

# How to design a mini zine in Canva

An overview for setting up your design file  
and understanding page order



[mythicaltype.com](https://mythicaltype.com)



Hi there! My name is Kali. I've made a lot of zines in Canva, and I wanted to share my process. This tutorial is about how to lay out an 8-page mini zine in Canva.

I hope you find this helpful! If you have any feedback on this guide, please contact me through [mythicaltype.com](https://mythicaltype.com).

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# 1. Introduction

## **What is a zine?**

Zine comes from the word "magazine."

A zine is a self-published, non-commercial print work. Zines are usually produced in small batches.

Zines can be about any topic.

This tutorial is on how to lay out an 8-page mini zine that uses one side of one sheet of paper.

## **What is Canva?**

Canva ([canva.com](https://canva.com)) is graphic design software that can be used in an internet browser or as a mobile app.

Canva offers free plans and pro (paid) plans. Some templates, design elements, and advanced features are available only in the paid plan.

Everything in this tutorial can be done with the free plan.

# Canva caveats

Some professional graphic designers don't like Canva. But here's the thing: Canva is accessible (with a free-forever plan), and it has less of a learning curve than Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator.

Yes, Canva has some limitations. But more importantly, Canva enables anyone with an internet browser to create. If you learn to work within Canva's limitations, you can produce amazing work.

So what are those limitations?

1. **RGB vs. CMYK color profiles.** RGB is available in the free version. RGB and CMYK are both available for paid plans. Technically you should export in CMYK if you intend to print your zine. Realistically, the differences in the color profiles won't make a huge difference when it comes to zines. (Zines are not supposed to be perfect anyway. DIY mindset!)
2. **Margins.** Canva's margins are set by default and you cannot change them. But you can work around this. You can set your own margins by setting custom guides. Use your guides as the margins, instead of Canva's default margins.
3. **No automatic pagination.** You have to add page numbers manually. Not a big deal, but it's more time consuming than if Canva could do it automatically. I make all my pages and rearrange them in the order I want, and then I add page numbers at the end.
4. **Can't resize designs on the free version.** If you start making a design and then realize you need to make the page smaller or larger, you can't resize it automatically in Canva. You can work around this, too, by making a new design in the new size you want. Then copy and paste all the elements from the previous design into your new one. You'll have to manually resize some things, but you would have had to do some of that anyway, even with Canva's resizing functionality.

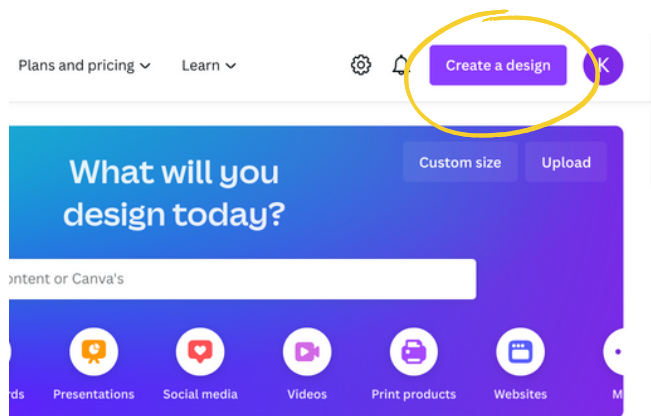
So those are the limitations, but don't let them hold you back. Now it's time to make a zine!

# 2. Zine layout - Creating a design

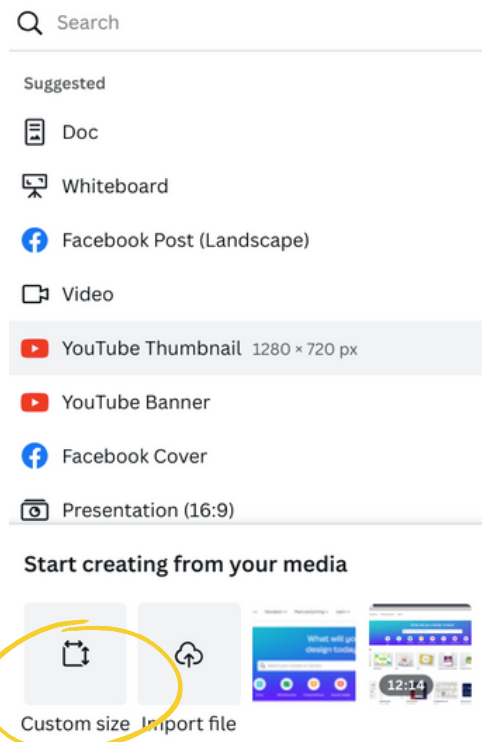
Instructions in this tutorial are for using Canva in an internet browser. The app interface is similar but there may be some differences.

Go to [canva.com](https://canva.com) in an internet browser. Log in to your Canva account (or create a free account, if you haven't used Canva before).

On the Home page, click on **Create a design** in the top-right corner.



Click on **Custom size**.



## 2. Zine layout - Creating a design

Change the measurement unit to what you use (inches or centimeters). Enter the dimensions of the paper you want to print on.

In the U.S., standard letter size is 11 inches wide by 8.5 inches high, so use those dimensions if you're printing on standard U.S. letter paper.

Click on **Create new design**.

Q Custom size ×

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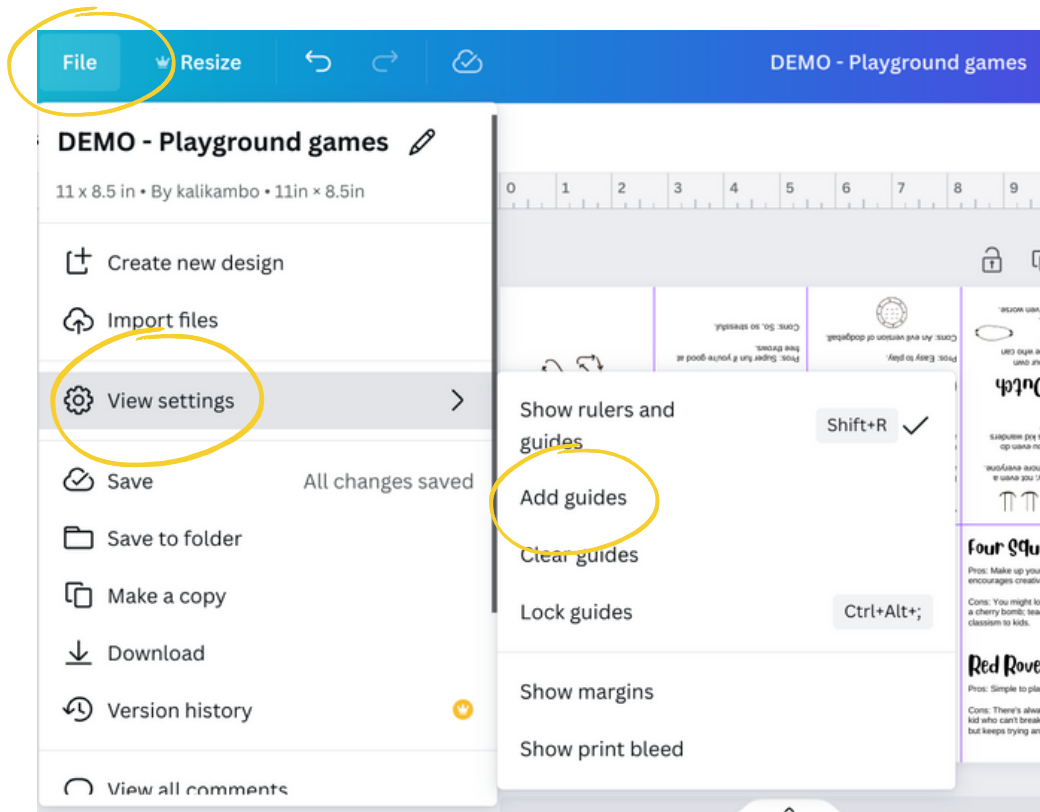
Width      Height

11      8.5      in ▼      🔒

**Create new design**

# 2. Zine layout - Adding guides

To add guides to the page, click on **File >> View settings >> Add guides**.





# 2. Zine layout - Adding guides

In the guides menu, click on **Custom**.

For Columns, enter "4."

For Rows, enter "2."

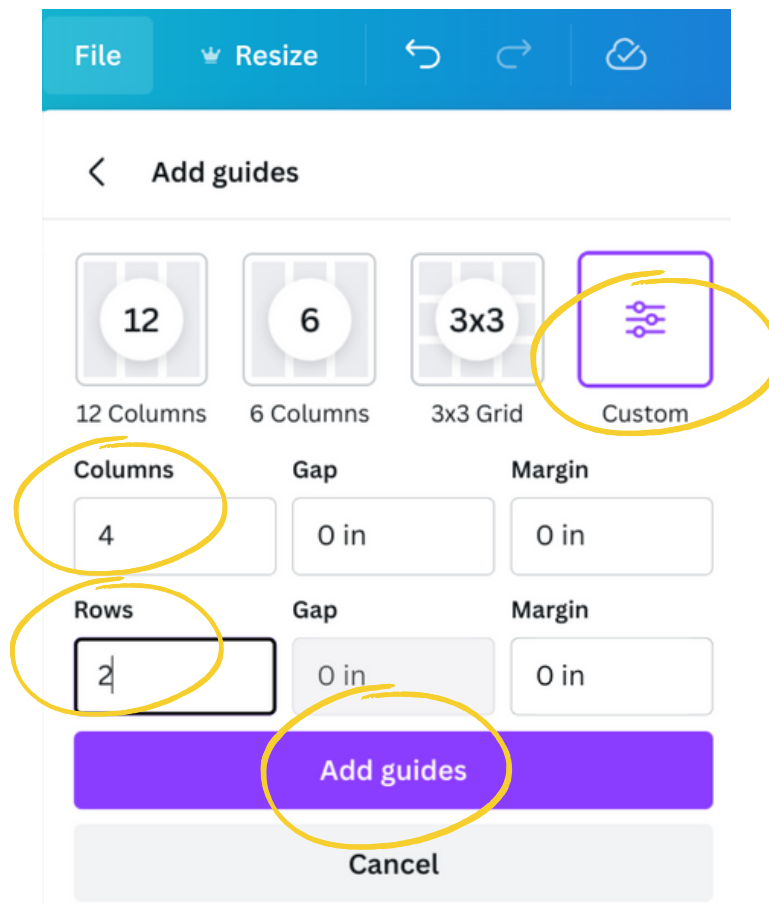
This will create 4 evenly spaced columns and 2 rows (top and bottom).

Gap refers to the space between columns or rows. If you set this to zero, there will be single lines between columns and rows but no space.

Margin refers to the space around the edge of the paper.

Use Gap and Margin in whatever ways are helpful to you.

Then click on **Add guides**.



# 2. Zine layout - Adding guides

The guidelines will appear on the design as purple lines. These lines will not show when you print out the zine.

After you add guides, they are “locked.” This means the guides are locked in place and you cannot move them by clicking and dragging on the guides.

Locking the guides is helpful because then you won’t accidentally move a guide when you intend to move a text box or a graphic element.

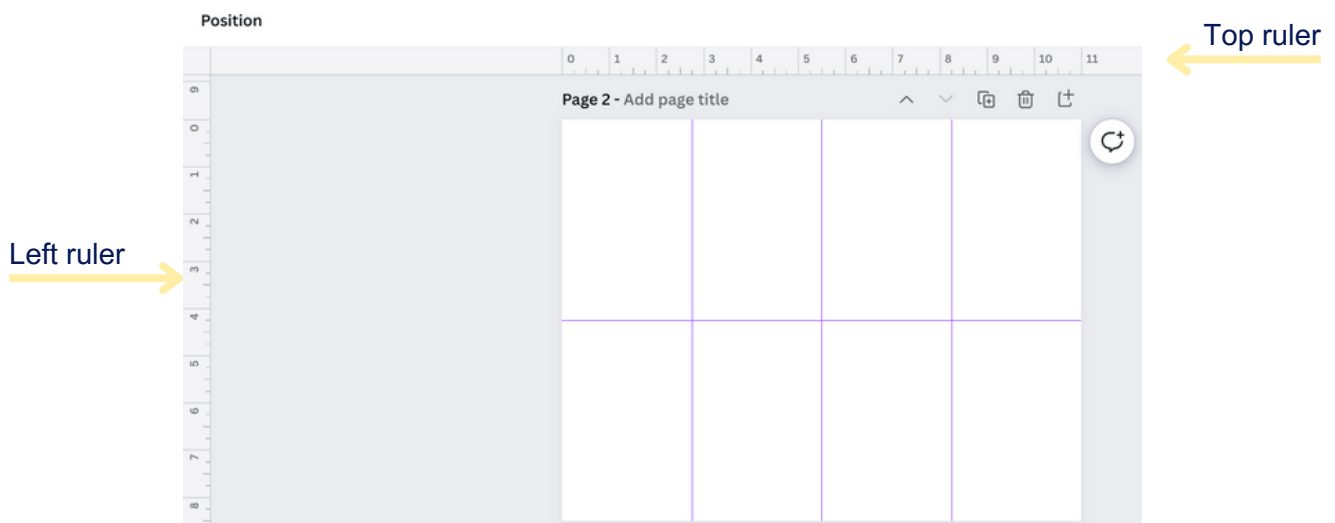
## How to add additional guides

Check if the rulers are visible along the top and left sides of the screen. If the rulers are not visible, go to **File >> View settings >>** and click on **Show rulers and guides**.

To add a horizontal guide, click and hold in the ruler across the top. Drag the line down into your design to where you want it. Let go of the mouse to set the guide.

To add a vertical guide, click and hold in the ruler to the left. Drag the line to the right, into your design, to place it where you want it. Let go of the mouse to set the guide.

As you move the guide, the line may change to pink (instead of purple). Pink signifies that the guide is lining up with other elements in your design.



# 2. Zine layout - Adding guides

## How to move a guide

Check that guides are unlocked. Go to **File >> View settings >> Lock guides**.

A check mark next to "Lock guides" signifies that guides are locked. No check mark signifies that guides are unlocked.

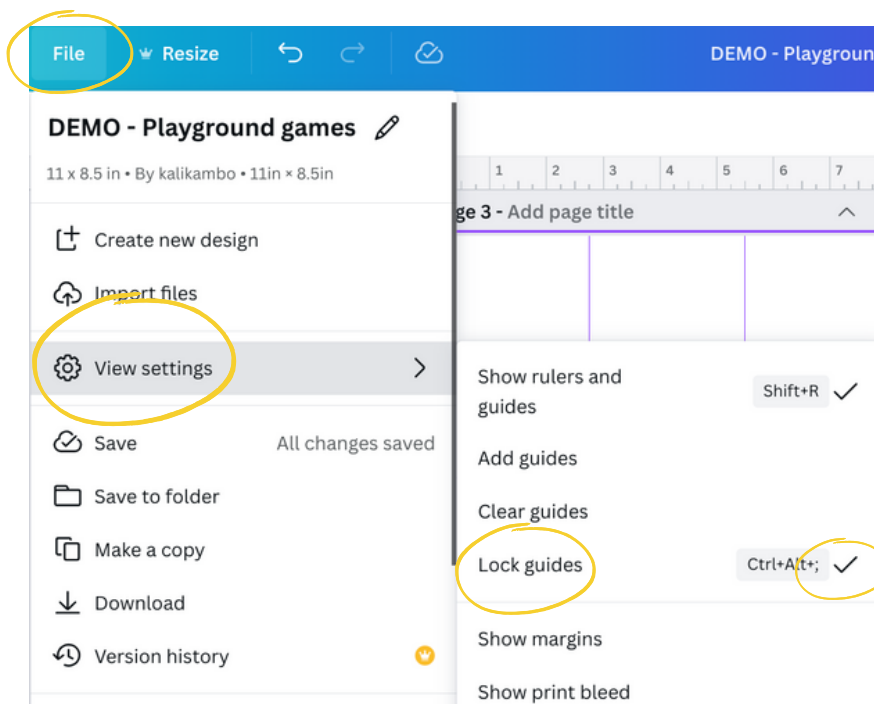
To move a guide, click and hold and drag the line to where you want to place it on the page.

## How to delete a guide

Check that guides are unlocked. Go to **File >> View settings >> Lock guides**.

A check mark next to "Lock guides" signifies that guides are locked. No check mark signifies that guides are unlocked.

To delete a guide, drag the guide off the design and let go of the mouse. The guide will disappear.



If there is a check mark next to "Lock guides," that means guides are locked.

Click on "Lock guides" to remove the check mark and unlock guides.

# 2. Zine layout - Page order

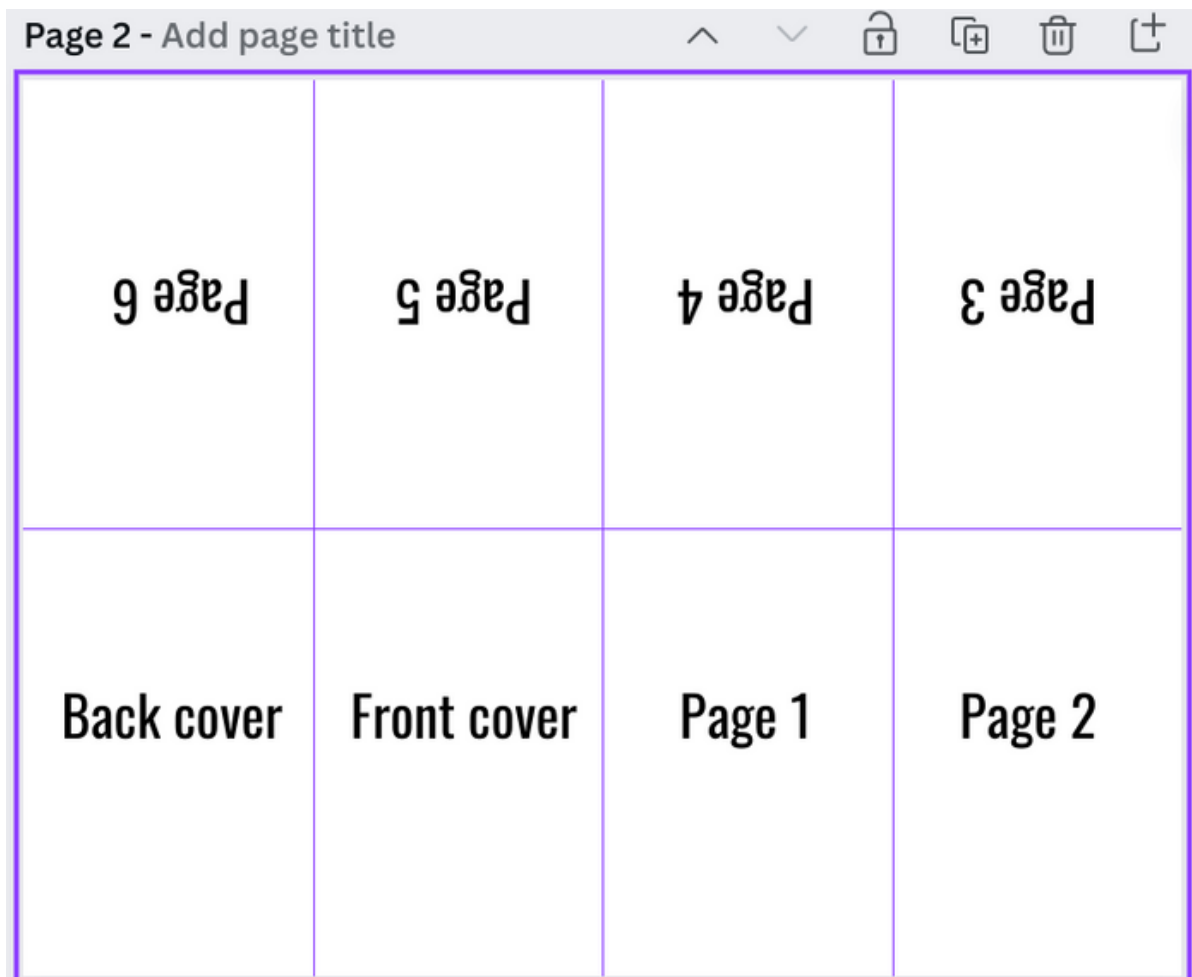
See the image below for the page order.

The bottom-left panel is the back cover of the zine. The panel to the right of that is the front cover. Then page 1 and page 2.

Page 3 is in the top-right corner. Notice that pages 3, 4, 5, and 6 are flipped upside down compared to the pages in the bottom row. This is so that when you print and fold the zine, all the pages will be oriented correctly.

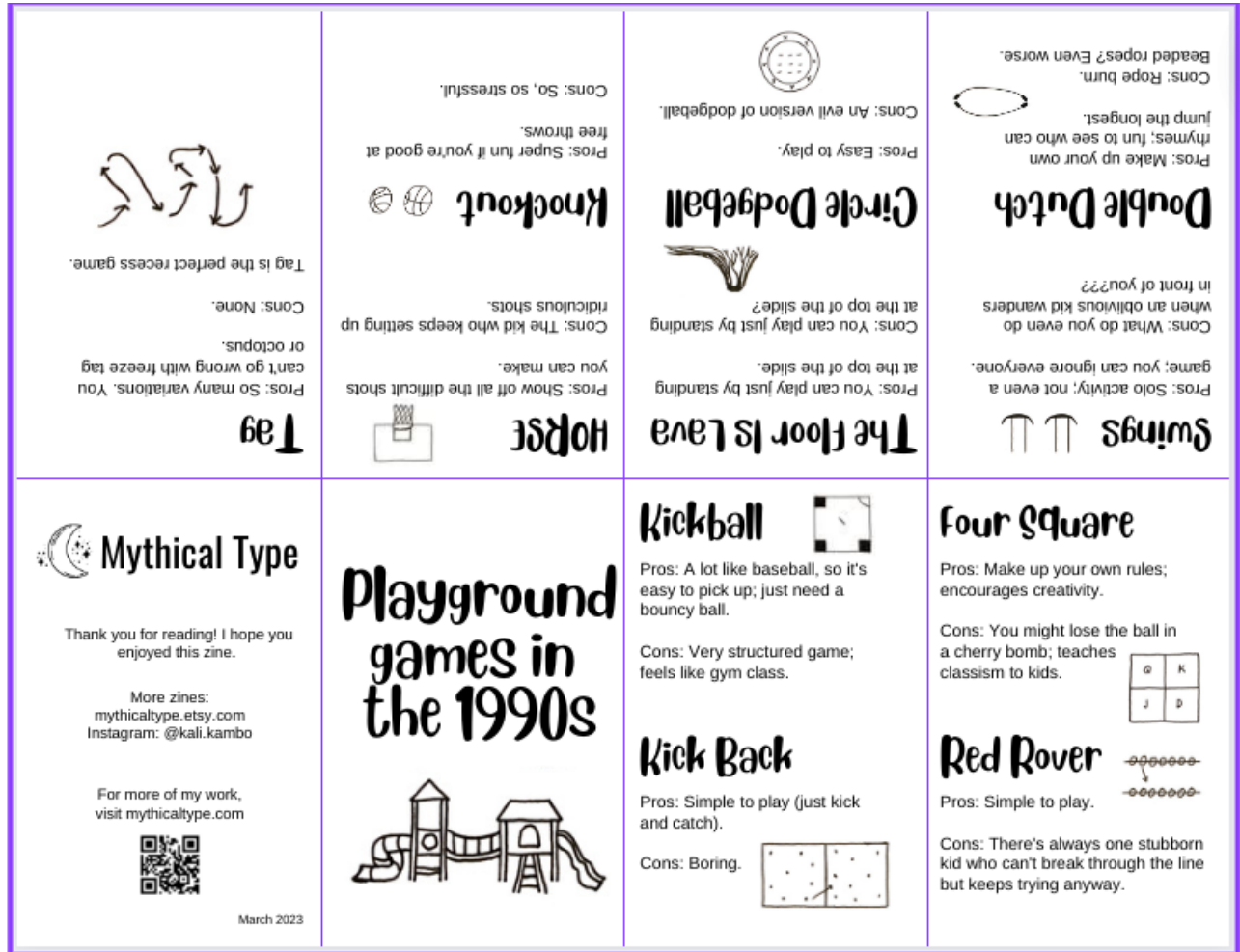
You can work on pages 3, 4, 5, and 6 right-side-up, and then rotate them so they are upside down.

To rotate a text box or graphic element, click on the element. Then click on the rotate button (it looks like two arrows). Click and drag to rotate the element. A small window displays the degrees as you're rotating. Rotate the element to 180 degrees, so it is exactly upside-down from the bottom row.



# 2. Zine layout - Page order

Below is an example of a finished zine. Note how the pages in the top row are upside-down compared to the pages in the bottom row.



# 3. Saving your zine

When you finish designing the zine, save it as a PDF.

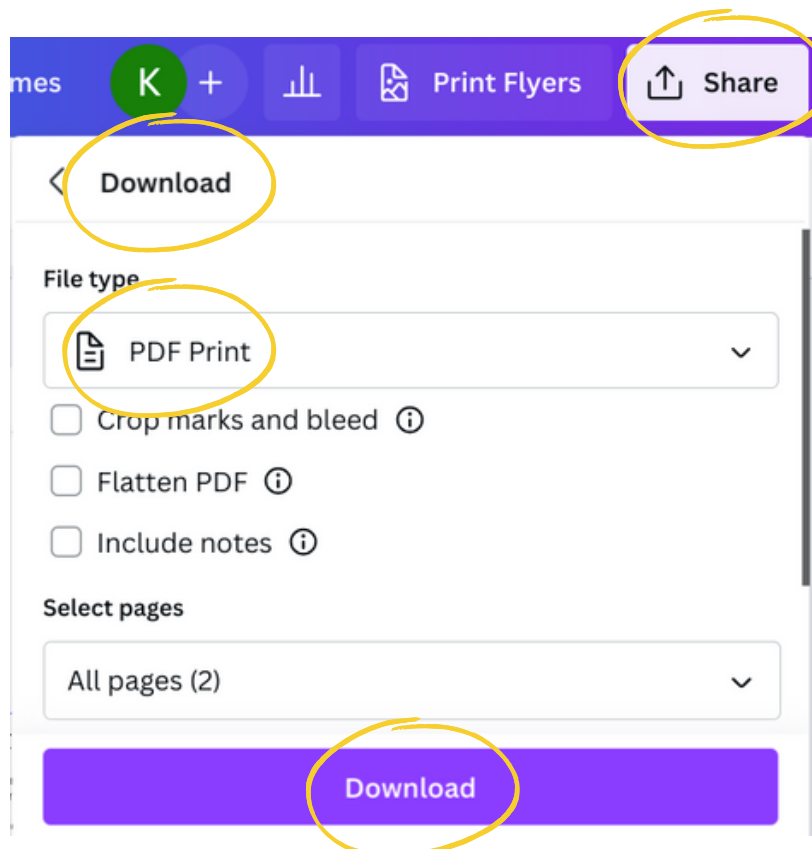
Click on the **Share** button in the top-right corner. Click on **Download**.

For File type, choose **PDF Print**. With the free version of Canva, the PDF will download with the RGB color profile (which is typically used for digital but not for print). For printing zines, RGB will be fine unless you're very particular about how colors appear.

The option to download a PDF with the CMYK color profile is available to Canva Pro users (the paid version of Canva).

Click on the **Download** button.

Note: If you intend to share your zine digitally but not print it, you can choose **PDF Standard** instead of PDF Print. This is a lower quality file than PDF Print, but it is suitable for sharing digitally and sending via email.



# 3. Saving your zine

The zine will download as a PDF to your computer. Then you can print the zine at home or at a print shop (wherever you print zines).

Tip: Print a test copy of the zine before printing a bunch of copies. Then you can see if you need to adjust spacing or formatting before printing all your zine copies.



# Thanks for reading!

I hope you found this guide helpful. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact me through [mythicaltype.com](http://mythicaltype.com).

Happy zine making!