"The designer is not an artist, yet he can be one."

— Walter Gropius

Until a few years ago, the word *newsletter* was a synonym in my personal dictionary for *junk mail*. Like many graphic artists, for me the job of designing a newsletter ranked up (or down) there with creating flyers for the church bake sale. Only later in life did I discover that the problem with newsletters wasn't the newsletters themselves, but the way most were designed. In place of arresting images and dynamic graphics, bold fonts, and handsome colors, most newsletters were drab and dreary salutes to crummy clip art and Times Roman.

Yet despite the preponderance of pathetic publications, some newsletters are so engaging, so vibrant, so breathtakingly beautiful that readers can't wait to tear into them. Newsletters that would make even Picasso proud.

In this chapter, you'll learn how to take the drabbest newsletter and make it dramatic. You'll see how to work with inexpensive images and graphics and make them look like a million bucks. And you'll discover how to use type to effectively convey meaning to your newsletter. Along the way, you'll also learn about creating interactive newsletters, setting up flexible baseline grids, designing eye-popping charts and tables, and converting Adobe InDesign documents into Adobe Acrobat forms.

What Makes a Good Newsletter?

Before the age of the Internet, the need to design and distribute printed newsletters was unquestioned. Businesses had information to get out on a timely basis to clients and constituents, and newsletters provided just the low-overhead vehicle for such information. Most newsletters were eight to twelve pages, rarely bound, and printed in one or two colors. At the end of the process were untrained secretaries or assistants conscripted to design newsletters using Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect.

Today the need to push through corporate information is just as strong; in fact, it's stronger. With more information competing for your attention than ever before, cutting through the daily dross is more of a challenge for those trying to be heard. Fortunately for designers, the modern world is starting to realize that design does matter. Thanks in part to people such as Steve Jobs and others who recognize that form and function need not be mutually exclusive, design is enjoying a renaissance. In a world of sensory overload, once again society is turning to design as a way to distinguish ideas and products from the mosh pit of daily information.

Who Needs Newsletters When You've Got the Web?

Since the emergence of the Internet as more than a sandbox for nerds, legions of progressive social critics have proclaimed the end of print. Granted, sales of books, newspapers, and magazines are at all-time lows, with many publishers and media giants looking to consolidate or divest their holdings rather than expand. Yet despite this dreary financial forecast, the death of print is greatly exaggerated. At least for now.

No doubt the day will come when ink-stained fingers are a thing of the past. But at the moment, a good newsletter can be a great way to communicate with friends, customers, colleagues, and clients. Portable, light, cheap, unbreakable, and decidedly low-tech, the newsletter continues as a viable means to communicate on a small scale.

Newsletter Varieties

Although newsletters are traditionally defined as a few sheets of paper saddle-stitched together, it's good to take stock of other formats or variations on the theme:

- *Electronic*: Typically a Web-based HTML page might start life as an email; recipients receive the newsletter in their inbox and click a hyperlink that takes them to a page in their Web browser.

- *Interactive*: This kind of newsletter might also be HTML- or PDF-based. PDF newsletters can either be sent as email attachments (less likely these days because of security concerns surrounding attachments, even though PDF is a secure format) or downloaded via a link in the email. Often these kinds of links are password-protected so that only subscribers, members, or trusted recipients can download the PDF.
- *Hybrid*: The hybrid newsletter crosses over both the paper and electronic world. Again, PDF is the current vehicle of choice for this kind of newsletter because of the format's ability to embed interactive material such as sound, video, or active form data. Although embedding audio or video elements greatly increases file size, PDFs can also simply link to off-site multimedia content. This content is then pushed down to the recipient from a Web server when a particular page or object is accessed. Often the PDF is set up for easy printing so users can access the content in an offline environment.

Paper Newsletter Preproduction Checklist

When planning a newsletter, it's essential to think through what kind best suits the needs of your client. A newsletter for a nonprofit environmental organization will have a different look and constituency than a newsletter serving Catholic charities. Likewise, newsletters designed to reach the health and medical professions will vary from those aimed at higher education.

To help clarify the choices, here's a checklist of items you should consider before diving in:

- ☐ Number of pages
- ☐ Process or spot colors (if spot, how many)
- ☐ Trim size
- ☐ Format (portrait or landscape)
- ☐ Paper quality
- ☐ Binding
- ☐ Envelope or self-mailer
- ☐ Publication frequency
- ☐ Who is responsible for supplying content
- ☐ Photography or illustrations
- ☐ Print run (quantity)
- ☐ Inserts or special printing needs

Developing the Newsletter

Once you've resolved issues of trim size, page count, ink type, and so on, it's time to dig in. Although the old saying "You can't tell a book by its cover" applies to newsletters, too, you'd never know it by the amount of energy that's invested in designing the front page. And rightly so. If the front page is humdrum, overly busy, or just plain unattractive, what's the incentive to turn the page? Why bother?

But if the front is clear, dynamic, and well organized, then readers will rush to the second page, which is just what you want. And it's just what they want, too. Readers (like any audience) want a good experience. They want to like what they see, because liking is fun; not liking is a drag. So, your job as a graphic designer is to set them up to like what's about to come. And if your readers like what they see on the first page, they're predisposed to like what comes after it. So, how do you make your audience like your modest newsletter?

It Starts with the Nameplate

Often mistakenly called the masthead, the *nameplate* is the big type (usually) at the top (usually) of most newsletters, newspapers, or magazines. You'll notice the *usually*. When you study really great newsletters, you'll discover that not all follow this standard formula. Alternate locations for nameplates include running vertically up the left side, horizontally across the bottom, through the middle, or practically anywhere else you can imagine (Figure 4.1). The point is that wherever you decide to place your nameplate, it's important that you treat your nameplate, like your logo, consistently. Occasional variations in color and size are two exceptions to this rule, but otherwise vigilantly protect your identity from different interpretations or usages.

Figure 4.1 Many well-designed newsletters run the nameplate in an untraditional location.

Figure 4.2 The project for this chapter is a neighborhood association's newsletter, which you'll piece together in InDesign.

In this chapter's project, you'll create the nameplate for your fictitious neighborhood block association in Adobe Illustrator CS3 and place it in InDesign CS3, where you will construct the newsletter (Figure 4.2). You could create this particular nameplate directly in InDesign, but instead you'll work in Illustrator because you can then easily place or repurpose the final file into any other program, as you'll see.

Creating the Nameplate in Illustrator

Like many design projects, most of the battle when creating a nameplate is figuring out what your design is and how it will look. Once you've surpassed that hurdle, building the nameplate is easy, as you'll see here. To begin, start Illustrator CS3, making sure you've activated the font Aachen Std Bold. If you don't have Aachen Std Bold, use any other bold font such as Rockwell or Myriad Black.

1. Choose File > New. In the dialog, set New Document Profile to Print, and set Size to Letter. Click the Advanced button, set Color Mode to CMYK, and set Raster Effects to High (Figure 4.3). Now click OK.
2. With the Type tool, click anywhere in the blank document, and type 100.
3. Select the number 100, and apply the Aachen Std Bold font.
4. Set the point size of the number 100 to 200 pts, and notice the uneven letter spacing between the *1* and the middle *o* as well as between the middle *o* and the rightmost *o* (Figure 4.4).
5. With the number selected, in the Character panel, choose Optical from the kerning field. Notice how optical kerning improves the letter spacing, but not perfectly.
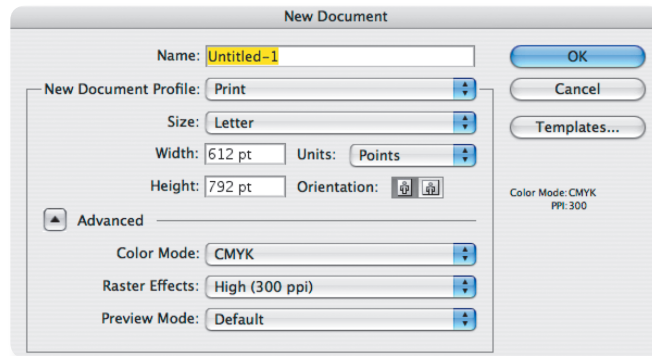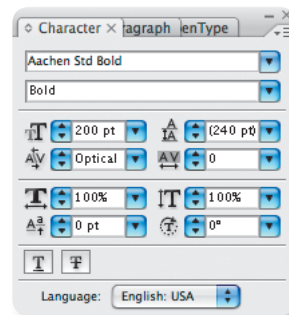

Figure 4.3 Set up your document with these settings.

Figure 4.4 You can fix the uneven spacing with a series of simple steps.

6. Put the insertion point between the *1* and the middle *0*, and apply negative kerning either by using the Character panel or by using the keyboard shortcut of Option+Left Arrow (Mac OS) or Alt+Left Arrow (Windows). I suggest using −64 as your kerning value so that the spacing looks even across the three numbers.

7. Making sure that your rulers are visible (View > Rulers), drag a ruler guide on both sides of the three-character block. Be precise, ensuring that the guides touch just the left and right edges of the two outside digits, not the overall bounding box, which is wider.

8. Beneath the previous line, click with the Type tool to start a new line. Type **STREET**. Apply optical kerning, and then kern manually as needed.

9. Using the Selection tool, position the left edge of the *S* of *STREET* until it snaps to the left ruler guide. Hold down Shift, and drag the lower-right corner of the bounding box until the right edge of the second *T* aligns with the right ruler guide (Figure 4.5)

10. Repeat step 9 for the word *NEWS*.

11. Repeat step 9 for the phrase *A MONUMENTAL BLOCK*, making it slightly wider than the other three words above it so that the quotes hang just a bit outside.

12. Fill all the type with 100 percent black.

13. Save the file in Illustrator CS3, and name it 100_Nameplate.ai.

Figure 4.5 Here's why auto kerning can't be trusted, especially with large type.

At this point, you can use the nameplate exactly as it is, but for this project let's take it one step further. Launch Photoshop CS3, choose File > Open, and open the **100_Nameplate.ai** file. In the Import PDF dialog, accept the defaults, being sure to set the resolution to 300 pixels per inch. Follow these steps to complete the nameplate:

1. In Photoshop CS3, choose File > Place, and navigate to the file named **Trees.jpg** in the Chapter 4 Links folder. Click OK to place the file as a Smart Object in a new layer above the 100 STREET NEWS layer.

2. Scale the tree image up to cover the words *100 STREET NEWS*, leaving the lower tag line uncovered. Press Return (Mac OS) or Enter (Return) to accept the scaling.

3. Place your pointer on the black line separating the two layers, hold down Option (Mac OS) or Alt (Windows), and click to clip the image to the text (Figure 4.6).

4. Double-click the text layer, and add a slight drop shadow in the Layer Style dialog. Use the settings as shown in Figure 4.7

5. Save the file as a Photoshop (.psd format) file.

Now that you have your nameplate, you're ready to start building the newsletter in InDesign CS3.

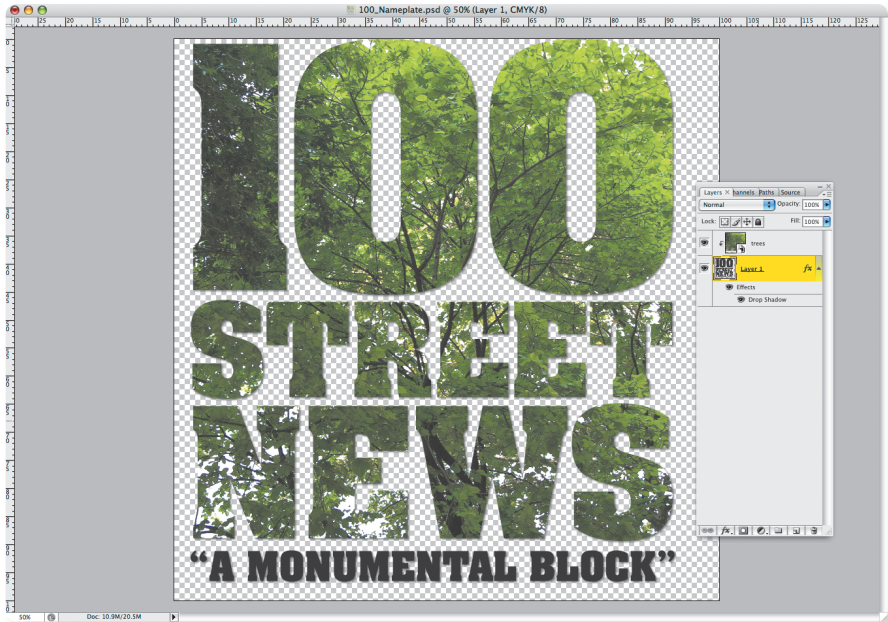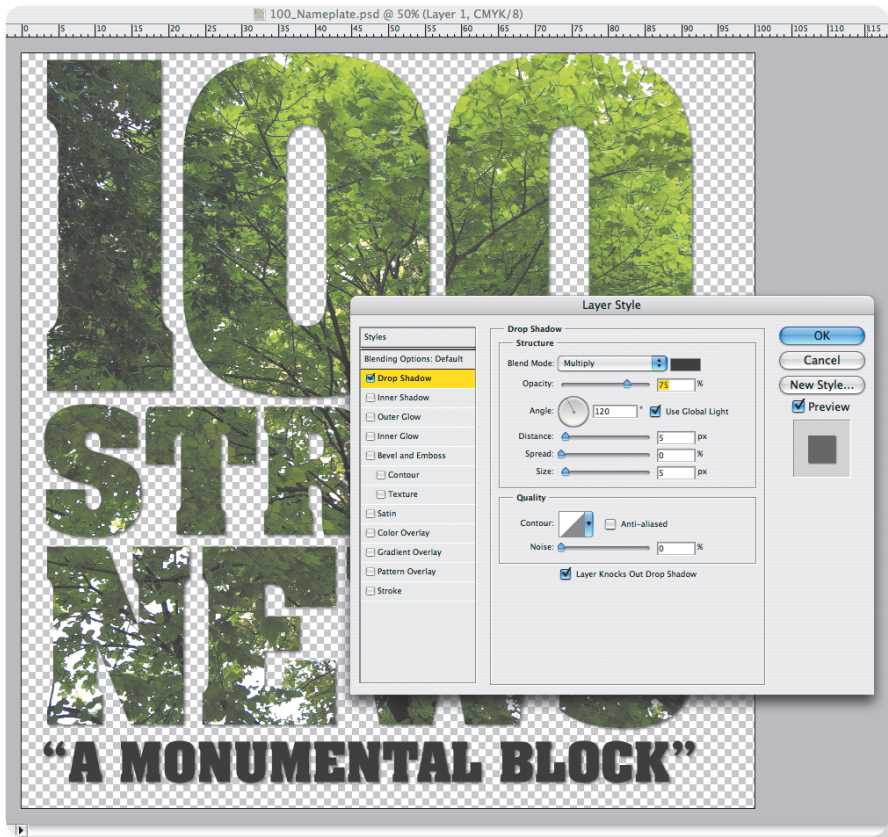**Figure 4.6** Clip your image to the text to add drama to your text.

Figure 4.7 From the Layer Styles dialog, apply a slight drop shadow to help lift the text off the page.

Laying Out Master Page Items

Here you'll create the basic newsletter document and structure the master pages. Once this is complete, you'll be set to begin the design process.

1. In InDesign, choose File > New. Choose Letter from the Page Size pop-up menu. Use the settings as shown in Figure 4.8, and click OK when you've finished.
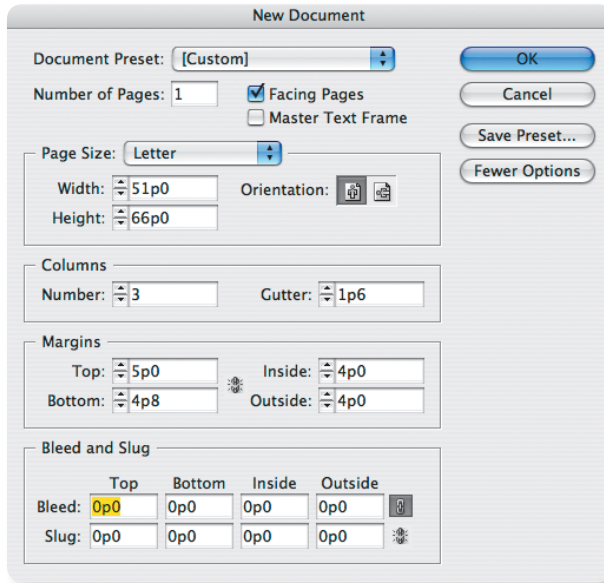

Figure 4.8 Use the following settings to set up your new document, which will give you the structure needed for the master pages.

Understanding Picas and Points

All dimensions for this project are expressed in picas and points. Each pica consists of 12 points, and 6 picas equal an inch. Therefore, 72-pt type is nominally 1 inch in height—nominally because some fonts are inherently larger or smaller than others because of how type is measured from descender to ascender. Also, *x-height*, the distance from a font's baseline to the top of the lowercase characters, varies from face to face. Some fonts have large x-heights, which tend to make them appear optically larger than fonts with smaller x-heights. For more about type, see Chapter 2, "Creating Effective Typography."

What's more important about working with picas is knowing how to express various measurements. Just as if you're working in inches in InDesign, 5 means 5 picas, which can also be written 5p. On the flip side, 5 points can be expressed as either p5 or 0p5. One-half pica can be written as either .5, p6, or 0p6.
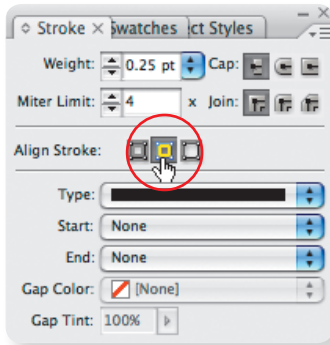
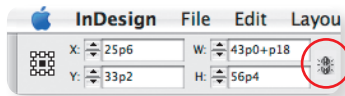**Figure 4.9** Click this button to align the stroke to the inside.

Figure 4.10 Enlarge the frame by using the Width and Height fields in the Control panel.

NOTE: If you're wondering why you typed +p18 to increase the frame 9 pts all around, remember that p9 + p9 = p18, which equals 1p6, which equals the width of your column gutters. By adding 9 pts all around, you moved the frame half the gutter width outside the live area.

Figure 4.11 Drag a horizontal guide outside the page area.

2. In the Pages panel, double-click the words *A-Master* to center the master pages in your view. Draw a 0.25-point black frame that snaps to your four margins of your left master (known as the *verso*). For greatest accuracy, make sure the Align Stroke setting in the Stroke panel is set to Align Stroke To Inside (Figure 4.9).

    The idea is that you want to enlarge this frame p9 outside the margins or what's called the *live* area. The easiest and most accurate way to enlarge the frame is by using the Width and Height fields in the Control panel.

3. With the frame selected, go to the Control panel, and unlock the button that's used to constrain Width and Height proportions (Figure 4.10).

4. In the Width field, type **+p18** directly after the 43p width that's displayed. Press Return (Mac OS) or Enter (Return) to apply the value.

5. In the Height field, type **+p18** directly after the 56p4 height that's displayed. Press Return (Mac OS) or Enter (Return) to apply the value.

6. Click outside the frame to deselect.

7. Repeat steps 4 and 5 for the 0.25-pt frame on the right-hand master page (known as the *recto*). Or, press Shift+Option-drag (Mac OS) or Shift+Ctrl–drag (Windows) to copy of the verso frame to the recto page, and click the Align Horizontal Center to Page button in the Control panel.

As you can see, you've now increased the size of the frame in equal amounts both vertically and horizontally, all without drawing ruler guides *and* with none of the measuring that usually goes along with placing such guides. Remember this trick of combining an existing value with an added amount, because it's very handy in many other situations. Not only can you add new values, but you can also subtract, multiply, or divide values by using the − (minus), * (times), or / (divide by) keys.

In the next steps, you'll add a guide that stretches across both masters. Before drawing the guide, use the Measure tool to check the distance from either side of the existing 0.25-pt frame to the outside of the page. The distance, found in the Info panel, should be about 3p4. With this in mind, drag a horizontal guide outside the page area from the top ruler until its *y* coordinate reads 3p4 in the Control panel (Figure 4.11).
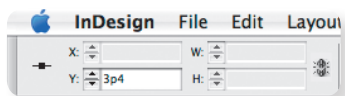
1. Using the Selection tool, drag the top of the 0 .25-pt master frame up so that it snaps to the 3p4 rule.

2. Click in the verso frame with the Type tool to place the insertion point.

3. Type the header information using Aachen Std Bold 7.5 pt (or whatever font you chose for the nameplate): **100 STREET NEWS • AUGUST 2007**.

4. Center your text horizontally by clicking the Align Center button in the Paragraph panel.

5. Choose Object > Text Frame Options, and add a 6-pt top inset to the frame.

6. Select Paragraph Rules from either the Paragraph panel menu or the Control panel menu to create the 0.25-pt rule with an offset of 0p4 (Figure 4.12).

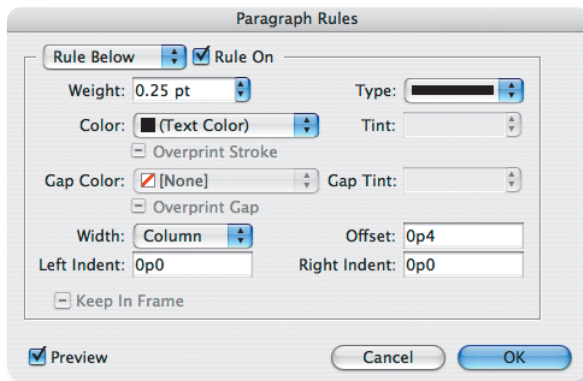7. Repeat steps 1 through 6 for the recto master frame.

Figure 4.12 Set the offset to 0p4 in the Paragraph Rules dialog.

Before you've finished with the A-Masters, you need to add a 0.25-pt black rule that's perfectly centered in the two column gutters. Although you could probably eyeball the position of the rule and get away with it, here's a simple way to add the rule and ensure that it's dead-center in the gutter every time:

1. With the Line tool (or Pen tool; either works fine), hold down the Shift key, and draw a line anywhere on your page that snaps from the top margin to the bottom margin.

2. Using the Rectangle tool, draw a ½-inch wide (approximately) rectangle that also snaps from the top margin down to the bottom margin.

3. Select both objects, and click the Align Horizontal Centers button in the Align panel.

4. Choose Object > Group.

5. Move the grouped objects to the proper gutter, and adjust the frame so that it snaps to the gutter's width. Notice how the center rule remains centered, regardless of how tall or wide the gutter.

6. Copy the object, and drag to the other three gutters. Then choose File > Save. Save the file as **100_Newsletter.indd**.

TIP: By default guides are always page-specific. To drag a guide across a spread, either drag from outside the page area or hold down Command (Mac OS) or Ctrl (Windows) while dragging across a single page. Pressing the Shift key while dragging helps position guides because it forces the guide to snap to the tick marks on your ruler.

NOTE: If you're unable to insert your pointer in the frame, choose Preferences > Type, and select Type Tool Converts Frames To Text Frames.

Designing the Front Page

Now the fun begins. The front page of a newsletter is the most important page. The success of your newsletter lives or dies based on the strength of its front page, so it has to be great. The front page has to make you want to pick it up and read it.

No matter what's inside, if your front page is dull and lifeless, then chances are few will want to turn the page. Even if they do, their opinion of your newsletter will be tainted by their reaction to its front page. Remember, first impressions in design are like first impressions elsewhere in life: they're everything.

Placing Key Elements

You'll begin by placing the nameplate file across the first two columns on page 1. Then you'll flow in your text. The files you'll use are located in the Links folder of the Chapter 4 folder. If you haven't already done so, download the Chapter 4 folder at www.peachpit.com/prodesignCS3.

1. Choose File > Place, and navigate to the file named **100_Nameplate.psd**. Resize and scale to fit as needed. The nameplate will overlap the gutter rules that were placed on the verso master.
2. Shift+Command-click (Mac OS) or Shift+Ctrl-click (Windows) the left gutter rule to release it from the master. Delete the gutter rule.
3. To flow in your text, choose File > Place, and navigate to the **newsletter0807. txt** file. Click Open to load the text icon with unformatted text.
4. Click and drag across the first two columns beneath the nameplate from the upper left to the lower right to create one wide column of text. The text in this column will be specially formatted to create an opening for the newsletter.
5. With the two-column frame in place, use the Selection tool to click on the red plus sign (overset text icon) found in the lower right of the column. This will reload the text icon with the rest of the story.
6. With the loaded text icon at the top of the third column, press and hold down the Shift key, and then click to have InDesign automatically flow the text (Figure 4.13). Depending on your default settings, autoflowing the text should generate at least three pages automatically.

With the bulk of your text now in the newsletter, it's time to begin formatting the copy with style sheets.