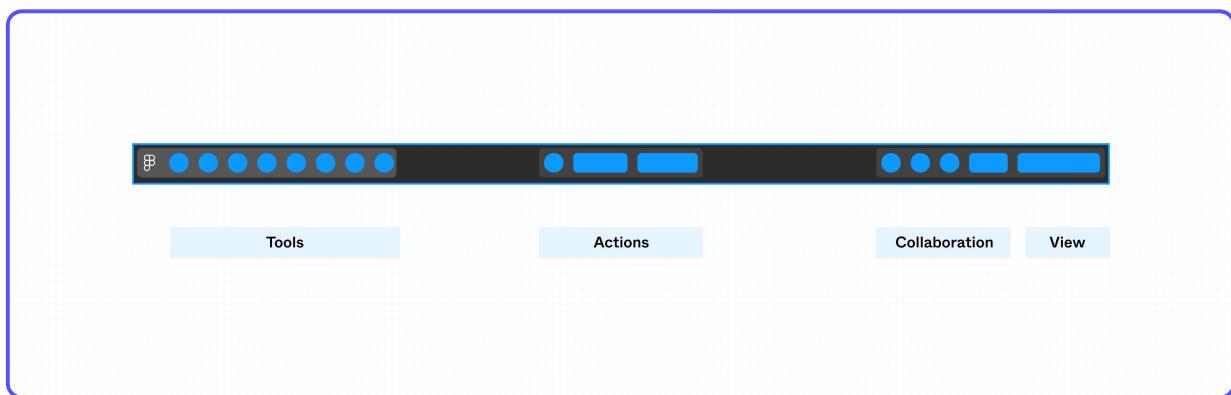
If you're new to Figma, it's normal to feel a bit lost when you first open a file. We'll take you on a tour, so you can orient yourself and start collaborating with your team.

Design files have four distinct regions: a [toolbar](#), a [left sidebar](#), and a [right sidebar](#), and the [canvas](#). We've simplified the layout so you can get to know what lives in



## Toolbar

The toolbar contains a selection of important tools and actions. There are four groups: tools, actions, collaboration, and view options.



## Tools

Switch between tools to explore the file, select and move layers, or resize them.

Find tools to create frames, shapes, text, and other [layers](#). These will be the

Preferences, like [dark mode](#) or scroll behavior.

## Actions

Access file-level actions, like libraries and version history.

Or, with layers selected, access functions for combining layers. Like applying [masks](#), creating [components](#), or [editing shapes](#).

## Collaboration

Find tools to share your designs and work together in real-time. [Share](#) the file, see who else is here, talk over [audio](#), and more.

## View options

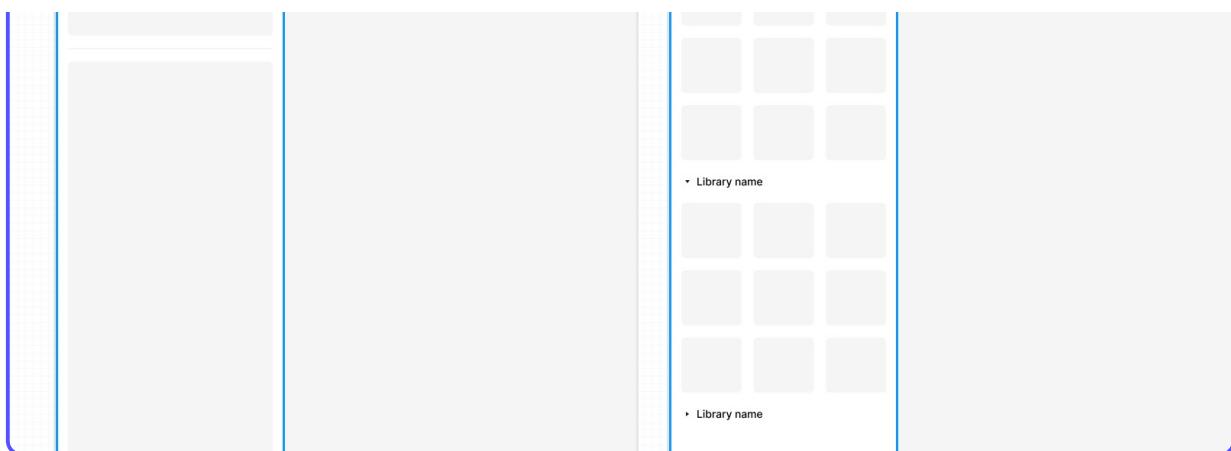
View prototypes or adjust your personal [zoom](#) and [view options](#). The changes you make here only apply to your view.

## Left sidebar

The left sidebar gives you access to layers, pages, and assets. View a list of pages in the file, select a page to view, then explore any layers on the canvas.

Use the **Assets** panel to view local components or find components from libraries (requires edit access).



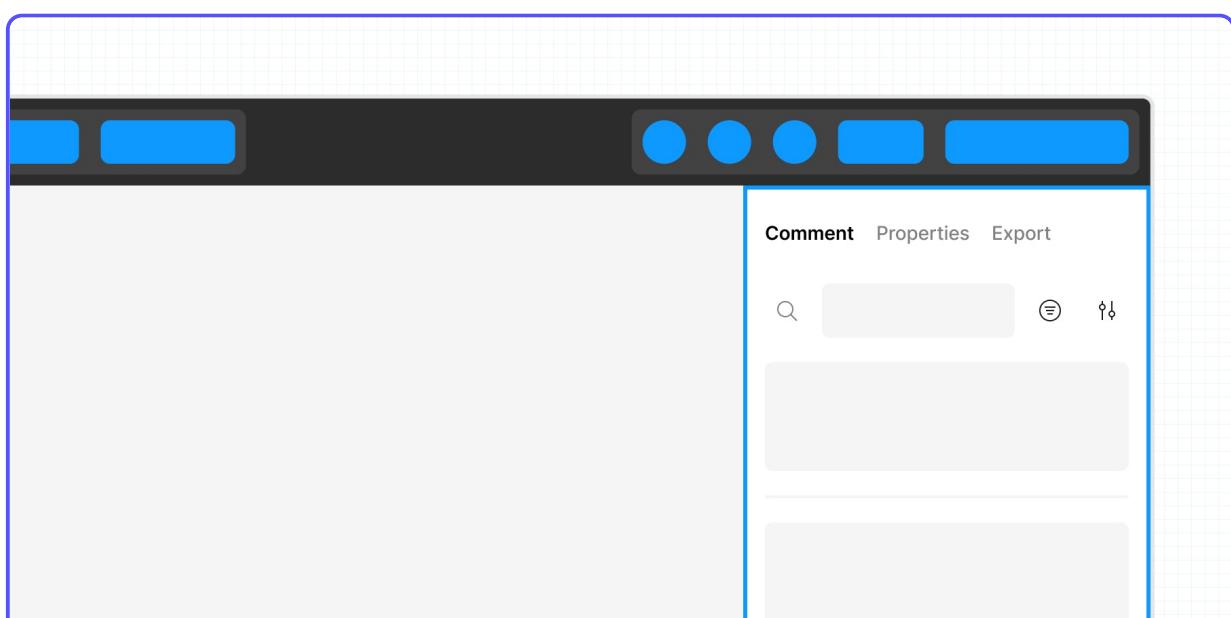


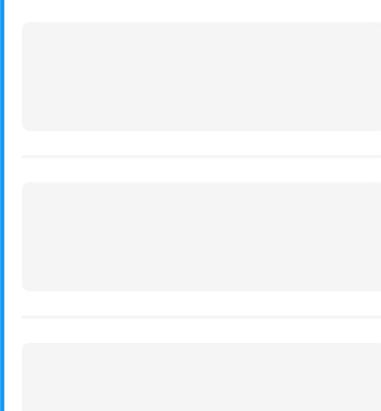
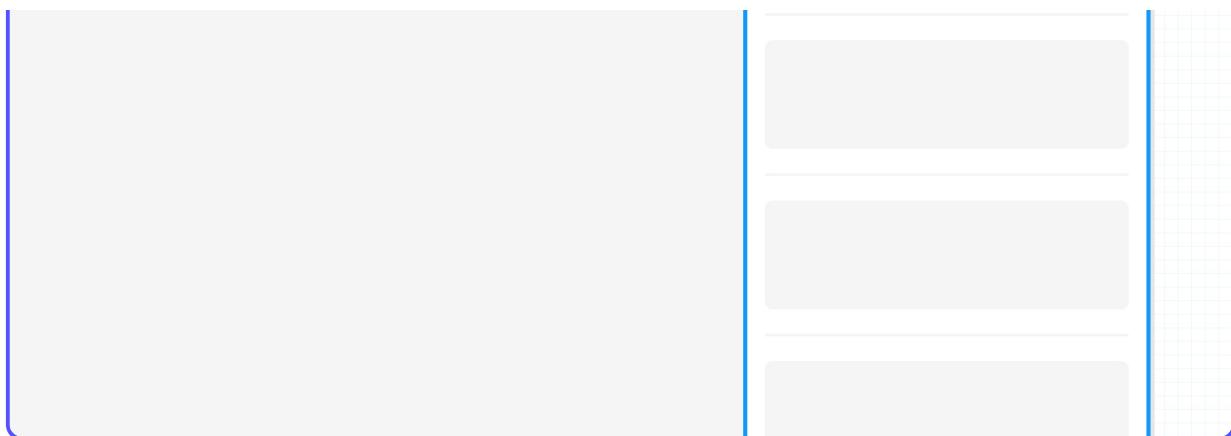
[Explore the left sidebar →](#)

## Right sidebar

The right sidebar is where you can access more information about your designs. When you don't have anything selected, you can view local resources, like color or text styles.

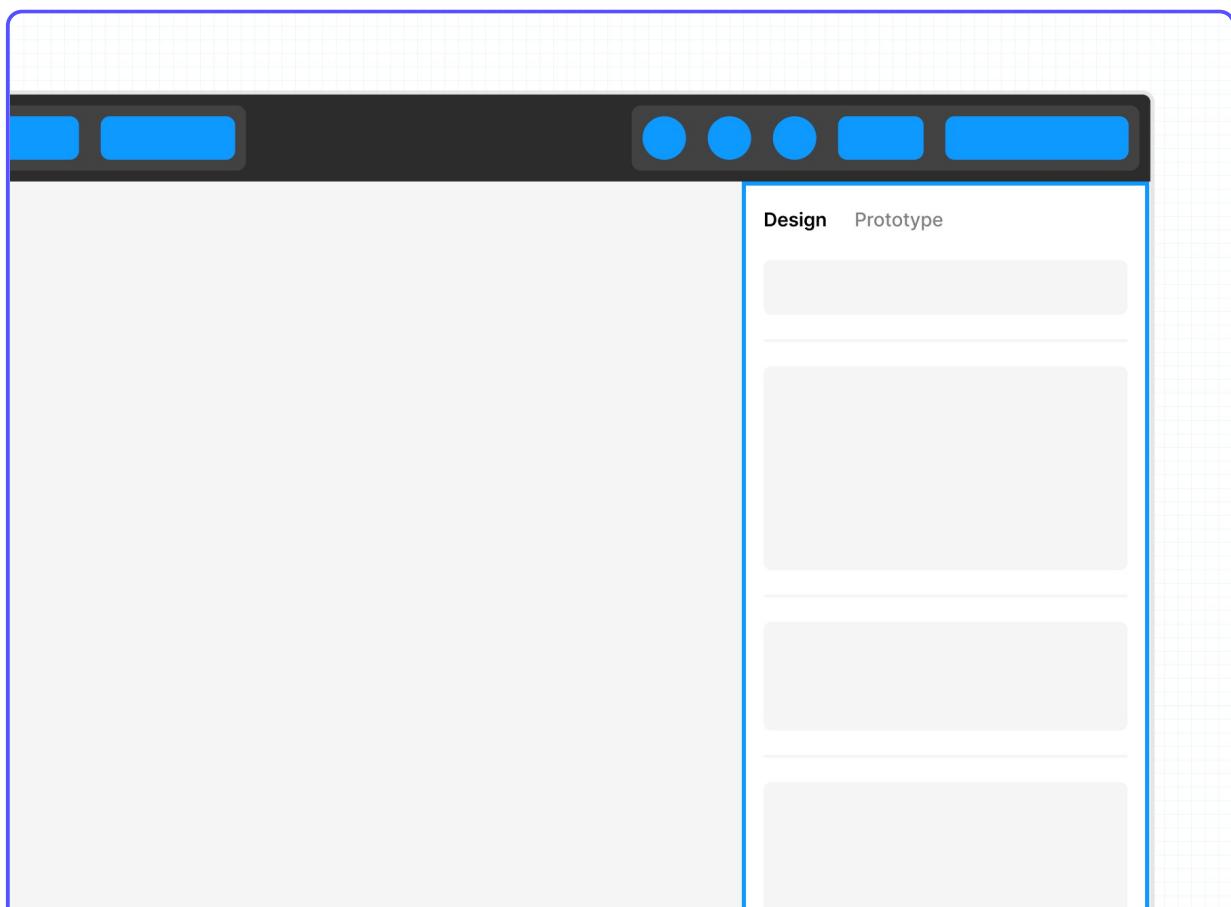
With a layer selected, you can explore properties of your current selection. Your permissions will determine what you can see in the sidebar, and what actions you can take.

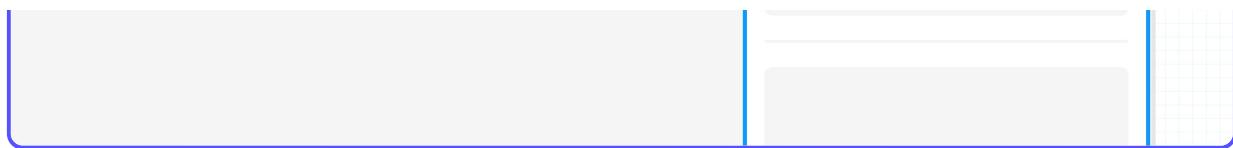




## View only access

- **Comment:** View and search comments
- **Properties:** View the properties of your selection
- **Export:** Export assets from the file





## Edit access

- **Design:** View and edit the design properties of layers
- **Prototype:** View and edit prototype interactions, flows, and settings

[Explore the right sidebar →](#)

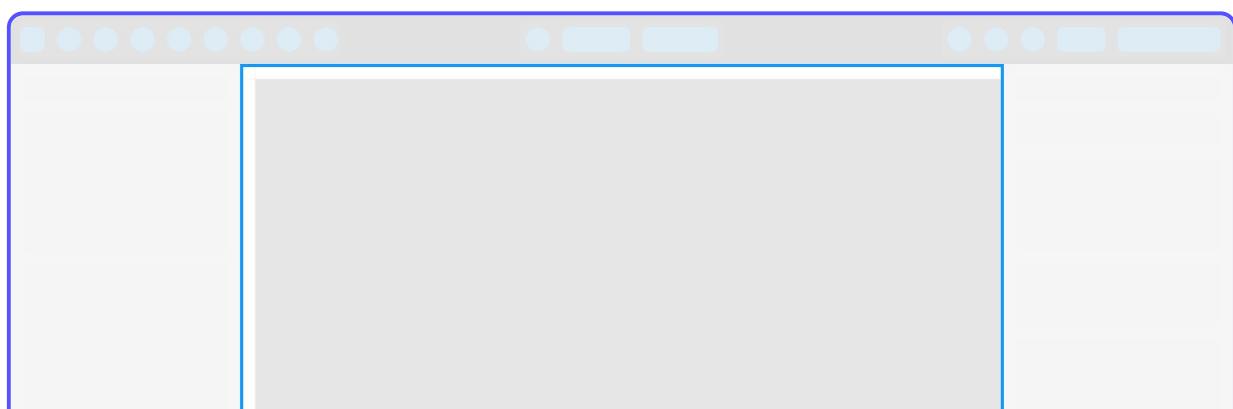
## Inspect designs with Dev Mode

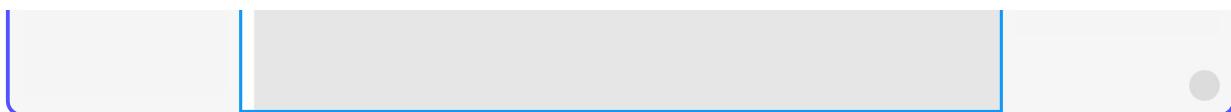
Are you viewing the file as part of the handoff process? Dev Mode is a developer-focused interface for inspecting and navigating design files.

Dev Mode allows you to identify designs that are ready for development and access the information needed to transform designs into code. [Guide to Dev Mode →](#)

## Canvas

The canvas is your working area where you'll arrange layers to create your designs. You'll find lots of room to explore and iterate on your ideas.





## Pan to move around

**Pan to move around the file and see what else is on the canvas.**

Mouse: [left mouse click button icon] Hold down the `Space` bar, then click and drag to move around the canvas.

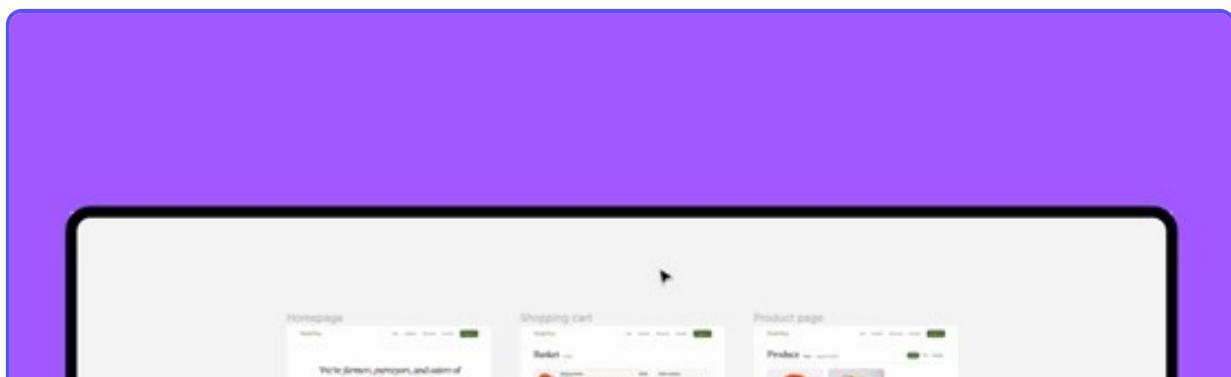
Trackpad: [two finger drag icon] With two fingers, slide in any direction to pan the canvas. Figma will use your computer's default scroll direction settings.

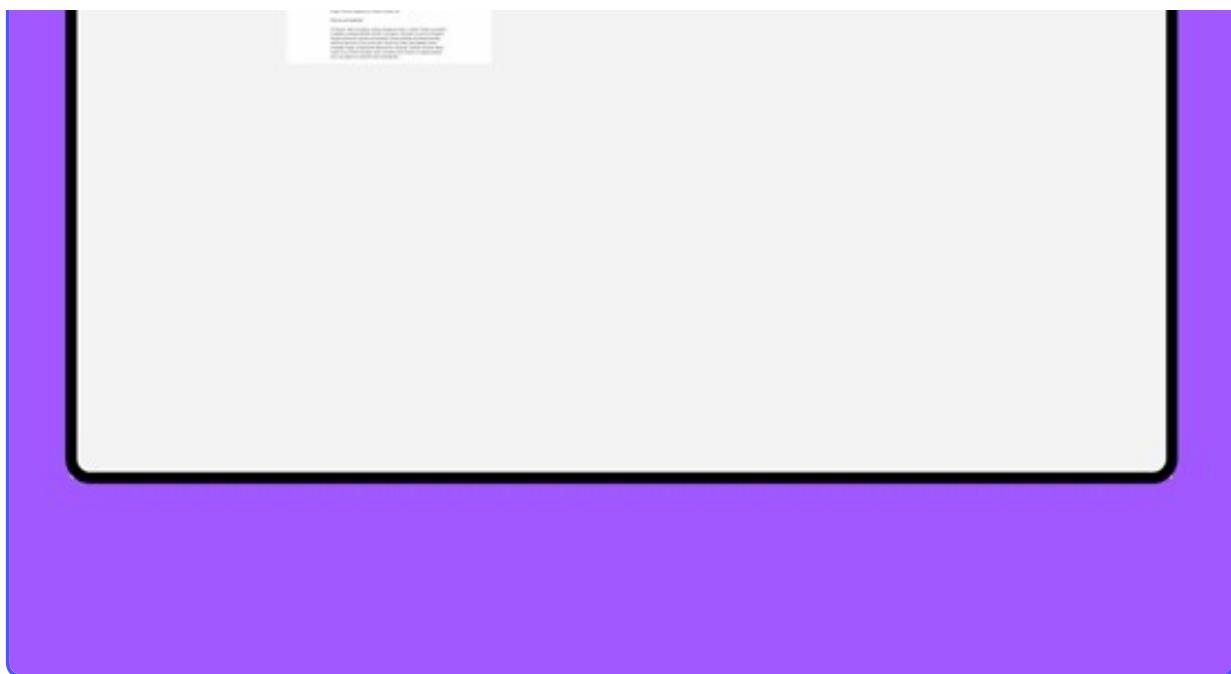
## Zoom in and out

**Zoom in to take a closer look, or zoom out to see the bigger picture. View the current zoom level in the top-right corner of the screen.**

Mouse: Hold down `⌘ Command` / `Ctrl` and `space` and scroll down to zoom in and up to zoom out.

Trackpad: Pinch two fingers together to zoom out or stretch two fingers apart to zoom in.





## Stress-free exploration

If it's your first time joining or exploring a file, interacting with things on the canvas can feel a little scary. People are often worried they'll move, change, or delete something by accident.

Great power doesn't have to come with great responsibility. Select the [hand tool] in the toolbar, or press `H` on your keyboard. Now you can click, drag, and zoom your way around a file, without the fear of making unintended changes.

## Put it all together

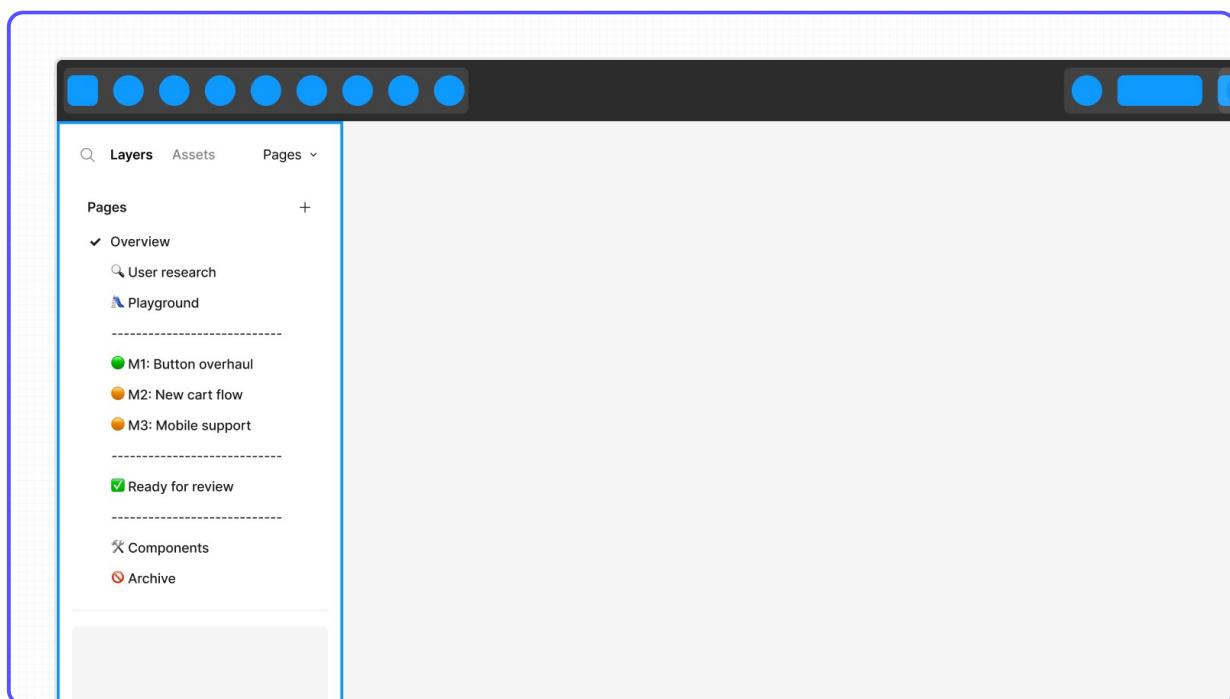
Let's do a quick recap! The **toolbar** gives you the tools and functions you need to create and combine layers. You can then arrange those layers in the **canvas** to create your designs.

The **left sidebar** is where you can explore and organize your layers. The **right sidebar** is where you can view layer properties.

## Pages

Pages help you organize your design files. Each page is its own canvas, giving you even more space to create and explore your ideas. People use pages to:

- Manage designs by milestone or status
- Organize components
- Keep a scratchpad of ideas
- Archive older designs



To browse a file's pages, click the current page name in the left sidebar. You can also tap to create a new page. [View pages in the sidebar →](#)

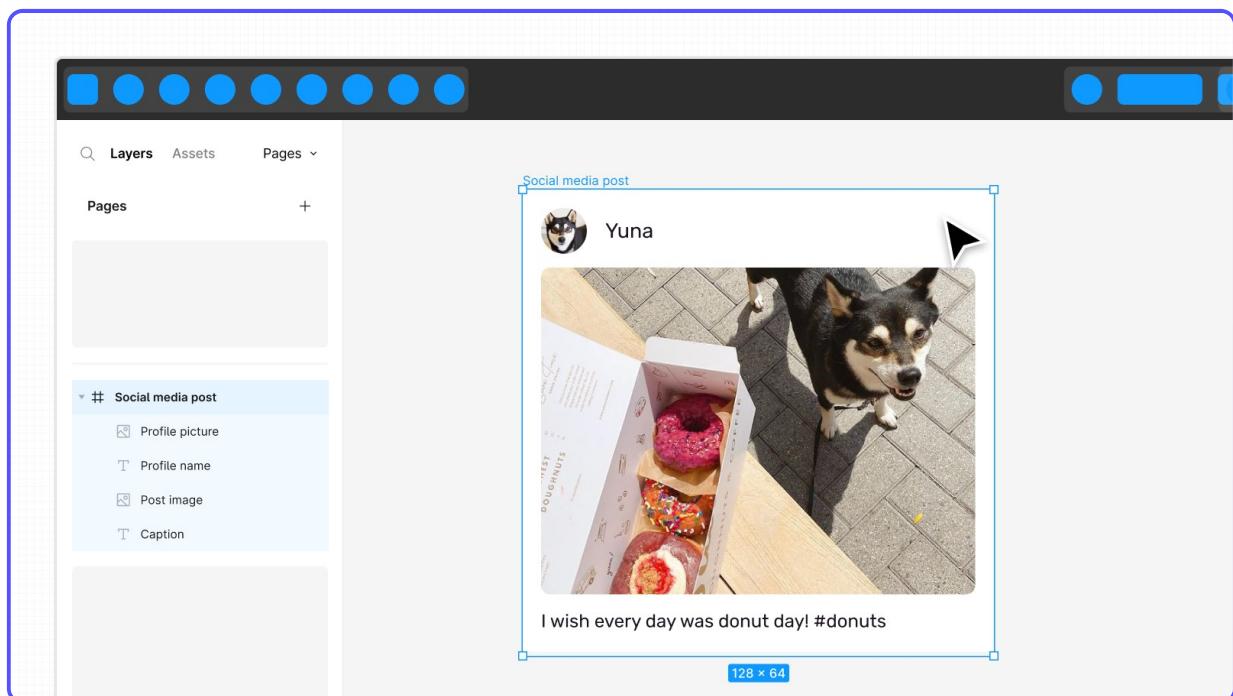
Pages are great for sharing a specific collection of designs. For example, you can create a distinct page for a review or when designs are ready for development.

## Layers

Designs are usually created from a combination of shapes, text, and other elements.

When you add objects to the canvas, Figma treats each object as a separate layer. Having separate layers allows you to change or edit the properties of each layer on its own.

Like this design for a social post, which includes a name, profile photo, image, and caption.

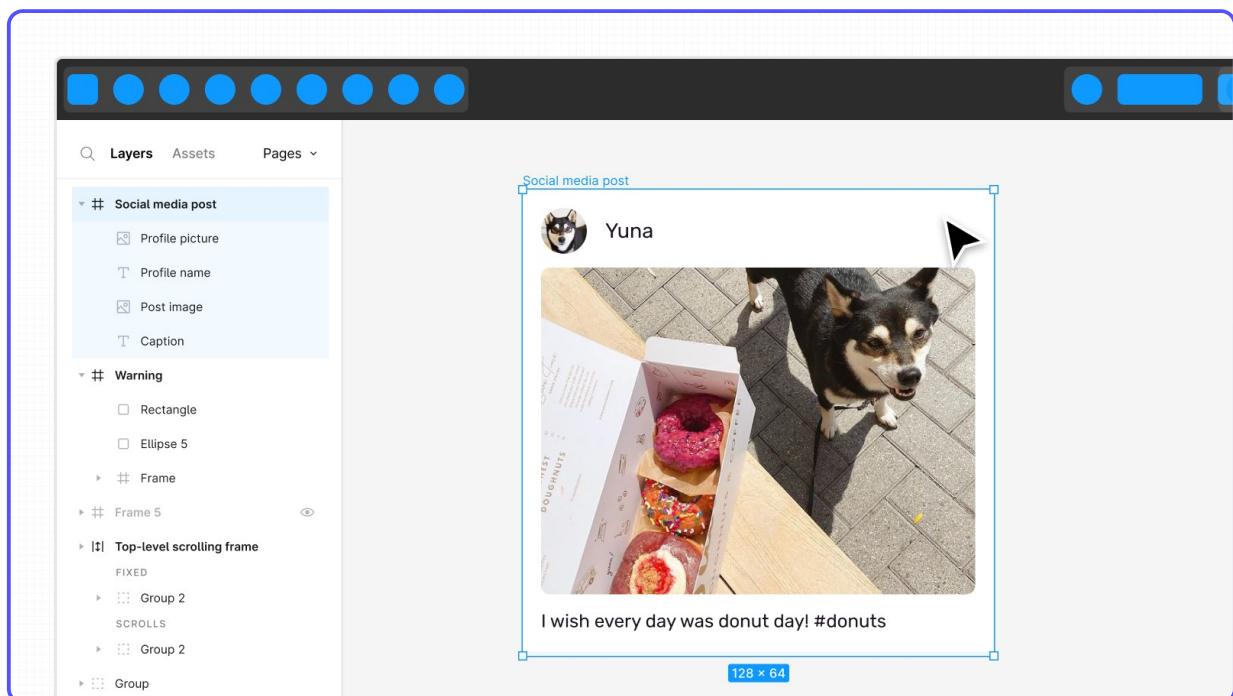


You don't need to be a geometry whizz to use Figma. But it helps to know we're working with three dimensions on the canvas.

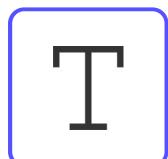
We have the **X** (horizontal) and **Y** (vertical) axis that gives us a layer's coordinates on the canvas. We also have a third dimension, the **Z-index**, that gives us the layer's depth or order it appears.

## View layers in the Layer panel

Layers can sit on top of, behind, next to, or inside other layers. To see how layers are organized, check the **Layers** panel in the left sidebar.



Layer icon	Layer name	Shortcut
	Frame	[F]
	Group	[⌘ Command] [G]
	Component	[⌥ Option] [⌘ Command] [K] or [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [K]



Text

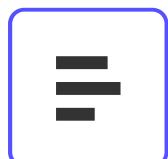


Shape

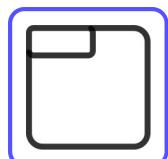


Image

or



Auto layout



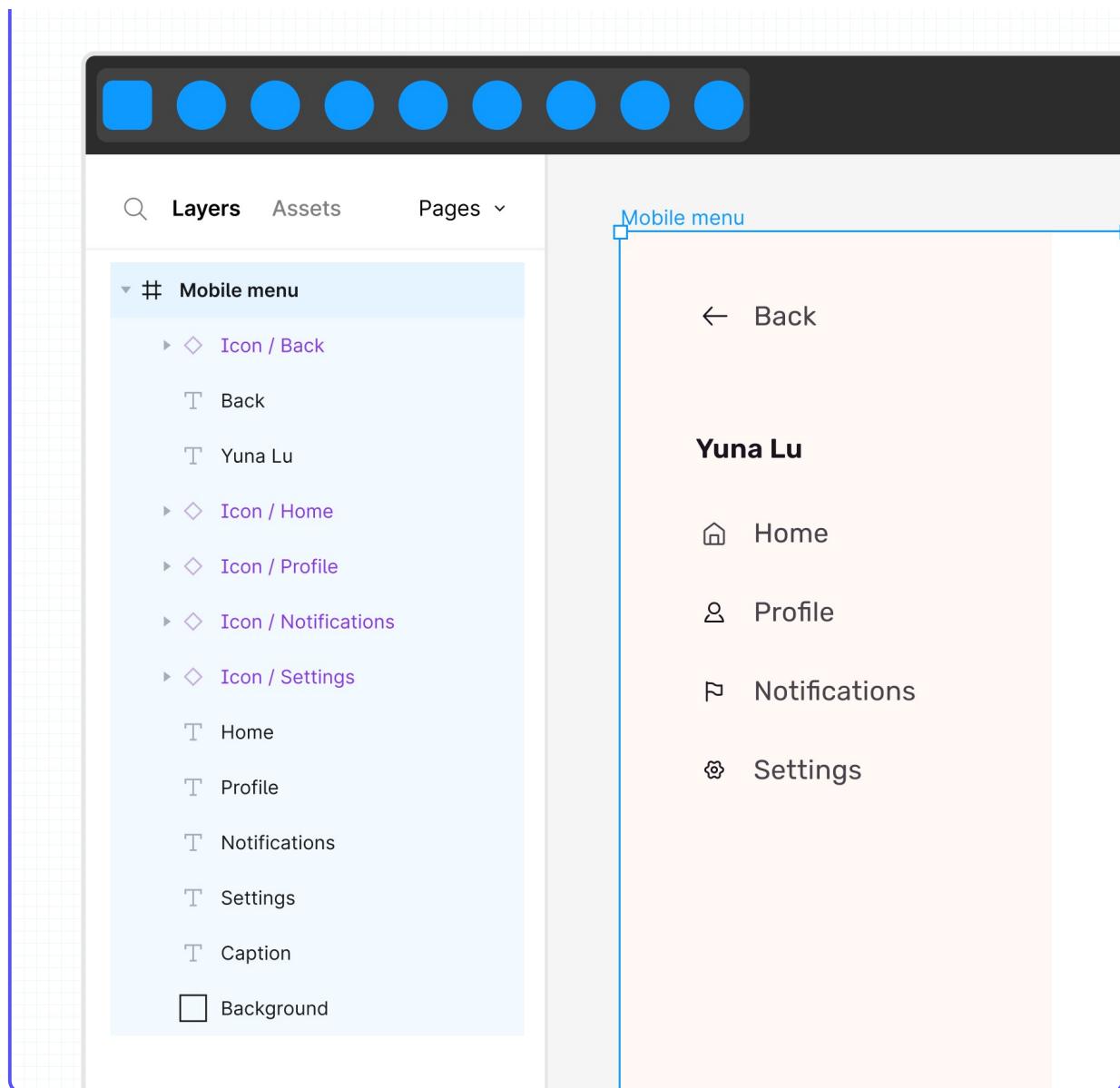
Section

GIF or  
video

or

## Types of layers

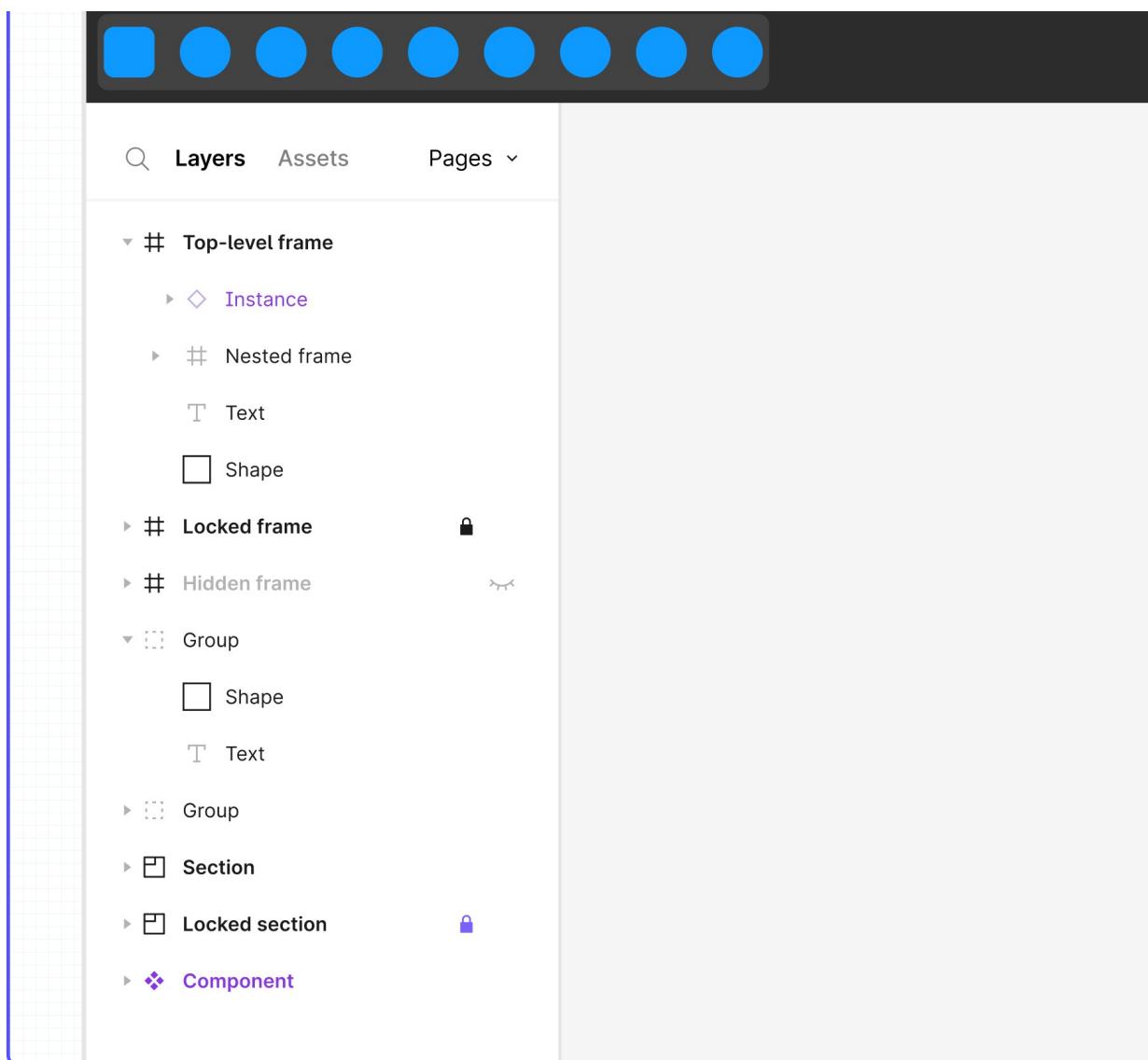
Each layer has a name and an icon for the layer type. You might have noticed that some of these icons appear in the toolbar. You can select that tool from the toolbar,



## Layer order and hierarchy

The order in which layers appear in the layers panel is also important. Layer order determines how layers overlap in the canvas.

This menu has a rectangle that acts as the background. As it's below the other layers in the layers panel, it also appears above those layers in the canvas. If it was above the other layers in the layers panel, we wouldn't be able to see any of the text or icon layers.



## Layers as containers

We mentioned that layers can be *inside* other layers. You can tell if a layer contains other layers if there is an arrow next to it in the layers panel. Click the arrow to view any layers within that container.

### Relationships between layers

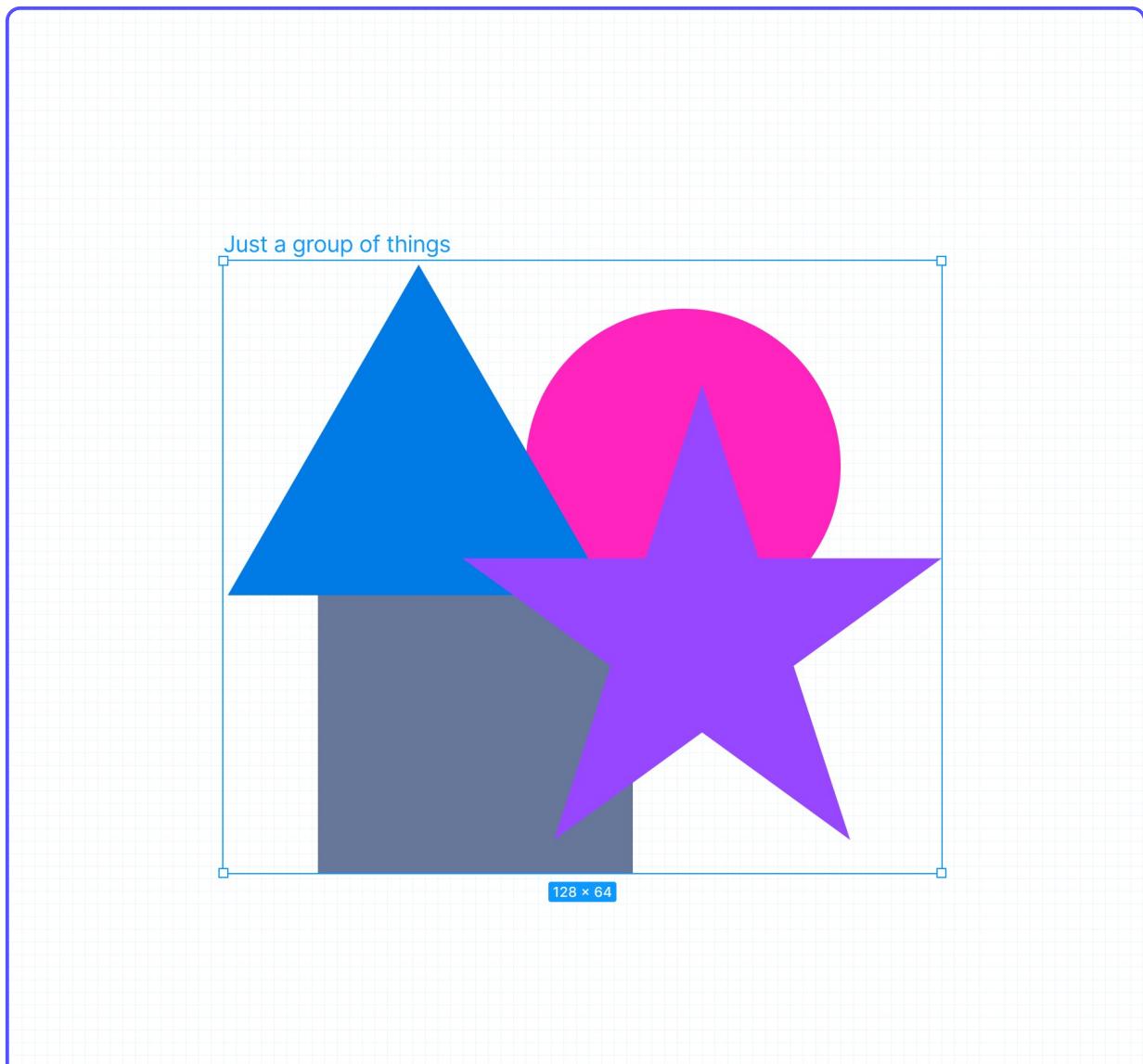
We use the terms parent and child to describe relationships between containers and the layers within them.

- **Child** layers are layers inside a parent layer. They could be individual layers, like a shape, or some text, or containers with their own children.

[Parent, child, and sibling relationships →](#)

## Working with containers

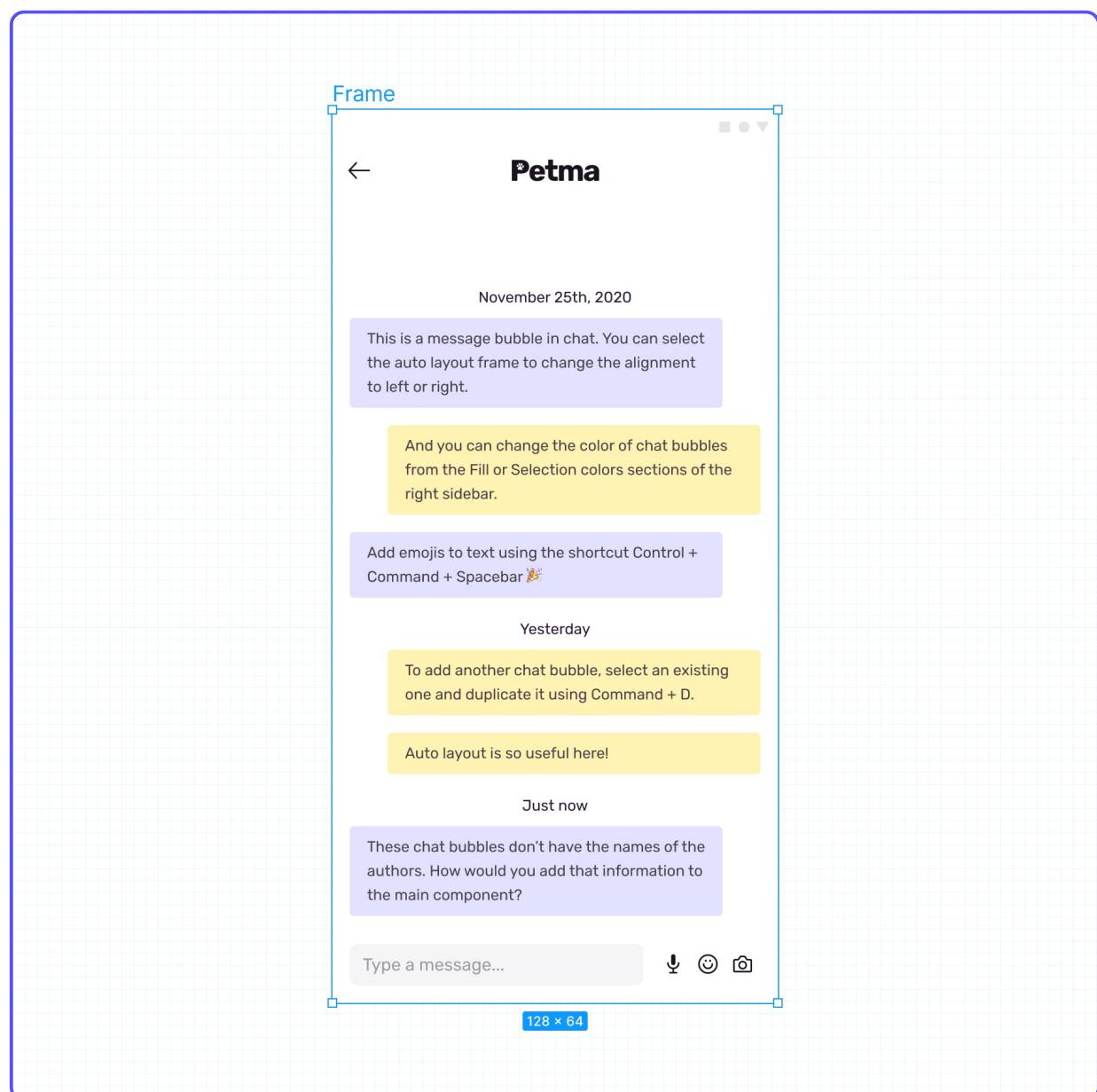
There are a few different types of layers that function as containers: **groups**, **frames**, and **sections**. While they may seem similar, they each have their own benefits.



## Groups

Groups are a great way to combine layers into a single element. They simplify the layers panel and give you a single object you can interact with in the canvas. For example: you have a collection of shapes you want to stay together.

Groups are collections of layers and not distinct elements, so they don't have dimensions or properties of their own. When you make changes to a group, you're actually applying those changes to each layer in the group .

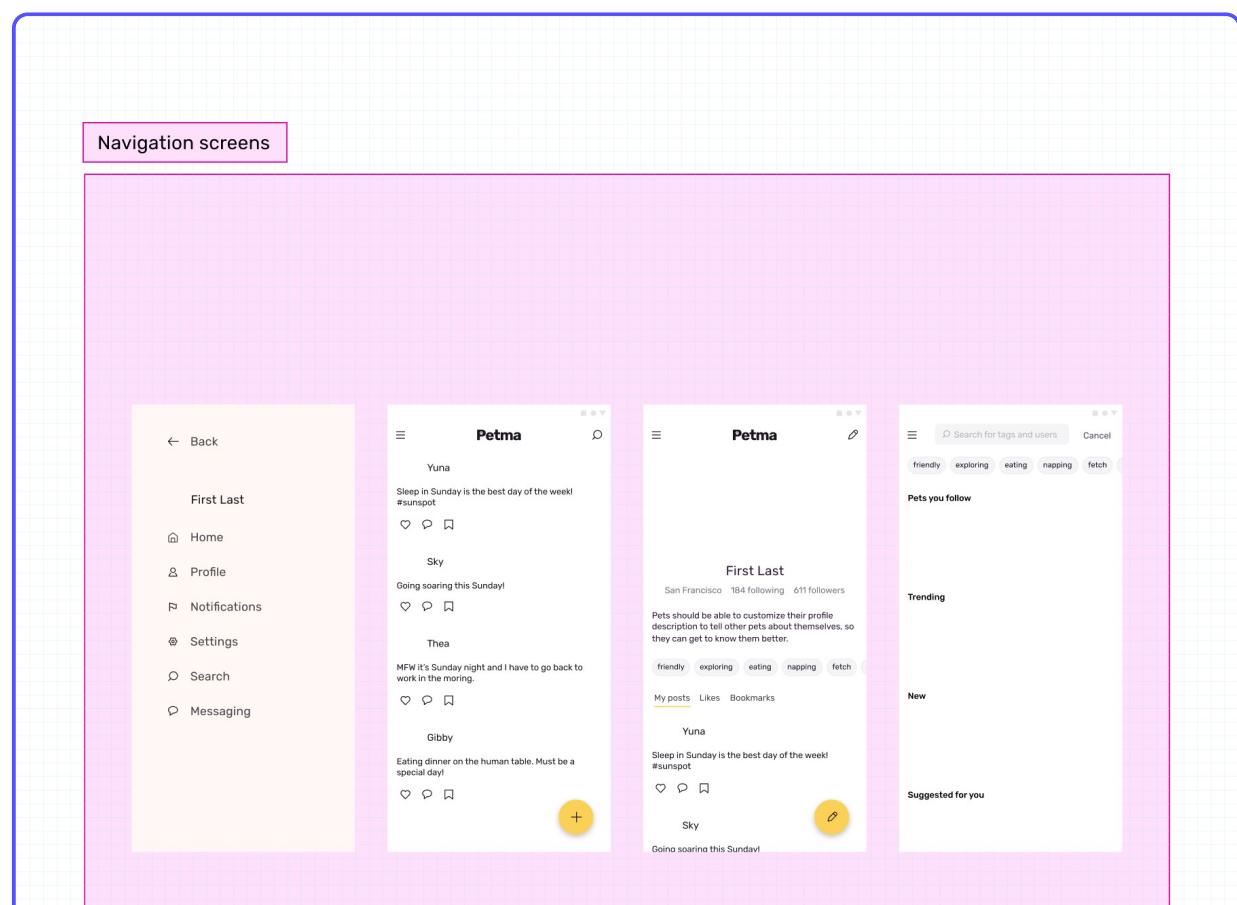


for a specific device or screen size, like a single page in an app design. They can also act as containers for layers that make up distinct elements, like the layers in a navigation bar. You can even put frames inside other frames.

Unlike groups, frames can have dimensions and properties of their own—like fills, rounded corners, and shadows. They also have features like [auto layout](#), [constraints](#), and [layout grids](#), that allow you to control or influence the layers inside them.

## Frame presets

Figma has frame presets for common assets, devices, and screen sizes. Whether you're designing a mobile app or an Instagram post. [Explore frame presets →](#)





## Sections

The [section](#) tool allows you to designate and label a specific region of the canvas. You can use sections to group related concepts and ideas or organize your designs.

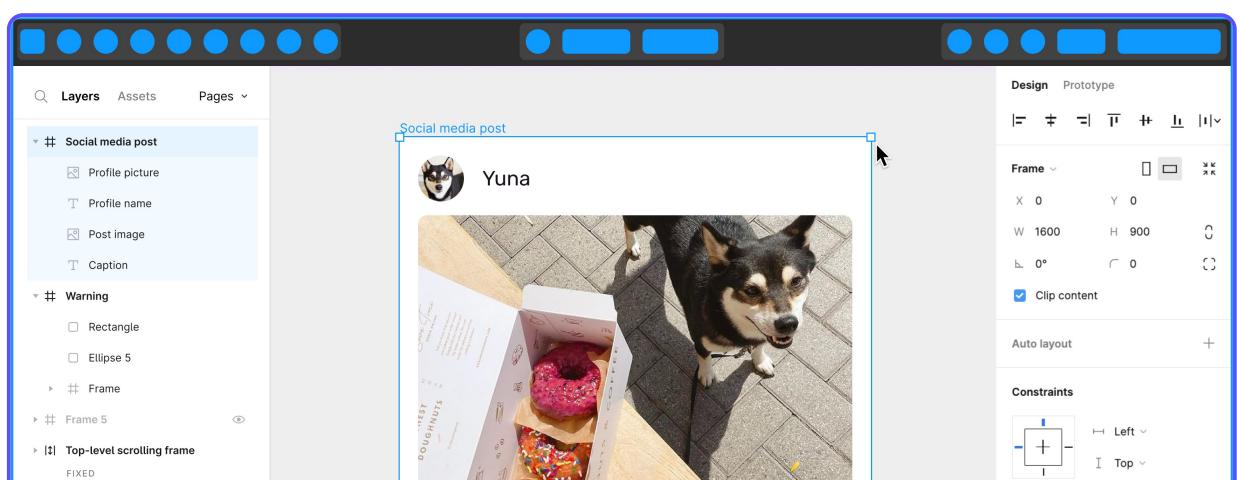
Sections help to draw focus, give context, and guide collaborators through processes. They're perfect for activities like reviews or for sharing designs for handoff.

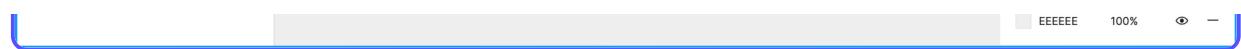
Check out our best practice guide for more information on [when to use groups and frames](#).

## Explore layer properties

When you hover over a layer or object in the canvas, a box appears around the entire element. Click on a layer to select it and view more information about its properties.

In the left sidebar, you can view the layer's name and how it's organized. In the right sidebar, you can view the properties of the layer.





A layer's properties will include basic information about the layer, like its dimensions and location on the canvas. As well as any styling, like color, text properties, or effects like shadows.

Which properties you can see will depend on the type of layer you have selected. If a layer uses a style, then only the style name and icon will be visible in the right sidebar.

## Layout      Layer      Auto layout      Constraints

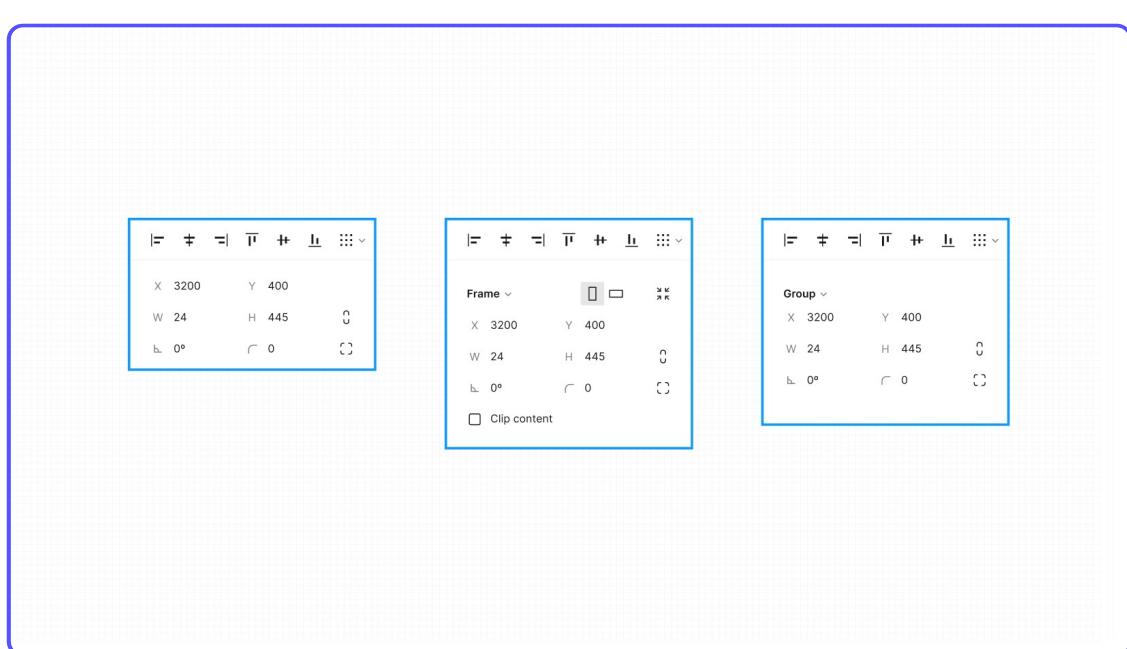
### Fills

### Stroke

### Selection colors

### Effects

## Export



Supported on:

## Frames      Groups      Components      Instances

### Auto layout

### Sections

### GIFs

## Can't edit properties?

If you click on a layer, but can't adjust its properties, it means you have view-only access. You can use the **Properties** panel to view the properties of the layer, but you can't make any changes.

If you're viewing the file as part of the handoff process, then Dev Mode is for you. Dev Mode is a developer-focused interface for inspecting and navigating design files. [Guide to Dev Mode →](#)

## Permissions in design files

Your permissions will determine what actions you can take and whether you can make changes to files. We're not going to do a deep-dive into Figma's permissions model here. But there's one concept to understand: the difference between an **editor** and a **viewer**.

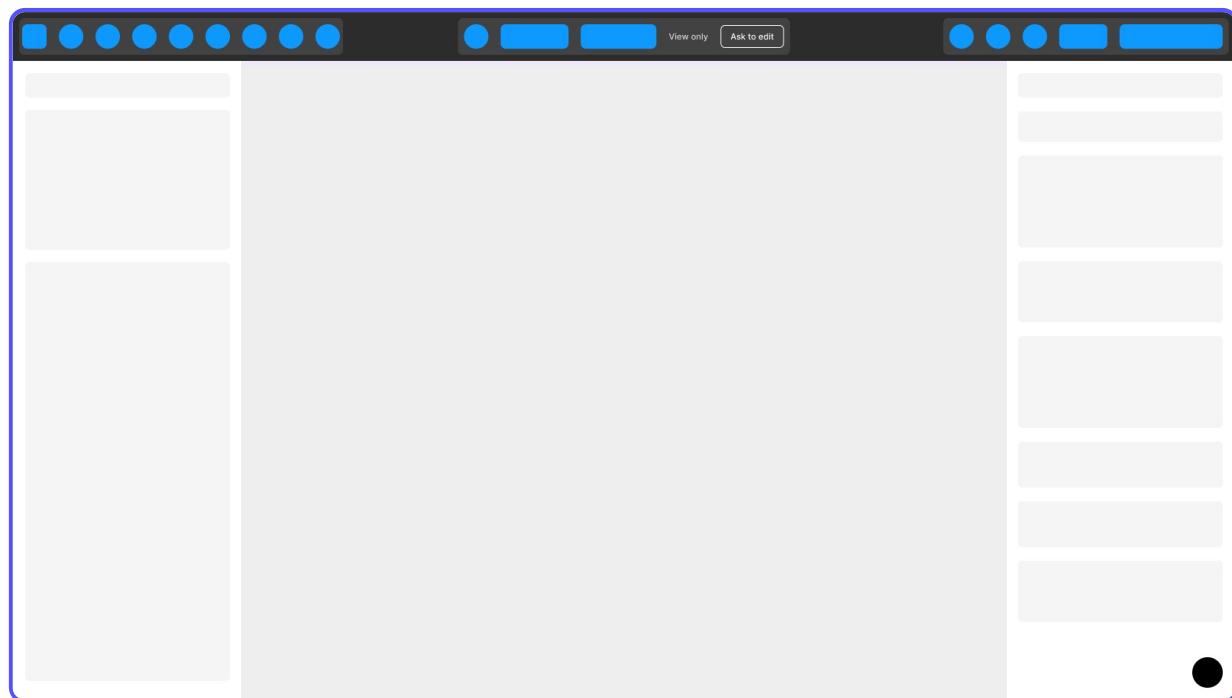
- Editors can edit or make changes to a file. That includes everything from moving layers, updating properties, and managing the file itself.
- Viewers can explore pages and prototypes, but they can't make any changes. Viewers can still contribute to files by giving feedback.

Explore actions viewers can take



## How to check your permissions

The quickest way to see whether you can edit a file is to check the toolbar. If you see the full toolbar, with all the creation tools and actions, you have edit access to the file.



## Need edit access?

You can [request access to a file](#) from the toolbar. Click the **Ask to edit** button next to the file name.

If you don't see this option, it means your access has been restricted by a team or organization admin. If you're on the Professional plan, reach out to your team admin. If you're on the Organization or Enterprise plan, request an editor upgrade.

## Ready to start creating?

These quick starter projects are the perfect way to kick-start your learning journey:

- [Design your first button](#)
- [Create an illustration in Figma design](#)
- [Create a basic wireframe and prototype](#)
- [Create pixel art in Figma design](#)

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**Yes**

**No**

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# Figma



English (US)

## Use cases

UI design

UX design

Prototyping

Graphic design

Wireframing

Brainstorming

Templates

Remote design

## Explore

Design features

Prototyping features

Design systems features

Collaboration features

FigJam

Pricing

Enterprise

Students and educators

Contact

## Resources

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## Compare

[Sketch](#)

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[Invision Studio](#)

[Framer](#)

[Design on Windows](#)

[Miro](#)