

# Simply Design

How to Format Picture Book Text  
and Illustrations for Kindle



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## Introduction

*Simply Design* is for authors who want to self-publish their picture books and need help with formatting their illustrations and text for publishing on Amazon Kindle. Picture books are defined as a sub-genre of Children's books because they have full page illustrations targeted at children aged 5-8.

Many authors assume that they need expensive programs or programming knowledge to format their illustrations, but this process can be completed with two free programs. These procedures require general computer skills, but users do not need to know how to code in HTML or CSS.

## Purpose

This manual outlines the steps to format text and illustrations for picture books.

The procedures include

- Styling the text to reflect the tone or change in action
- Formatting the illustration dimensions
- Embedding text in the illustrations
- Combining the illustrations to publish on Kindle.

**Note:** The procedures do not include how to create complex text alignment. To modify the shape of the text, Photoshop, or a similar program, is needed.

## Special Notations

Warnings have been clearly marked. They will appear in the text like the following box.

**Warning:** Read these boxes before continuing to the next step to prevent formatting or file issues.

## Necessary Programs

The steps in this manual are written to be performed with Windows 7. If your computer uses a different operating system, small adjustments may need to be made.

The procedures require [Paint](#), [Kindle Previewer](#), and [Kindle Comic Creator](#).

## Text Style

Typography is an overlooked aspect of formatting illustrations. Publishing houses pay art directors to focus solely on the typography of children's stories, but self-publishers do not have this luxury. For authors interested in self-publishing, it is important to consider the tone that the font is producing, and choose an arrangement before uploading the picture book to Amazon.

### Defining Typography

Typography is the art or technique of arranging type. It involves all aspects of textual design: font size, weight, alignment, line spacing, color, and typeface (Phinney and Colabucci).

**Typography** is different from **font** and **typeface**. Font means the collection of letters, numbers, and characters, while typeface means the style or appearance. Due to the invention of computers and digital text, font, and typeface have become interchangeable terms.

### Typeface and Font

The **typeface** Garamond describes all of the characters that have the same style or design, but when it is applied in a project the characters are separated into groups called fonts.

Two Different Fonts
Garamond, 10 point, Bold
Garamond, 14 point, Bold

These separate groups are called **fonts**, which describes characters that share the same characteristics like typeface or **weight** (bold, light, or italicized). Each arrangement and style of text has a different effect on the story and the reader.

In children's books, typography is used to emphasis the action, dialogue, theme, or emotion of the story.

#### Tips for Typography – *Italic*, **Bold**, color, typeface

- Accentuate action words or phrases
- Show dialogue – exclamations or thoughts
- Change typefaces for multiple texts
  - the story, letters, signs
- Match typeface to historical background

However, the typeface, color, or arrangement should not distract the child from reading and understanding.

## Typography and Visual Learning

Children are visual learners. They use textual cues to understand the change in action or voice. Professors from the University of Essex studied the effects of typography on children. Their research showed that, as text size decreased, children aged 5 to 7 years suffered slower reading speeds and made a greater number of errors (Hughes and Wilkins 1).

The more engaging and visually complementing that the text is to the story, the easier the reader could understand. If typography is used incorrectly, readers will become unfocused and be less likely to follow the story. Children's literature is aimed at the 5 to 8 age group; as the target audience, typography in picture books should cater to their needs, as outlined in the following section's guidelines.

## Steps for Perfecting Typography

Picture book text should meet the following guidelines:

- Few lines of text (multiple lines look like stripes, which are visually stressful)
- Uncluttered text arrangement
- Clear typeface (not decorative or cursive)

Complete the following steps and apply to the text:

1. Complete the manuscript
2. Identify the time period or historical background of the story
3. Define the tone or theme of the story
4. Target prominent character quirks or personality traits
5. Research typefaces that matches the historical period, theme/tone, or character personality

**Note:** For more advanced text elements, Photoshop or a similar editing program will be needed. Simple italic, bold, color, or typeface changes can be manipulated in Paint.

Choosing a typeface that matches personality, theme, or historical time period is mostly a personal decision for the author. To match the historical time period, research fonts that are font styles that fall near the time period of the story's setting. The following section explains details to take into account when choosing a particular font. For specific guidelines to help choose a font, look for a comprehensive guide on font styles.

## Typeface Characteristics

To choose fonts based on the historical period of the story, authors must first understand the characteristics of the type families. Below are the brief descriptions of the characteristics of Modern (a modern day looking typeface), Humanist, and Old Style (both vintage looking typefaces due to their resemblance to scribes handwriting).

**Modern style typefaces** (late 18<sup>th</sup> century to present), like Bodoni MT, Bell MT, or Century, are recognized by the long, thin horizontal serifs, vertical stress (no slanted letters), and contrast between thick and thin lines.

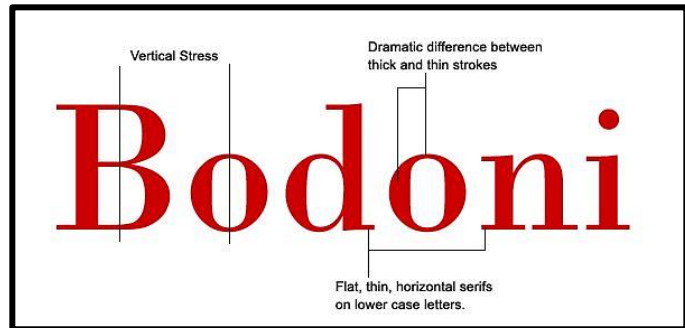


Figure 1: Modern Typeface

Modern typefaces are characterized by appearing structured and cold, but they are eye-catching and have easy to read serifs (Boardley Type).

The **Humanist style** (mid-18<sup>th</sup> century) and **Old Style** (15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century) typefaces are rooted in calligraphy, mimicking the handwriting of early scribes (see Figure 2).

Humanist typefaces, like Centaur and Adobe Gurmukhi feature a slanted “e” and cross bar to mimic handwriting.

Old Style typefaces, Goudy Old Style, Palatino Linotype, or Perpetua, feature upright letters and a horizontal cross bar. However, both use wedge-shaped serifs (Boardley Old Style).

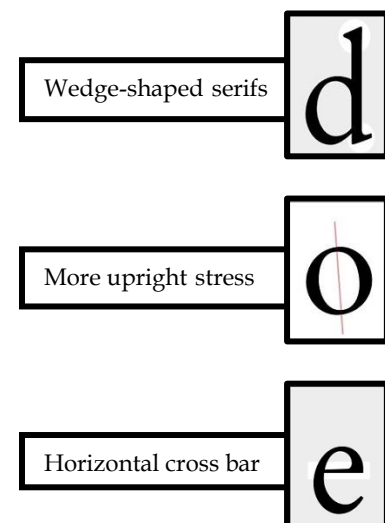


Figure 2: Old Style Typeface

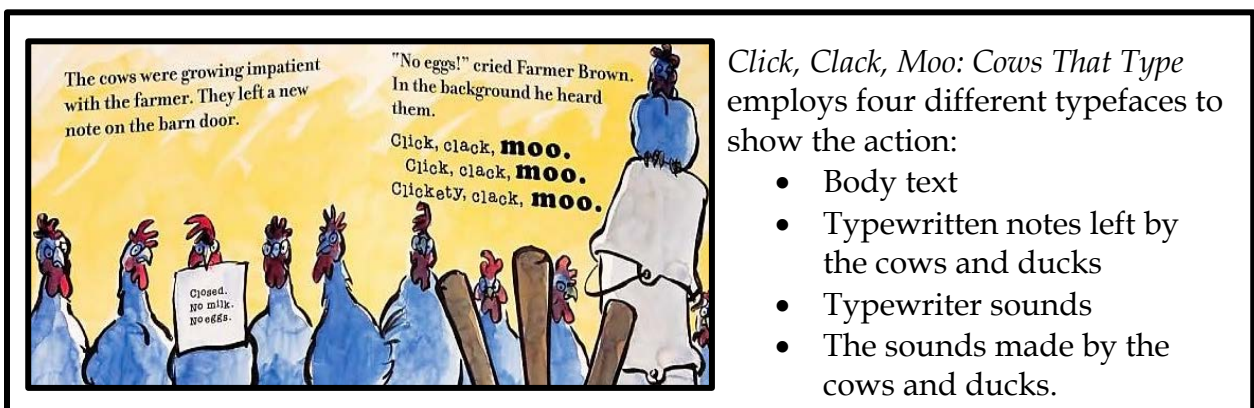


Figure 3: Click, Clack, Moo Illustration

*Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* employs four different typefaces to show the action:

- Body text
- Typewritten notes left by the cows and ducks
- Typewriter sounds
- The sounds made by the cows and ducks.

## Format with Paint

Paint is a free program that is often disregarded as a useful image editing tool. The Paint interface is less complicated than other image editing programs, and it is universally found on PC devices, regardless of the operating system.

**Note:** Mac computers do not run Paint, but they are pre-installed with a similar program, Paintbrush. Mac users may follow the steps for Paint, but they may have to make variations based on button names or location.

Some believe Paint is elementary and does not offer the necessary advanced tools. For many image creation and editing projects, this assumption may be true; however, for formatting picture book illustrations to publish on the kindle, an uncomplicated program is all that is needed.

The instructions for formatting illustrations on paint will require the following buttons:

- File
- Resize
- Text
- Zoom
- Undo and Redo (optional)

For their location see Figure 4.



## Getting to Know the Interface

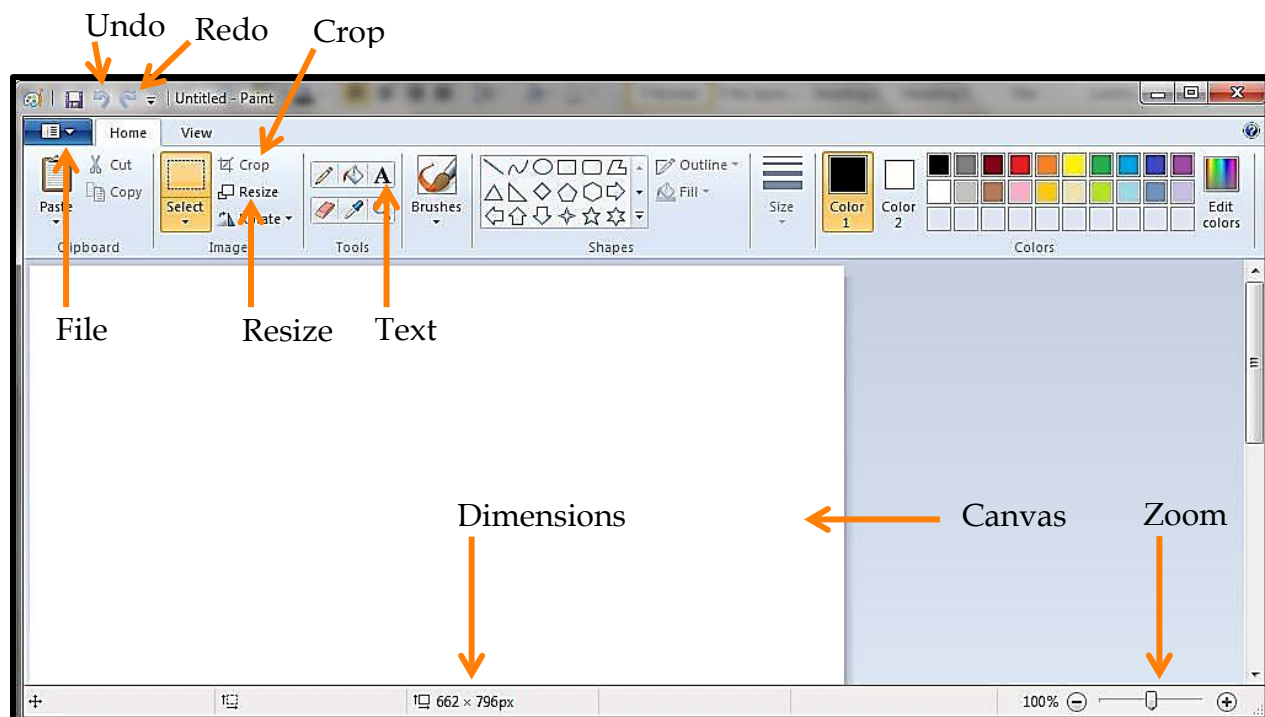


Figure 4: Paint Interface

**File**— This button opens a drop down menu with options for saving a project, opening a project, or starting with a new, blank canvas.

**Undo/Redo**— These buttons undo changes made or reapply changes.

**Resize**— This button opens a menu for changing the dimensions of the image by percentage or pixels, as well as tilting the image by degree.

**Crop**— This button is used for cropping, or cutting, the image. When clicked, the user can drag a box around the desired portion of the image, hit enter, and the section outside the box will be deleted.

**Text**— This button allows the user to click on a section of the image and type in text. A menu will appear to allow for text editing (see Figure 4).

**Dimensions**— These numbers show the dimension of the image. The default setting is in pixels.

**Canvas**— This is the workspace where the user will insert an image, perform edits, and save the image and any extra white space left over. To minimize white space, drag the edges to be even with the image.

**Zoom**— This slide bar will either zoom in or out on the image.

## I. Opening the File in Paint

- 1.1. Open **<Paint>**.
- 1.2. Click **<File>**.
- 1.3. Select **<Open>**, and find the first illustration in the **<File Explorer>**.
- 1.4. Perform any edits or touch-ups to the illustration.
- 1.5. Resize the image before adding text by following the instructions in section 2.

## 2. Resizing the Illustration

To display on a Kindle device, the image needs to be resized to 600x1024 pixels (px). As outlined below, the height can be adjusted in the resize menu, but the length will need to be cropped manually to retain the central part of the image. Unless the image was created with the same or proportionate dimensions, automatically resizing will distort the image.

- 2.1. On the **<Home ribbon>**, click **<Resize>** (see Figure 4).
- 2.2. Select **<Pixels>** (see Figure 5).
- 2.3. For portrait images, highlight the current vertical value and replace it with 1024.
- 2.4. For landscape images, highlight the current horizontal value and replace it with 1024 (see Figure 5).
- 2.5. Click **<Ok>**.
- 2.6. To resize the other dimension, select the **<View>** tab and check **<Rulers>**.
- 2.7. If you are taking excess from the right side, zoom in and, with the square tab, drag the right side of illustration to 600, using the top ruler as a guide.
- 2.8. If you need to take excess from both sides, click selection, draw a box around the desired part of the illustration, and click **<Crop>**.
  - 2.8.1. The illustration may need to be cropped on both sides, to be resized to 600px but still retain the central part of the image.

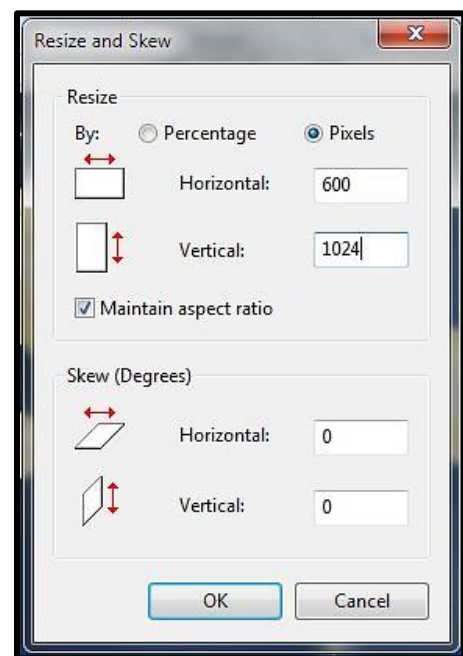


Figure 5: Resize Menu

**Note:** The new Kindle Fire HD has the dimensions w: 800px and 1280px. If you believe your book will be used by readers with this device, adjust your illustrations to match. However, 600x1024px illustrations will display well on the Kindle Fire HD in full screen mode.

- 2.9. Double check the dimension by looking at the dimension indicator at the bottom of the screen (see Figure 4). The other dimension value should read 600.
- 2.9.1. If the value is not 600, click <Undo> and repeat steps 2.6-2.9.

### 3. Adding and Editing the Text

- 3.1. Click the <Text> button and select the area of the illustration where you want the text to start.

**Warning:** After you type your text, do not click out of the text box. The text will become pixels and be embedded in the image, so it cannot be changed.

- 3.2. Type the text.
- 3.3. To change the typeface, with the text box still selected, highlight the text and click the typeface drop down menu (see Figure 6).
- 3.4. Choose the typeface and click **inside** the text box to deselect the text and view the changes.
- 3.5. To change the font size, highlight the text, and click the font size drop down menu (see Figure 6).
- 3.6. To change the color, highlight the text, select <Color 1>, and click on a new color (see Figure 6).

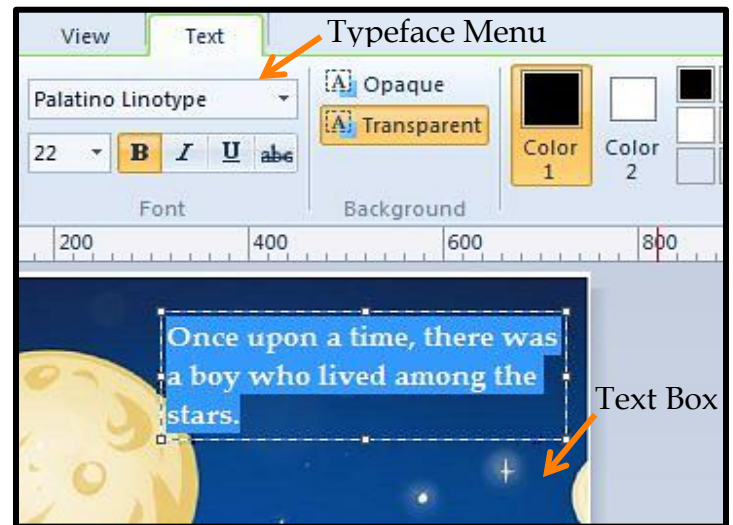


Figure 6: Editing Text

### 4. Completing the Illustrations

- 4.1. With the text box still selected, hover the cursor over the edge of the box until the cursor changes to two double-sided, crossed arrows.
- 4.2. Click and drag to move the box to the desired location.

**Warning:** If you click out of the text box, the text will become embedded into the image and can no longer be edited.

**Note:** In Paint, the text may move slightly to the right or left when the text box is deselected.

- 4.3. When you are satisfied with the text, click out of the box.
- 4.4. Perform any final edits to the illustration.

## 5. Saving the Illustration

- 5.1. Click **<File>**.

**Warning:** Choose **<Save As>** to save the file. If you click **<Save>**, the new file will replace the original. Save each completed illustration as a new file, so the original is available for future editing.

- 5.2. Hover the cursor over **<Save As>**, and click on **<JPEG picture>**, to the right.
- 5.3. Choose the location to save the file or click **<New Folder>** to create a folder, like “Name of Book Illustrations” folder, and click **<Save>**.
- 5.4. Repeat [steps 4.1-4 and 5.1-3](#) for the rest of the illustrations.

## Kindle Comic Creator

Once you apply the text and proper dimensions, you may be combine the illustrations into one file to upload to Kindle Direct Publishing. Kindle Comic Creator is a free program from Amazon that is designed for authors to format graphic novels, manga, or comic books for self-publishing. However, it also works well for full screen picture book illustrations.

Kindle Comic Creator accepts the most common graphic files, so users are not limited to just JPEG or PDF. It offers HTML/CSS editing for the technical users, but it functions primarily without coding. Before publishing, projects can be previewed in multiple settings to simulate other Kindle devices, so users can test the appearance and functionality of the book. Go to [Amazon](#) to download the Kindle Comic Creator.

**Note:** Kindle Comic Creator requires Kindle Previewer to be downloaded. Visit [Amazon](#) to download.

### Choosing Settings

Open Kindle Comic Creator and select **<New Book>**. For steps 1-5, see Figure 7.

1. Click the **<Language>** drop down menu to select the language of the book.
2. Select “no” for **<Kindle Panel Viewer>**.
3. Choose the book’s orientation.
4. Select “Right-to-Left” for **<Page Turn Direction>**.
5. Change the **<Canvas Size>** for your book to w: 600px and h: 1024px.

**Note:** The new Kindle Fire HD has dimensions of w: 800px and h: 1280px. Be sure to match the canvas size to the dimensions of your illustrations (Spender).

6. Click **<Continue>**.
7. Type in the title of the book and author’s name.

8. If you have an in-home publishing company, type the name under **<Publisher>**.
9. Click **<Browse>** after **<Cover Image>**, and locate the cover image in the **<File Explorer>**.

**Note:** Except for the canvas size, all of the data, called **Metadata**, can be edited later. Select **<Book Settings>** and **<Metadata>**.

10. Click **<Start Adding Pages>** to begin.

### Adding Images

1. Click on **<Add Page>** to add illustrations (see Figure 8).
2. Find the illustrations in the **<File Explorer>**.
3. Click on the first illustration.
4. If the illustrations are all listed in a row, hold shift and click on the last one to select all of them at once.
5. If the illustrations are separated by other files, hold control and click on each illustration to select all of them.
6. Click **<Open>** to insert the illustrations.
7. To change the order of the illustrations, click and hold on an illustration, drag it down to the correct order, and release.
8. Repeat step 7 for all illustrations that are out of order.

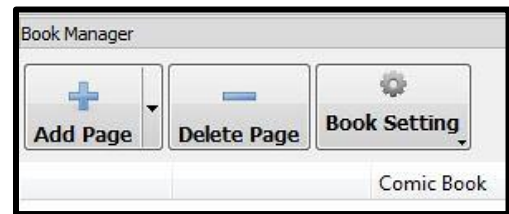


Figure 8: Book Manager

**Note:** If the zoom feature, the box with a percentage below **<Help>**, is missing, click on **<View>**, hover over **<Toolbars>**, and select **<Comic Toolbar>**.

## Saving for Kindle

After adding all of the illustrations, the file is ready to be saved to upload to Kindle Direct Publishing.

1. Click **<File>** and **<Save>** to save the .opf file in case it needs more editing.
2. Click **<File>** and **<Export as KF8 Book>**.
  - a. This will save the file as a .mobi that can be read by the Kindle Previewer program and uploaded to Kindle Direct Publishing.
3. It is recommended to open the .mobi file on multiple devices to check for issues.
4. If you are satisfied with the book, go to [Kindle Direct Publishing](#) to start the publishing process.

Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing is an easy to use online program for publishing multiple file types into Kindle eBooks. The website offers extensive instructions and FAQs to help users navigate the publishing process.

## Conclusion

The procedures outline the steps to format picture book text and illustrations for writers to self-publish on Kindle. By following these steps, users can create publishing house quality, full screen illustrations with correctly styled text and then compile them into one file that is readable by Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing. Authors can take their newly made file and easily publish and sell eBooks for readers with Amazon Kindle devices or app.



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