

CUT- TING TO THE PAPER CHASE

A guide to formatting digital zines for print

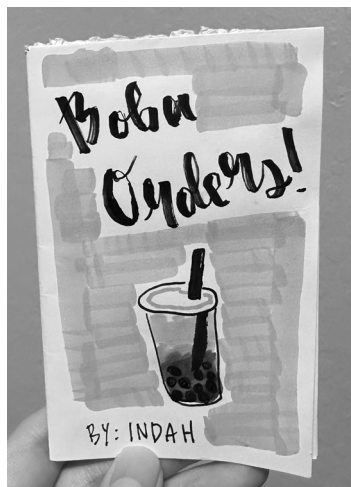
WHAT IS A ZINE?

"A *zine* (derived from magazine) is an independently- or self-published booklet, often created by a single person."

-ZineWiki

The beauty of zines is that anyone can make them! Whether you want to use traditional collaging methods or work digitally, zines are a way to express your creativity and personal opinions (My first zine was about my favorite boba drinks!).

Zine distribution works differently from books or magazines. Since most people make them at home, they are generally printed out in small batches and given out for free or traded with other zine makers.



Creating your zine digitally enables zine makers to print out infinite copies of their works and opens up the avenue of digital distribution. However, many digital artists who are interested in making zines do not have experience formatting their documents for print, which makes them hesitant at trying to make their own zines. If you're a digital artist feeling intimidated by the world of print or simply want to expand your knowledge, then this zine is for you!

This zine will cover:

- Software
- Formats
- Document setup
- Layouts
- Printing
- Binding

This zine will *not* cover:

- Making a zine
- Scanning
- Copying

SOFTWARE

If you're a digital artist, you likely already have a digital art program you're comfortable with, whether that be Photoshop, Clip Studio, or Procreate. You can easily adapt the layout guidelines I'm going to give you for your program of choice, but for simplicity's sake, I will be showing examples in Adobe InDesign.

InDesign is not a digital art program—it specializes in formatting documents for print. You can drag and drop art made in other programs into InDesign, so if you can get your hands on it, this program will make formatting your zine much easier!

Again, though, if you aren't able to shell out for InDesign (it's pretty pricey), don't worry about it! *This zine over-explains a lot of things for the sake of thoroughness*, but as long as you have the right page size and don't put anything too close to the edge, you'll be fine. The most important part of making a zine is having fun!

WHERE TO PRINT

No printer at home? No problem! There are many places where you can print out your zine, such as:

- ★ The library
- ★ College campuses
- ★ Your office if your boss likes you

If you're planning to print a larger number of zines, these might be more convenient/cost-effective (They might also offer binding):

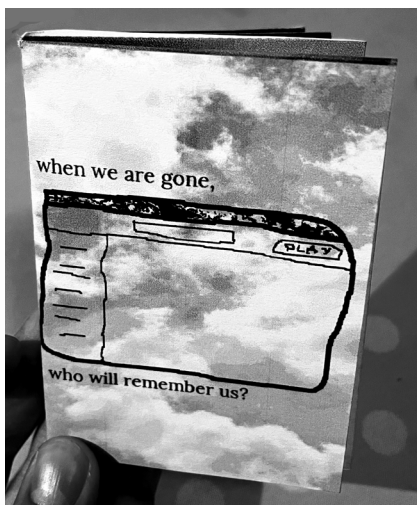
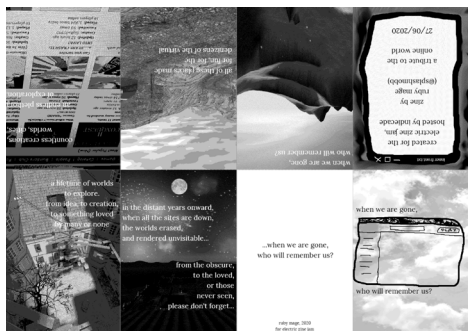
- ★ Post offices
- ★ Local professional printers
- ★ Online printing services such as Mixam or PrintNinja

ZINE FORMATS

The two most common zine formats are:

The Mini Zine

- Made from 1 sheet of paper
- 8 pages
- Folded; no binding required!



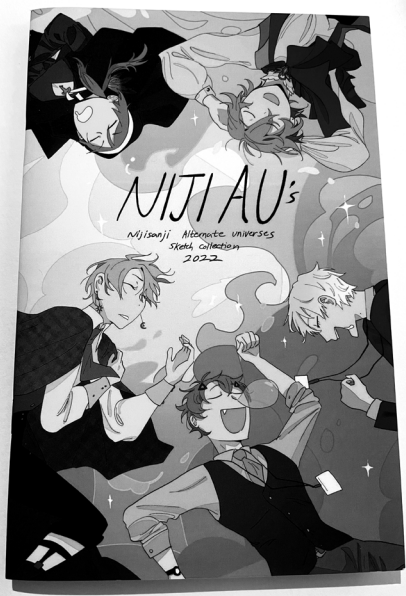
Zine by: Ruby Mage

The Folio Zine

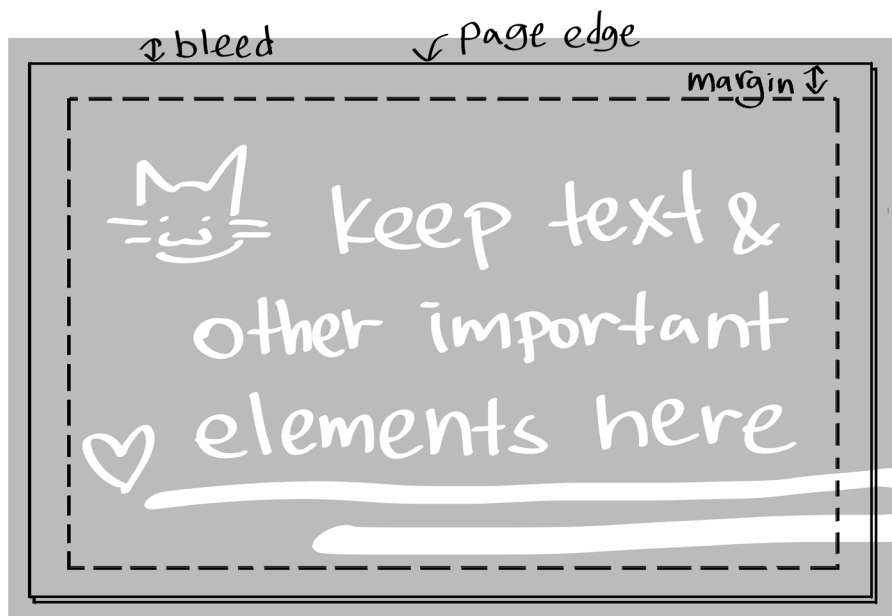
- Made from by folding sheets of paper in half
- Pages are multiples of 4
- Requires binding

This zine you're reading now is a folio zine!

This is a sketch zine by wishu. It's professionally printed on thick paper!



PAGE LAYOUTS



The **margin** is the no-text zone around the border of the page.

- ★ Ensures important information isn't cut off during printing
- ★ Helps keep your page looking balanced
- ★ *Keep these WITHIN the margins:* text & important graphic elements (such as the cat and heart in the graphic above).
- ★ *Extend these OUTSIDE the margins:* background graphics, elements that are meant to begin at the page edge (such as the two white lines in the graphic above)
- ★ In most cases, stick with a 0.25 inch margin or greater



Those using a professional printer might also have to deal with **bleed**. If your document has a background that extends to the page edge (like the gray background in the graphic above), the printer will print your document on a larger sheet of paper, then trim it down to size. The bleed ensures no paper peeks through after trimming.

- ★ Ask your print shop how much bleed you should use.

PRESET DETAILS

Example in InDesign

Width: 8.5 in Units: Inches

Height: 11 in Orientation:  

Pages: 1 Facing Pages: ☒

Start #: 1 Primary Text Frame: ☐

Columns: 1 Column Gutter: 0.1667 in

▼ Margins

Top: 0.5 in Bottom: 0.5 in

Inside: 0.5 in Outside: 0.5 in

▼ Bleed and Slug

Bleed

Top: 0.25 in Bottom: 0.25 in

Inside: 0.25 in Outside: 0.25 in

Slug

Top: 0 in Bottom: 0 in

Inside: 0 in Outside: 0 in

(you can ignore slug)

Setting these values in InDesign is done during the New Document initialization. The settings to the left will give you:

Page dimensions: 8.5 x 11 in

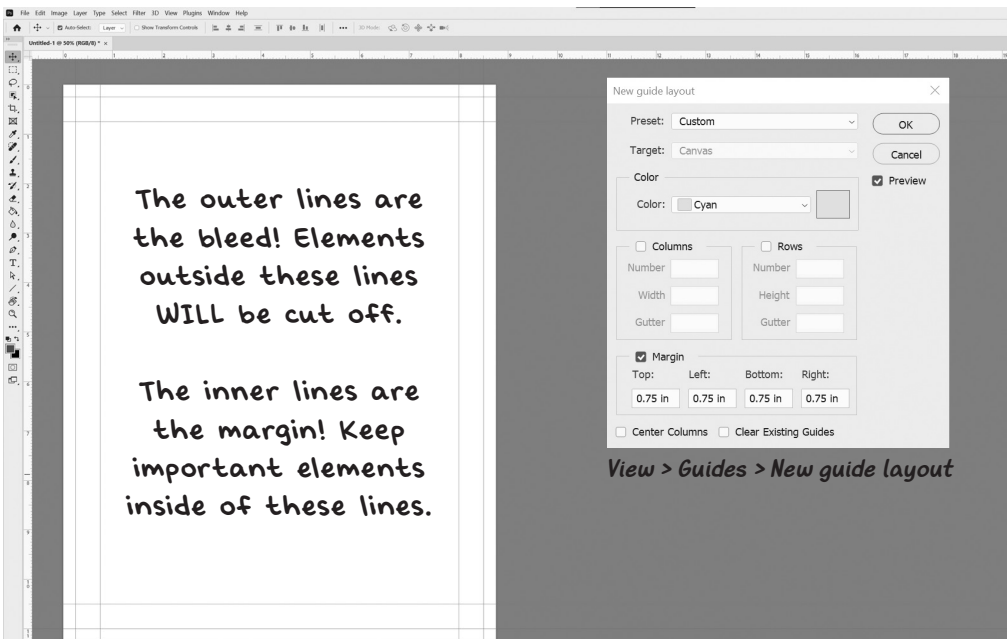
Margins: 0.5 in on all sides

Bleed: 0.25 in on all sides

Replicating this in Photoshop is harder, but it can be done using guides.

1. Create a new document. If using bleed, increase the page dimensions by bleed size (so in this example, our document will be 8.75 x 11.25 in)
2. If needed, add guides denoting the bleed. Go to **View > Guides > New guide layout**. In the four boxes in the Margin section, insert your bleed size.
3. Add guides denoting the margin. Go to **View > Guides > New guide layout**. In the four boxes in the Margin section, insert your margin size. If using bleed, add your bleed size to your margin size (so since we want a margin of 0.5 in, we'll insert 0.75 in).

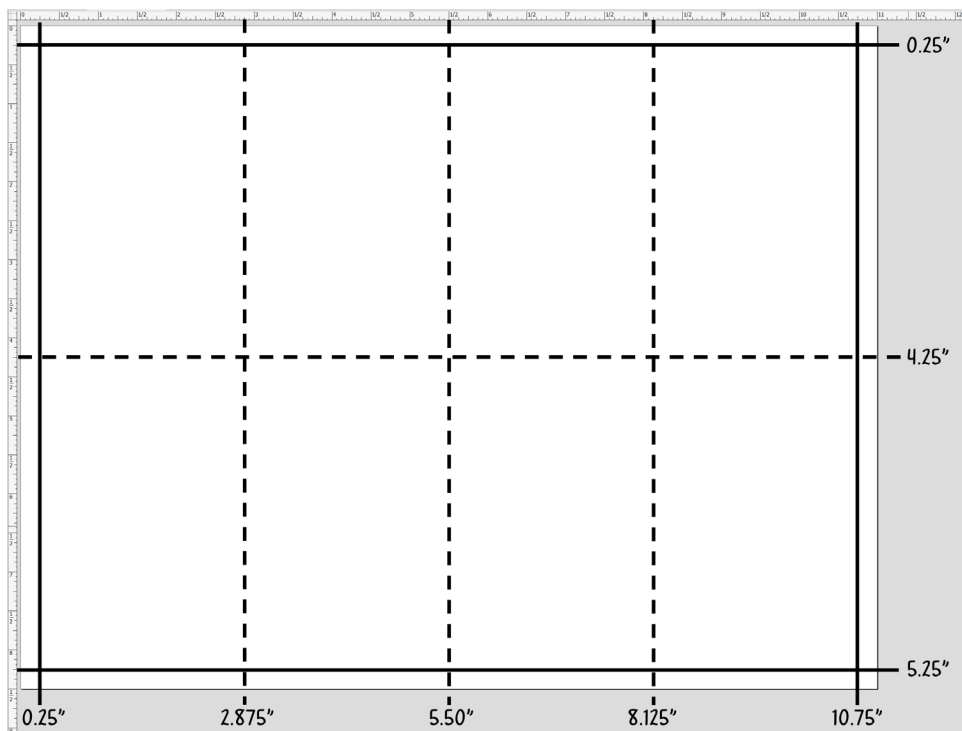
It'll end up looking like this:



View > Guides > New guide layout

THE MINI ZINE

Document Layout



- ★ This setup is for a **11" x 8.5" sheet of paper** (letter size) with **0.25" margins**. Dotted lines represent where you'll fold.
- ★ To simulate a **0.125" bleed** on a Photoshop document, increase document dimensions by 0.125" and add 0.125" to all the measurements above (so margins at 25" will be at 0.375").
- ★ The zine pages on the top row should be upside down.
- ★ There are two ways to number the pages, shown below.

g	S	h	ε
B	F	1	2

The mini zine example on pg. 3 uses the layout on the right→, but I prefer the layout on the ←left, as the front cover usually turns out neater.

h	ε	ℓ	1
5	6	B	F

Your document should be in either CMYK or grayscale color mode, and if there's an option for DPI/resolution, set it as 300 or more.

Printing

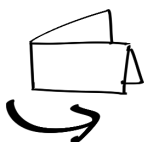
Printing a mini zine is pretty basic! Save your document as a TIFF (preferable) or PNG file, then print using these settings:

- ★ Paper size: Letter
- ★ Scale: Fit to page width
- ★ Everything else can be left as default or is up to you.

Folding



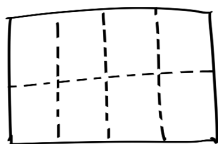
Fold in half lengthwise.



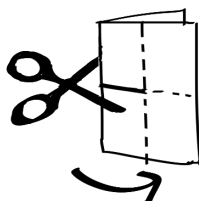
Fold in half crosswise once...



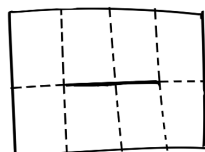
...twice.



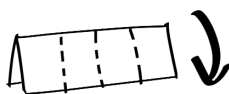
Unfold. You'll have 8 sections!



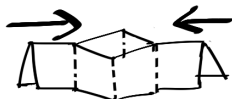
Fold in half crosswise. Cut until the 1st vertical crease.



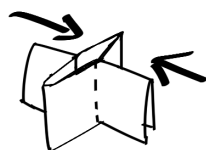
Unfold. You'll have a slit in the middle.



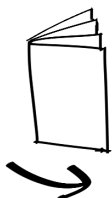
Fold in half lengthwise.



Push the sides together so the slit opens into a square.



Keep pushing to flatten pages.

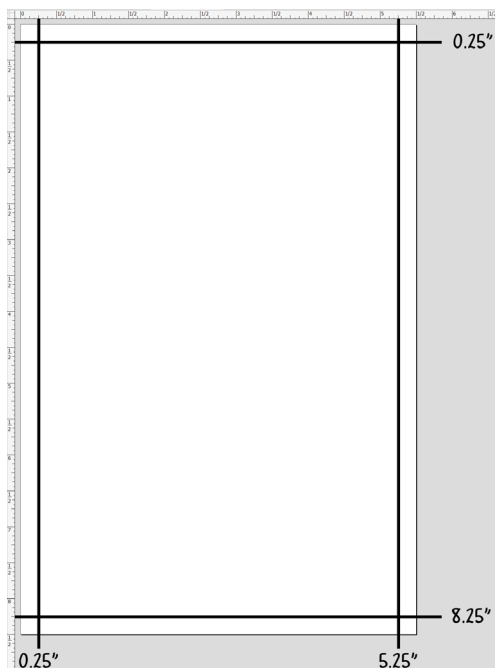


Flatten the book.
Done!

Tip: Use your nails, the side of a ruler, a credit card, or a bone folder to crease your folds cleanly.

THE FOLIO ZINE

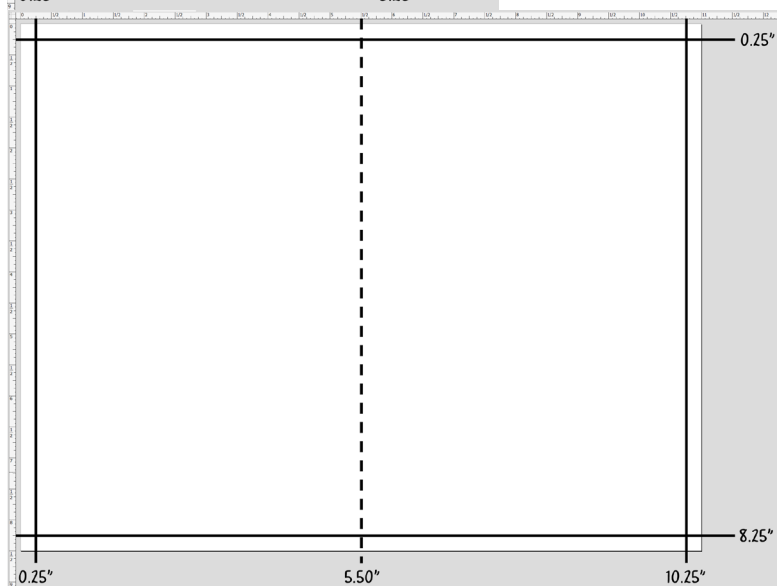
Document Layout



The setup on the left is for a *5.5" x 8.5" sheet of paper* (half letter) *0.25" margins*.

One sheet of 11" x 8.5" will end up containing four of these pages: two on the front and two on the back.

The setup below is for a *two-page spread (11" x 8.5")*. Try not to put any important elements right in the center of the page or it might be distorted during folding. Once you are done with your spread, save each page as a separate file. This will make it easier to work with later.



Again, your document should be in either CMYK or grayscale color mode, and if there's an option for DPI/resolution, set it as 300 or more.

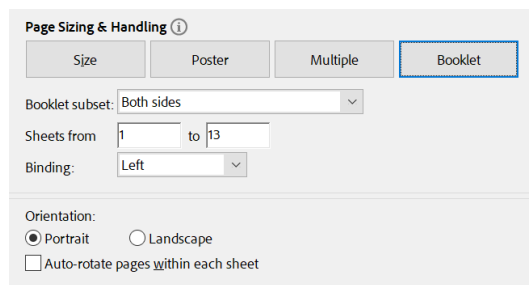
Keep in mind that the number of pages in a folio zine must be divisible by four (as there are 4 pages that fit on each sheet of paper). Vacat pages can help pad out your page count to reach a multiple of 4.

If you want to print the cover of your zine on a different type of paper than the rest of your pages, save the first two pages and the last two pages of your zine (the covers and inside covers) in a separate PDF document and print separately.

Printing

The easiest way to print out a booklet is to use Adobe Acrobat.

1. First, save your zine pages into one PDF file. If you are working in InDesign, go to File > Export and save as Adobe PDF (Print). Keep the default options. If you are working in some other program, save each page as a TIFF (preferable) or PNG file. Compile all files into one PDF using an online converter, or by using Photoshop (won't go into that here).

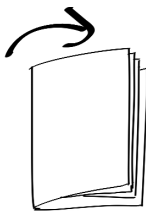


2. Open the PDF in Adobe Acrobat. Foxit Reader will also work.
3. Hit the print button, then change the print handling option to Booklet (see left). Leave all settings as default.

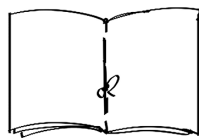
Folding



Line the sheets together.



Fold in half cross-wise. Crease well.



Bind the pages together. (pg. 10)

BINDING FOLIOS

Zines encourage creativity, and that extends to the binding! I've seen a lot of interesting ways people have used to bind the pages of a zine together, including using binder clips or by punching holes and inserting binder rings. The two most common methods to bind folio zines, however, are saddle stitching with staples and saddle stitching with thread.

Saddle Stitch w/ Staples

Saddle stitching refers to binding a booklet by stitching through the center fold line. ***Make sure you fold your booklet before binding!*** For the best results, fold and crease each individual sheet with a bone folder (see substitutes on pg. 7)

If you have a long reach or saddle stapler, then saddle stitching is as simple as lining the stapler to the middle crease and pressing down.

If you only have a regular stapler, you'll have to do a little work. Open up your zine and lay it face down on a piece of cardboard, as shown below. Unhinge your stapler, then line it up with the middle



crease and press down. The staple will go through the zine, and the edges will be absorbed by the cardboard. Use a bone folder, a spoon, or a ruler to bend the edges of the staples down.

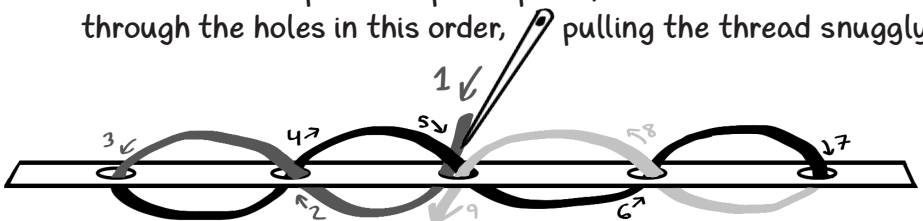
Saddle Stitch w/ Sewing

You'll need a needle and thread. I prefer embroidery floss, but any thread works. The folio zine I'm demonstrating with is by Sam Spina and is the size of a mini zine.

1. Open up your zine and use binder clips or the like to hold the sheets together.
2. Use a pin or thumbtack to poke five holes through the middle crease. Put a piece of cardboard behind the zine to prevent the pin from damaging your desk. I like to freehand these holes, but if you want to measure them out, then on an 11" x 8.5" sheet, the holes will be at:

- 1.25 inch from the top
- 2.75 inch
- 4.25 inch
- 5.75 inch
- 7.25 inch

3. Measure out a length of thread that's three times the length of the spine. Thread your needle.
4. Push the needle through the center hole and pull the thread through, leaving behind 2-3 inches. Secure this length to one of the binder clips to keep it in place, then lead the needle through the holes in this order, pulling the thread snugly:





5. Now, the needle will be on the cover side of the book with the thread going through the center hole. Push the needle under the one of the stitches and pull it through the loop to knot the thread in place.
6. Push the needle in back through the center hole and return it back to the inside. Remove your needle, then tug on the thread to pull the knot you made in the previous step to the inside.
7. Tie off your knot one more time, this time on the inside, then cut off the excess string.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Making a zine is a lot of fun! Although the advice I have written in this zine is pretty technical, I encourage you to ignore any of this information if you think it's too complicated! A zine doesn't have to be perfectly designed to be good; in the end, it's a lot more about the process of creation and expressing yourself in your own ways.

If you're interested in free, printable zines or other zine resourcess, check out the Zine Crisis Mutual Assistance Group at zcmag.xyz!

**The best way to learn how to make
a zine is to make a zine!**

See where your creativity takes you!



a zine by Indah R