# Introduction to Canva

Canva is a wonderful online tool that can help you design a wide range of things, from posters to business cards and trifold brochures to wedding invitations. Canva is a free service that requires a free account. You can sign up with an email account or by linking your Gmail or Facebook account to Canva. Canva is completely web based so the designs and projects you start on one computer can be accessed on from any other computer that can get onto the internet and to Canva.com. This handout will cover some of the basics to get you started.

Once you sign up and create an account you will be able to start designing.

The Home Screen
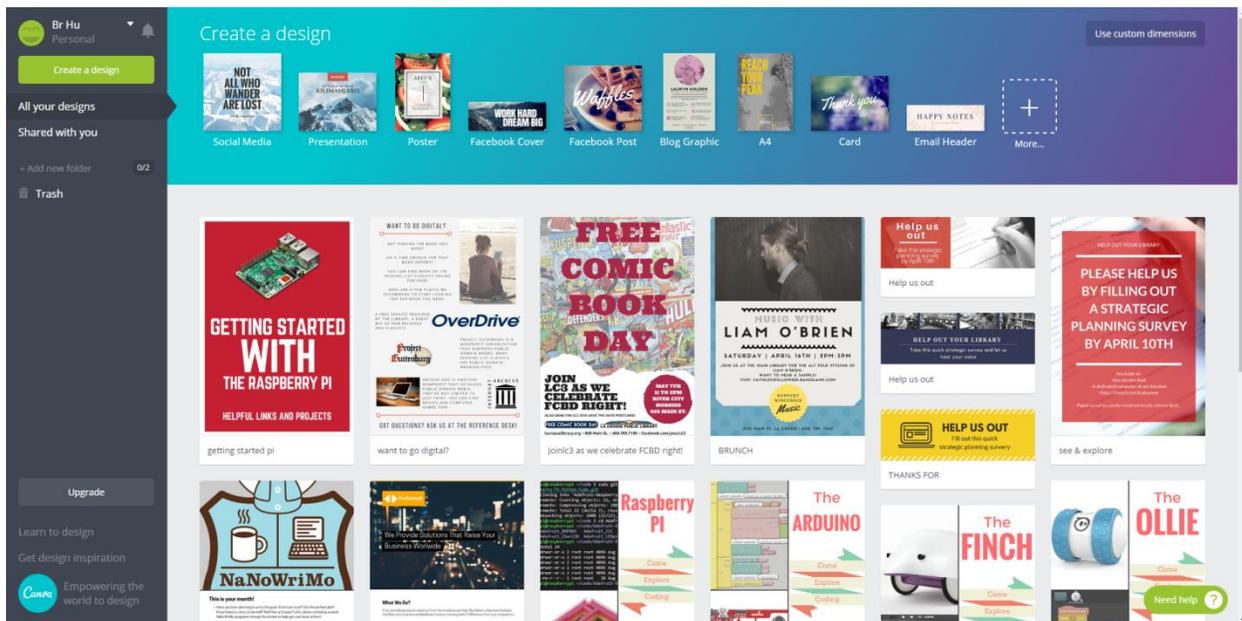
For this handout we will be calling the screen shown above "the home screen." This is where you can see your existing designs or select a new design to make. All the designs you have made will show up under the "All your designs" part of the home screen. You can share and have designs shared with you, designs shared with you show up if you click the "Shared with you" part of the home screen.

If you feel your designs are getting to be too many and cluttered you can create two folders to sort them in by clicking the "+ Add new folder."

They're kind of hidden but two great resources can be found below the "Upgrade" button. "Learn to Design" will take you to a webpage developed by Canva with easy to follow along design courses that are built into Canva. These courses will not only teach you how to use Canva better but will also teach you art and design principles as well (such as how to create a color palette). "Get design inspiration" will take you to part of Canva's website where people have shared designs they have made that they think are worth sharing with others. You can see what other people have made and get ideas for your own designs.

Create a Design
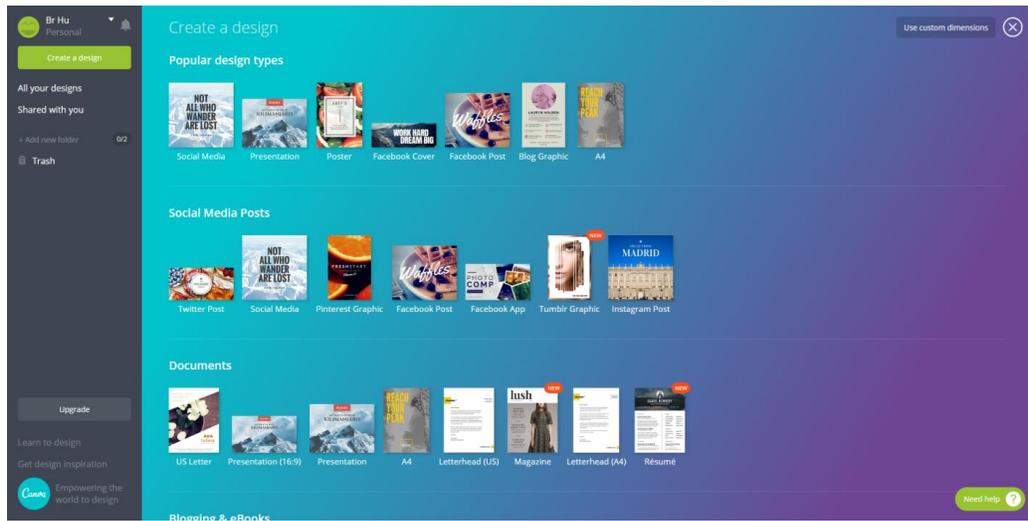
While the home screen provides you with six popular design options (see below) there are many other things you can design by clicking either the green "Create a design" button or by clicking the "More…" box on the home screen. When you hover you mouse over a design it will display the dimensions of the design template. If you don't see a design with the size or shape you want you can click "Use custom dimensions" and enter in the dimension you want in pixels, millimeters, or inches.

Clicking either will load up all the design templates you can use in Canva. They are listed below:
Popular design types – Social Media, Presentation, Poster, Facebook Cover, Facebook Post, Blog Graphic, A4, Card, and Email header.

Social Media Posts – Twitter Post, Social Media, Pinterest Graphic, Facebook Post, Facebook App, Tumbler Graphic, Instagram Post.

Documents – US Letter, Presentation (16:9), Presentation, A4, Letterhead (US), Magazine, Letterhead (A4), Resume.

Blogging & eBooks – eBook, Desktop Wallpaper, Kindle Cover, Blog Title, Blog Graphic, Album Cover, Infographic.

Marketing Materials – Real Estate Flyer, Poster (US), Poster, Food & Drink Menu, Business Card, Flyer, Trifold Brochure, Gift Certificate.

Social Media & Email Headers – Facebook Event Cover, YouTube Thumbnail, Tumblr Banner, YouTube Channel Art, Twitter Header, Google+ Photo, Etsy Cover Photo, Etsy Shop Icon, Facebook Cover, Email Header.

Events – Postcard, Wedding Invitation, Invitation (portrait), Invitation, Card, Photo Collage.

Ads – Facebook Ad, Wide Skyscraper (IAB), Medium Rectangle (IAB), Leaderboard (IAB), Large Rectangle (IAB).

Blank Canvas
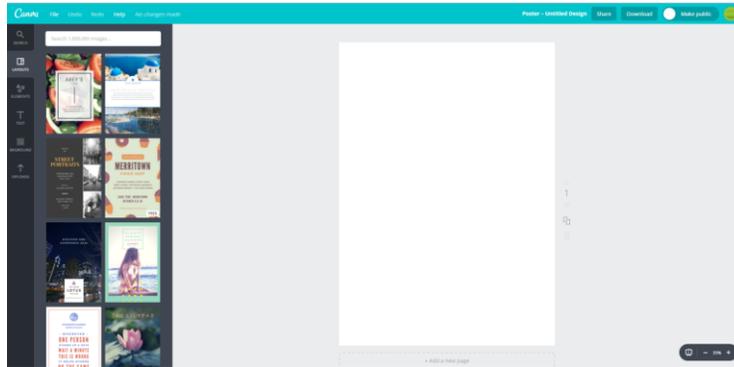
When you select a design you'd like to work with you will be taken to blank canvas. The canvas size will depend on which design you are working on. In the picture above the design is "Poster." At the start you are given several options on what you can do to the design.

Layouts

Layouts are predesigned graphics more than simply a layout. While the content is generic they are basically finished products that just need the user to put in correct information for what they'd like to promote.

Some are completely free, while others may have pay-for elements in them. Although Canva is a free service they do offer users the ability to purchase content (or elements). These can range from specially designed shapes or borders to photographs.

Layouts are a nice way to start your design. You can remove all the elements you want (even back to a blank canvas) or keep the things you like and build off of it.

Elements

Elements are like building blocks you can use to build your design. You can select from Free Photos, Grids (these are great for making your own custom layouts), Frames (basically the parts that are used to make up a grid but frames are free floating), Shapes, Lines, Illustrations, Icons, Charts, and I heart Canva (like illustrations but all pictures that are in support of Canva).

If you don't find something you'd like to use you can also important your own images. That will be discussed a bit more in a later part of the handout.
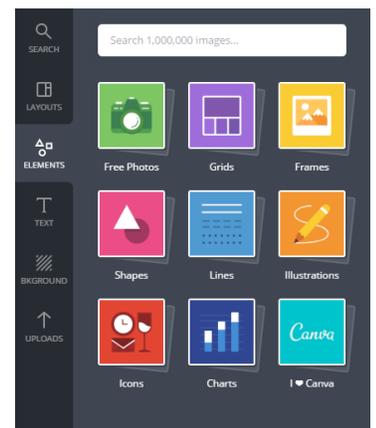
Text
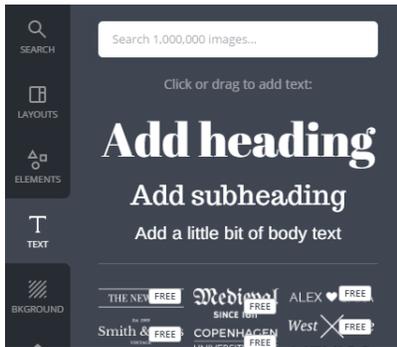
Under the "Text" option you will find options to add text in a few different ways. Heading, subheading, and "Add a little bit of body text" are the three standard options and are based on text size.

You also can select from flashy and catchy text elements. These are a mix of text, color, and shapes. These are a good way to make part of your message really stand out from the rest of the design.

Bkground aka Background

The "Bkground" option is where you can go and set a background for your image. The free options here are pretty simple; there are some solid color backgrounds and some simple patterns. If you'd like to use a photo as a background you can do that by selecting a photo (provided by Canva or one of your own) and making it the size of the canvas.
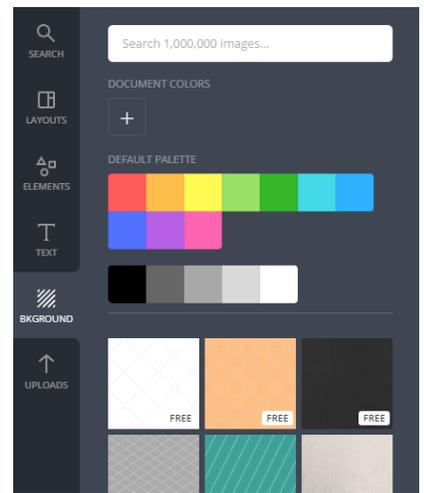
Uploads

If you do not find the kind of image you'd like to use online or have taken or drawn some images of your own this is the part of the website where you can upload them to be used in Canva. The process is fairly simple. You can upload from either your computer or from Facebook. Once you select one of these options the website will bring up a selection screen where you can find and select images to upload. Once you upload an image it will stay in the uploads section of the website indefinitely for you to use whenever you'd like.

Moving and positioning Elements and Text

You can move elements and text by clicking and dragging them but you also have additional options. After you have clicked on the element or text you'd like to manipulate you can get more options by clicking the triangle button on the small menu that pops up (when you click on an element or text).

The two options that need the most explaining are "Transparency" and "Move forward/back."

Transparency is how 'solid' or 'opaque' an element or text is, by lowing the transparency level you are able to make it so things behind the element are more visible (less blocked by the element you are editing).

Move forward or back is how you can stack your elements and text. Canva uses layers, and a way to think about this is like building a collage. If you place one element on top of another it blocks what is behind it. The move options allow you to reorder and place the elements in a way where you can decide what is on top or behind something.
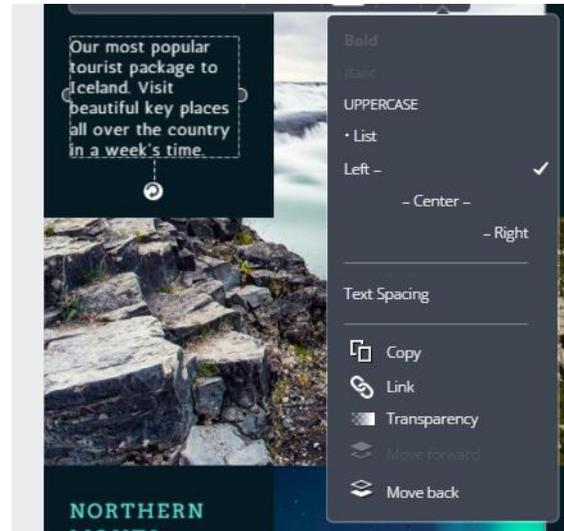
Downloading, printing or posting your design

Once you have finished your design you have a few options on how you can save the design to your computer.

Canva being web based automatically saves your design on their website while you're working on it but to get it onto your computer you start by clicking the "Download" button on the upper right side of the screen. You will be given four options for saving:
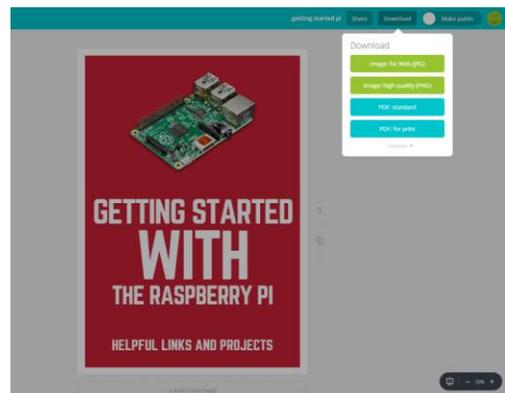
JPG – The most standard type of image found on the internet. It's a small file type meaning when you load a website it will load quickly.

PNG – This is a larger (in terms of file size) image file type. It is better for print than JPG but will not load as quickly on a website because of its larger size.

PDF Standard – The PDF file type is kind of a mix between an image and document file type. Some PDFs can be edited and typed on, in this case however it's a way to freeze your design like an image. This file type would be good if you printing several handouts on a home computer.

PDF for print – This type of PDF file contains more data and thus has a better print quality than PDF Standard (it also means the file size is also larger). This file type would be good if you are designing something that will be printed on nicer paper.

Downloading with paid content
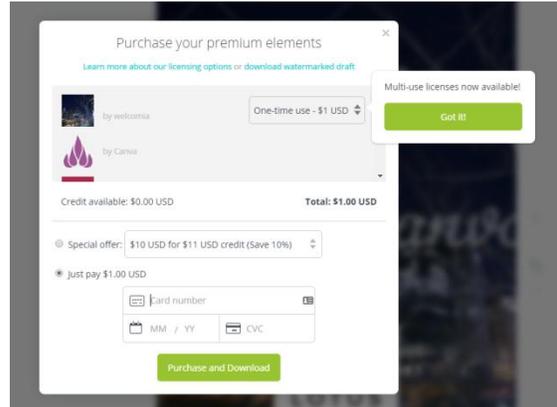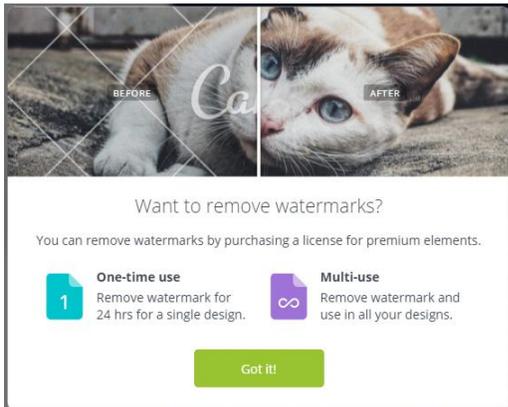
If you do end up wanting to use paid content as part of your design you will see the above screens when you attempt to download. A list of which items are paid content will be provided as well as a form on how to pay.