



**CONGENIAL
TELEGRAM
NUMBER05**

When you have a pre-made template, everything looks like a mini-zine. But when you have a pre-made template, you have a plan.

My 2015 zine-a-week project didn't work for me until I set some parameters. Every zine was 8-pages, quarter-sized—a single sheet of letter-sized paper folded in half two times. Every zine was finished and released on Sunday—at least before I went to sleep that night. Within those boundaries, a zine could be anything I wanted it to be.

Back then, I made my books with a 13" laptop, a series of open source word processing software and web forms, until late into that year of zines, I gave up on the computer all together in favour of Sharpies, paper, and a scanner.

In January 2020, I bought my first desktop computer, an iMac with the biggest and best screen. It's bigger than my TV. It's certainly bigger than my phone, and I once made an entire month of daily zines using Pages on my iPhone 5.

I haven't made a lot of zines in 2020, but I've written a lot of emails.

The farmers market took up so much of my time this spring and summer—and the pandemic took up the rest. I was writing a newsletter for market updates, and that's a kind of blog, right? I even copied/pasted a few months of newsletters into Pages and tried to turn it into a “quaranzine.”

Eventually, I decided the newsletter should remain as such. It was written at a time and for a purpose, and much is lost when it becomes a book.

But how to get back into a zine-making practice? It starts with a template.

The first CONGENIAL TELEGRAM I wrote last year was made in Open Office with a template I created from a preset I found on the web. But I was coming up against more and more limits of the open source software.

With every brand new computer, I like to use what comes pre-loaded and only download other apps when I discover something I can't do.

Pages is Apple's built-in program for creating books, etc. It's more than a word processor, but less than professional publishing software.

Pages is decidedly designed for business and casual home users, and most of the templates are optimised for screens, not print. But I taught myself how to make websites by looking at source code. I taught myself how to make templates by breaking Apple's.

A mini-zine is a single sheet of letter-sized paper, and and no worries about two-sided printing. The cover has the title, number, plus a dingbat character which best represents the theme. The back page is a prompt, a tiny lesson, an idea to take with you. The other 6 pages make up a short essay—or a long blog post.

I write CONGENIAL TELEGRAM directly into the text box. It's not edited to fit; it's written to fit. It's written for this particular template.

It's not hard writing, a few hundred words. But there was a year between CT03 and CT04; less than a month between CT04 and CT05. (That year between was 2020: Early Pandemic, so I have to be forgiving.)

Is it easier now because of the giant iMac screen? Writing at a table, not a couch? This particular template in this particular app? ^_(\ツ)_/^

It works (for now). I'll take it.

MAKE A TEMPLATE!

CT05 is the first issue written in Pages with the mini-zine I created in November. In fact, I saved this file as 2020-12-01-ct5 as soon as I completed the template. It's not only about ensuring this zine prints properly, but about setting design standards.

Choose the fonts, set the margins, and have your images ready to go. Make the technical decisions, then each month, you only have to write new words. These aren't easy decisions, of course, but if you take the time and make them first, you'll have more time for writing.

by Jess Driscoll on December 14, 2020