

Example Poster Design Tutorial – using Inkscape

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This tutorial will take you through some of the basics of Inkscape and introduce you to several tools which will be useful when creating not only posters, but figures as well. I'm going to assume you have Inkscape installed and running (if not download from: <http://www.inkscape.org/> it's FREE!).

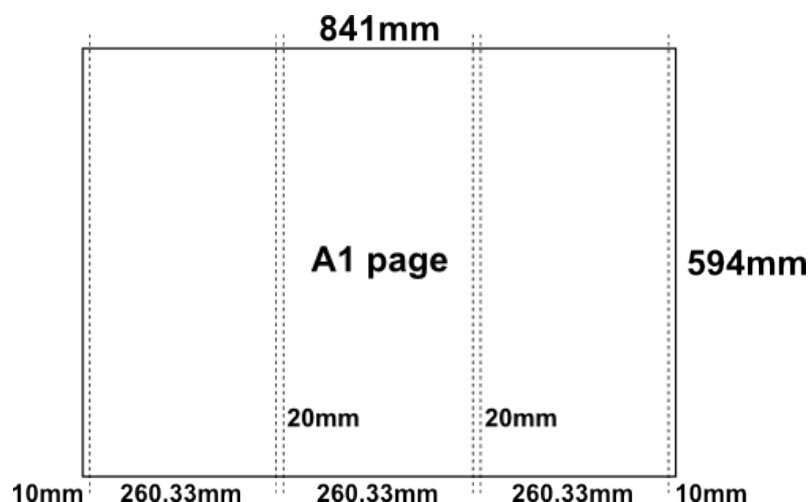
Setting up the document:

- **File** → **document properties**
- Set your paper size and default measurements
 - Paper size is usually A1 or A0 for posters, orientation can also be set.
 - Tip - It is much easier to work in either mm or cm.

The layout (set your guide lines):

- **Edit** → **guides around page**
 - This will display a set of guide lines which can be modified/moved about the page.
 - Each time you select the **guides around page** option you create another set of guides
 - Tip - Select this option a few times, you will need a few guide lines.
- To change the position of a guide line **double click** on it. This will display option to change either x or y position of the guide.
- Set a border of 10mm around your page using the guide lines.
- Do this by **double clicking** on each guide line and adjusting either it's x or y position by 10 mm.
- Next set a guide 90mm from the top of your page – this will form your title space.
- Setting up columns using guide lines is also possible – this just takes a bit of manual calculation.

Example:



Working with layers:

- **Layer** → **layers**
 - Opens the layers side-bar, from here you can create and manage your documents layers.
- Rename the default layer to **"background"**
- Next create a new layer, label this layer **"title"**
 - Tip – you may switch between layers by clicking on them. Different objects will reside in the layer you create them in.
- Layers may be locked to avoid editing their contents.
- You may also make layers hidden by clicking on the eye button.
- Tip – layers may also be accessed via the status bar at the bottom of the Inkscape window (can select different layers and change their visibility from here).

Creating shapes:

- Start by selecting your “title” layer.
- Then select the **create rectangle and squares tool** (located to the left hand side is the tools bar).
- Click and drag a rectangle from the top left of your page across to the right.
- The size and position of shapes (and most objects) can be modified by setting width and height as well as co-ordinates in the selection bar under the menus at the top of the screen.
- You can fill shapes simply by selecting a colour from your palette at the bottom of the screen.
 - Tip - Fill colours as well as strokes (borders) can be edited by selecting them (bottom left). Here you can adjust many options ranging from fill colour, tone, opacity, line style, and many other options.
- Play around with the shape tool and fill and stroke options until you feel comfortable.

Create a title:

- Make sure you have selected your “title” layer.
- Select the **text tool** (located to the left hand side is the tools bar).
- Click and drag a box where you would like your title displayed (this can be re-positioned later).
- Enter your title.
- Select your title text – you can then modify the font, size, colour etc. from the toolbar at the top of the screen, or from the **text** menu – **text** → **text and font**.

Align and distribute:

- Now that you have a title you will want to position it nicely on the page (poster).
- To do this select: **object** → **Align and Distribute**
- This will open a new side bar with alignment tools.
- There are many options here which allow you to align objects within Inkscape – the most basic way is to align an object to the page.
- Open the drop down menu and select **page**.
- You can then choose exactly how you’d like to align, i.e. centre, left, right, top, bottom.
- Now select **last selected** from the drop down menu – this tool allows you to align multiple objects relative to each other. Experiment and play around until you feel comfortable aligning objects.
 - Try to align text within shapes (draw a rectangle and centre your title within this).
 - Tip – if you find that the shape is on-top of the text you can lower and object by selecting: **object** → **raise/lower**.
 - Tip - Objects can also be moved to other layers from within the **object** menu.

Working with text:

- You will have already had some experience using the text tool making your title, this section of the tutorial will introduce a very handy feature of Inkscape which allows us to flow text into shapes (this is how we can set up columns in Inkscape).
- First start by drawing a rectangle (covered above).
- Then copy some text from a document into Inkscape:
 - Do this as you would normally, by copying text from within word, notepad, browser etc.
 - Then draw a text box with the **text tool**.
 - Then hit copy – your text should appear within Inkscape.
- Now that we have text and a rectangle we can:
 - Select the rectangle, hold the shift key and then select your textbox (multiple selections).
 - Then go to **Text** → **Flow into frame**
 - This will have moved the text into your rectangle, which can now be reshaped/resized and place anywhere on the page. The text can be edited in the same way as mentioned in the previous section (above).

Importing figures:

- Figures (graphs, tables, pictures, basically any image file) can be imported into Inkscape.
- To do this select **File** → **Import** – then select the figure you want to bring into your document.
 - Tip – figures can be resized in Inkscape, but you should always be making an image smaller (when you try to upscale an image past 100% they will pixelate and look terrible!).
- You can also copy paste most images from nearly any program into Inkscape as well.

Saving your document:

- **You should always be constantly saving your work (I don't need to tell you that!).**
- Inkscape uses an .svg file type (scalable vector graphics) – I will explain this in the tutorial.
- Inkscape is also very useful for exporting/saving you finished documents as other file types – most importantly PDF.
- To save your poster as a PDF go **File** → **Save as**
- Name your file.
- From the pull down menu select **portable document format (.pdf)**.
- This will present you with several options:
 - The only options you should have to change are:
 - the dpi (resolution) **set to 300** (this is print quality)
 - make sure that the **export area as page option is checked**.
- You can then open your pdf and see how it looks. The beauty of PDF format is that things will not change; you can open on any system and retain the same formatting and appearance.

This is pretty much it for the basic poster design tutorial, easy eh? ☺ Have a play around with all the different tools; again there is no exact right way to do anything. Inkscape is a great piece of software, and once you get over the initial learning curve it is very user friendly and flexible. I actually created all the figures for my thesis (and others thesis') in Inkscape, have designed several posters using it... and have just started playing with a new feature which allows you to create presentations from within Inkscape (JessyInk) – heaven forbid that one day PowerPoint will be replaced!!

So I hope you've enjoyed my hectic notes, and that it has made some semblance of sense. If you have any questions please feel free to get hold of me (emails are best – listed on the first page of this document).

Happy designing,

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