

Creating Color Swatches in InDesign

Adobe InDesign is a powerful document design tool that allows its users to customize every part of a document's appearance. A very important feature it has is the ability to create and apply color to a document's text, objects, and design. This manual is meant to guide you through the process of creating new color swatches step by step.

Special Notices

- This manual discusses how to use the Swatches panel to create new colors in InDesign. There is another way to create colors using the Colors panel, but this method will not be covered.
- When creating a new color swatch, you should **deselect** all the objects on your page. If any object is selected on a page while you are creating a color swatch, then the last color created will be applied to the selected object. To avoid this, click on the pasteboard to deselect everything on your page before creating a new swatch.
- When creating a color in the Swatches panel, you have two color type options: Process and Spot. Spot should only be used if you will be printing your design on a printing press and you know that your printer uses special Pantone inks, like spot inks or varnishes. If you are not planning on printing your design in this way, you should choose Process as your color type.

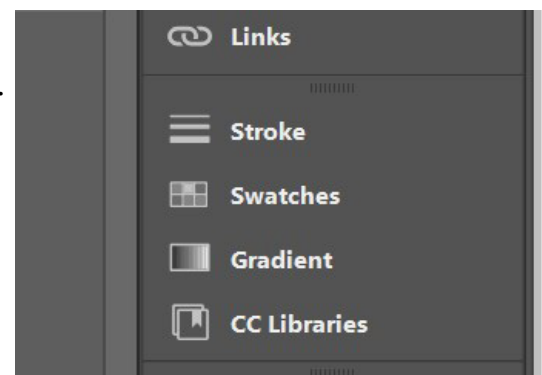
Equipment and Supplies

A current subscription to Adobe InDesign and an internet connection are the only required supplies to follow along with this manual. You may also need to use a search engine to look up color swatch values (CMYK or RGB) if you would like to create a specific color in the Swatches panel.

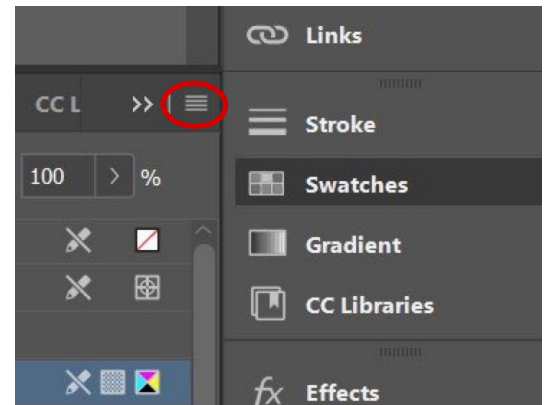
Creating New Colors Step-by-Step

Step 1. Open Adobe InDesign. Select and open the document you would like to create new color swatches for. Make sure all objects on your document are deselected.

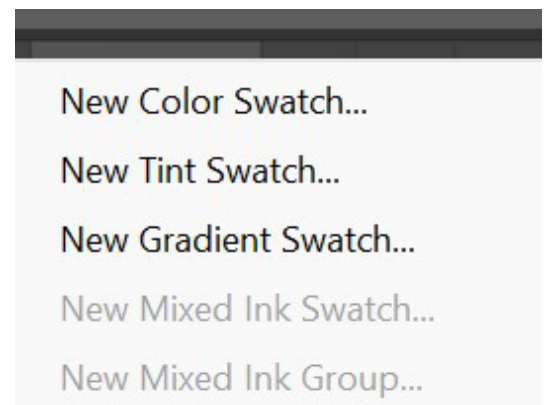
Step 2. Locate the Swatches Panel on the right side of your workspace and click on it.



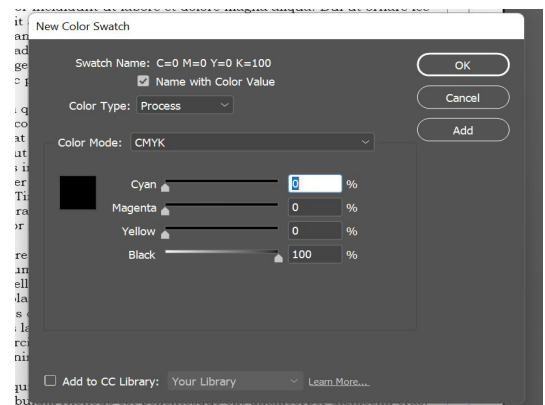
Step 3. A menu of already existing colors should open. In the right hand corner of the menu, there is a button with four straight lines. Click on this icon.



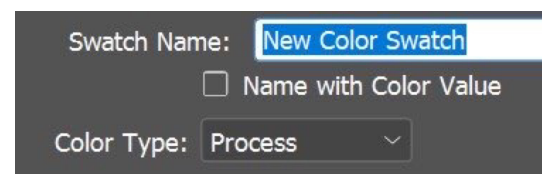
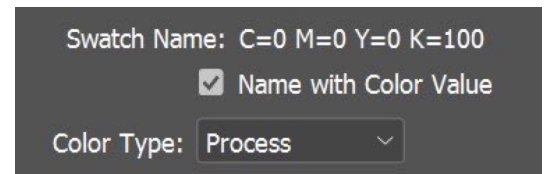
Step 4. When clicked, this button opens another, longer menu. Click on the very first option: “New Color Swatch...”



Step 5. The New Color Swatch Dialog Box should appear. Here you can create and adjust a color’s name, type, mode, and appearance.

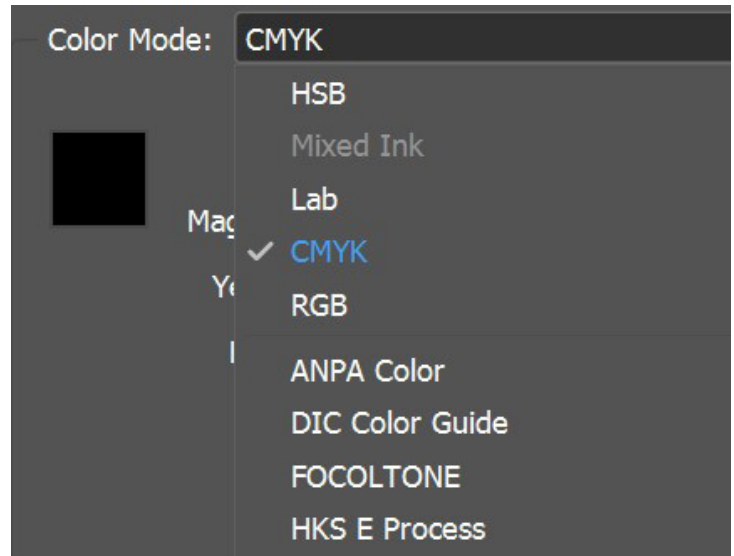


Step 6. First, choose a name for your color. You can either choose to let InDesign name it for you with the values of the color by keeping “Name With Color Value” checked, or you can create your own by unchecking that box and typing in your color name.

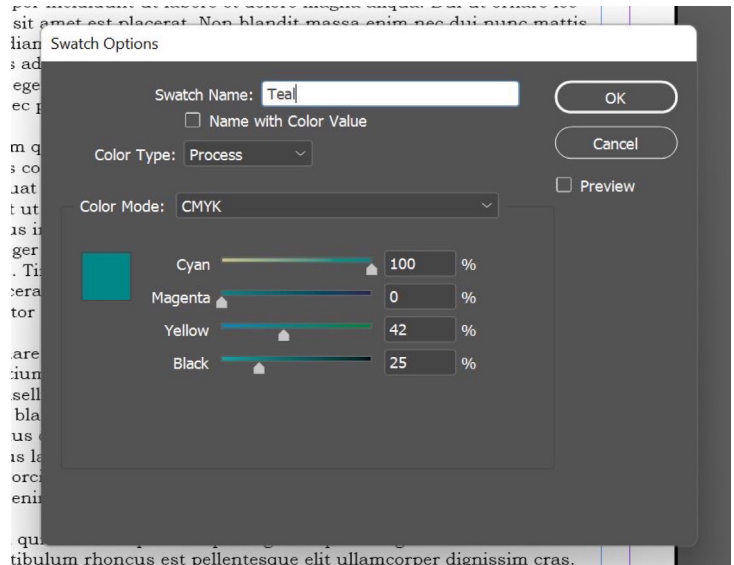


Step 7. Next, make sure your color type is set to Process by clicking on the drop down menu beside “Color Type” and choosing “Process”.

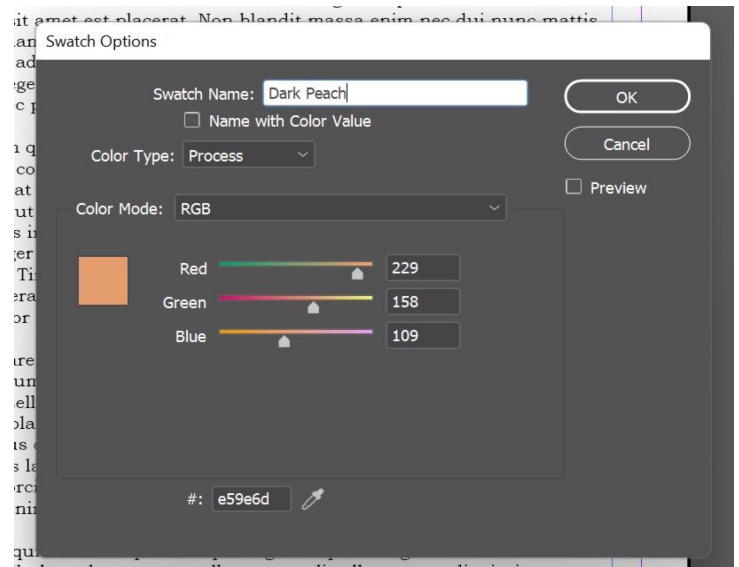
Step 8. Then, choose the mode in which you want to create your color by clicking on the drop down menu beside “Color Mode”. It is recommended that you use CMYK or RGB values to create your new color. If your document is going to professionally printed, use CMYK. If it’s mostly for on-screen viewing or desktop printing, use RGB. This manual will cover how to do both.



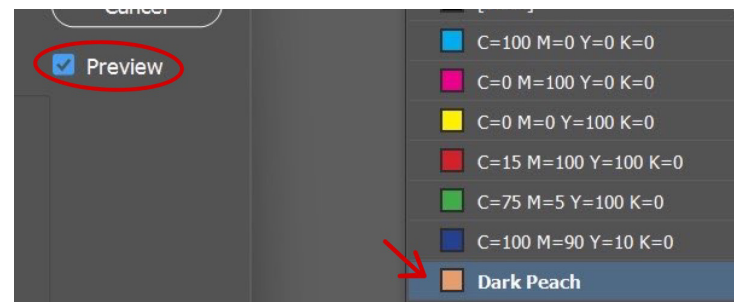
Step 9. CMYK allows you to manipulate the levels of Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Key, also known as Black, in a color. If you’re looking to achieve a specific color, a quick internet search should tell you the exact values that compose said color. You may input the values manually, or use the toggles below the color gradients to adjust the values.



Step 10. RGB allows you to manipulate the levels of Red, Green, and Blue in a color. Again, you can perform an internet search to find the exact RGB values for the specific color you'd like to create and input the value manually, or you can use the toggles below the color gradients to adjust the values.

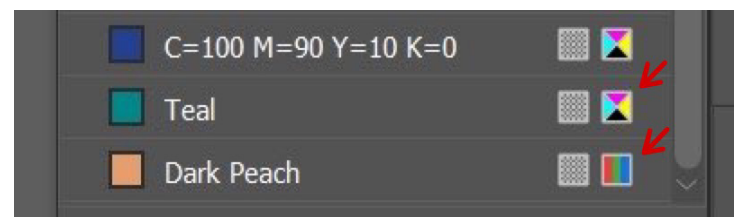


Step 11. If you'd like to preview what your new color will look like and where it will be located in the Swatches menu, select the checkbox on the right hand side next to "Preview". A preview of the swatch should appear at the bottom of the Swatches menu.



Step 12. Once you have achieved your desired color, click the large "OK" button in the upper right-hand corner of the dialog box to add your color to the Swatches menu.

Step 13. On the right side of each color, InDesign will indicate whether the color has been created using CMYK or RGB. You will see the mode indicator as a square with cyan, yellow, magenta, and black triangles if the color was made with CMYK. If the color was made with RGB, you will see the mode indicator as a square containing red, green, and blue vertical stripes.



Step 14. Now, you have successfully created a new color in InDesign using the Swatches panel!

Conclusion

Creating new color swatches in InDesign becomes easier and more efficient as you familiarize yourself with the process. Let your creativity flow and spend some time adjusting the values of your color to create the perfect swatch for your work. If you ever find yourself unsure about how to create and save new colors, you can always refer back to this manual. Here's a few quick tips to remember:

- Make sure everything is deselected on your document before starting.
- Set your color type to Process.
- Pick the color mode that's best for you (CMYK or RGB) and adjust the values to your liking.
- Click "OK" to add it to your Swatches menu.

For more information about InDesign and its capabilities, check out David Blatner's [InDesign 2022 Essential Training](#) course on LinkedIn Learning.