George Memorial Library
Basic Graphic Design with Canva

What Is Canva?

Canva is a user-friendly, web-based graphic design tool that allows users to create various types of visual content, including presentations, posters, social media graphics, marketing materials, and more. It provides both free and paid versions, offering a wide variety of templates, design elements, and tools that make graphic design accessible to everyone, even those without a professional design background.

- **Key Features:**
  - Drag-and-drop interface
  - Pre-designed templates
  - A wide variety of fonts, images, and icons
  - Collaborative tools (share and work on designs together)
  - Access to both free and premium content

Canva was created to make graphic design accessible to everyone, regardless of their skill level. The platform was founded by **Melanie Perkins**, **Cliff Obrecht**, and **Cameron Adams** in 2012. Before Canva, graphic design was often seen as a complex and expensive process requiring professional software like Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator, which was not always user-friendly for non-designers.

Who Uses Canva?

Canva is used by a variety of people across different industries. Some of the most common users are:

- **Businesses and Entrepreneurs:** Create marketing materials like social media posts, flyers, and brochures.
- **Social Media Managers:** Design consistent, branded content for platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.
- **Educators and Students:** Create educational resources, presentations, and infographics.
- **Non-Designers:** People who don't have graphic design experience but want to create visually appealing designs for personal or professional purposes.
- **Freelancers and Creatives:** Graphic designers, photographers, content creators, and others use Canva for quick designs or as a collaborative tool.

How Can You Access Canva?

In order to access canva, you must create an account.

- **Go to Canva's Website**: Type **www.canva.com** in the address bar and press Enter.
- **Sign Up or Log In**:
  - If you already have a **Canva account**, click on **"Log in"** at the top right of the homepage. You can log in using your email, Google, Facebook, or other connected accounts.
  - If you don't have an account, click **"Sign up"**. You'll be prompted to create an account using your email, Google, Facebook, or Apple ID.
- **Choose Your Plan**: Canva offers both free and paid plans. After logging in, you can start with the **free version**, and if you wish to access premium features (like additional templates, stock images, and more), you can explore their **Canva Pro** or **Canva for Enterprise** options. If you're just starting out, the free version is great to begin with.

Exploring the Canva Interface

The Canva Homepage:

- **Search Bar:** To find templates, photos, elements, and more.
- **Template Gallery:** Access pre-made templates for a wide variety of projects.
- **Your Designs:** A section for all your saved projects.
- **Create a Design:** Allows you to start from scratch or choose a template to customize.

The Left Sidebar:

- **Templates:** A wide selection of pre-designed templates that can be fully customized.
- **Uploads:** Upload your own photos, videos, or logos.
- **Photos, Elements, Text, Backgrounds:** A library of free and paid design assets (images, graphics, fonts, colors).
- **Apps:** Integrations with other platforms like Google Drive, YouTube, and more.
- **Projects:** All your ongoing and saved projects.

Canvas (Main Workspace):

- Where your design takes shape. You can drag and drop elements into the canvas, resize them, and position them.
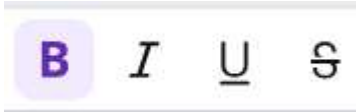
Top Toolbar:

- **Undo/Redo:** Go back or forward in your design history.
- **File:** Options like saving your work, exporting, or sharing.
- **Share:** Share a design for collaboration or send a link to someone.

Editing Basics

Once you open a design template or create a new project, the editor comes into play. Here's what you need to know:

- **Selecting and Editing Elements:**
    - **Text:** Click on any text box to edit the content, change the font, size, color, alignment, etc.
    - **Photos:** Drag images to the canvas. Use the resize handles to adjust the size or crop them.
    - **Elements:** Insert elements like lines, shapes, and icons. You can change colors, adjust opacity, and rotate them.
- **Positioning and Layering:**
    - You can layer items by sending them forward or backward (using the "Position" option in the top toolbar).
    - **Aligning:** Use alignment tools to ensure everything is evenly spaced.
- **Resize and Adjust:**
    - You can resize your whole design with the **resize button** for different social media post sizes (Instagram post, Facebook cover, etc.).
- **Download and Share:**
    - Once your design is ready, click **Download** to save it in different formats (JPG, PNG, PDF, MP4, etc.).
    - You can also share designs directly via email or social media.

Text Cheatsheet

Canva Sans	Font Selection
− 36 +	Font Size
A	Font Color
B _I_ U S̶	Font Style (Bold, Italicize, or Underline)

aA	Case Setting (Uppercase or lowercase)
☰	Font Alignment
☷	Bullet Points
☰↕	Letter Spacing + Line Height
Effects | ◯ Animate	Font Effects + Animation

How to Upload Your Own Images and Videos

- On the right hand toolbar, click 'Upload'.
- Then, select 'Upload Media'.
- Locate your file on your computer and upload it.
- Click the newly uploaded photo to add to your document.

Note: Canva has an incredible library of free + paid photos. You can access these via the 'Photos' tab.

Key Design Tips

- **Use Consistent Fonts**: Stick to 2-3 complementary fonts for consistency.
- **Spacing & Alignment**: Make sure elements are evenly spaced and aligned to avoid clutter.
- **Contrast**: Use contrasting colors for readability (e.g., dark text on light background).
- **Use High-Quality Images**: Avoid pixelated or blurry images; Canva has plenty of good options.
- **Hierarchy**: Make sure the most important elements (like titles) stand out by using size and weight of fonts.