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How to Design Ebooks in Google Slides

A practical guide to using Google Slides for designing ebooks

Table of Contents

Introduction

Google Slides is free, simple and easy to collaborate on. Simplicity can make designing easier, especially for a beginner designer. Easy sharing makes cooperation between designers and content creators very effective.

The idea of using Google Slides for creating ebooks isn't new, but most tutorials describe only the basics such as setting up a custom page format or creating a clickable Table of Contents.

In our guide we will explore more of the design capabilities of this tool. We will focus on some of the less obvious features which can help you to design a good looking ebook.

Enjoy.

Pros & Cons

Slides has many pros but also a couple of unpleasant cons.

Pros

- ✓ Free
- ✓ Easy collaboration between designers and content creators
- ✓ Easy to use for a beginner designer
- ✓ Its vector nature makes scaling designs easy
- ✓ Allows to create custom themes and layouts
- ✓ Wide range of Google Fonts available
- ✓ Easy to work with the text
- ✓ Easy image masking
- ✓ Limited number of options can make designing easier
- ✓ Built-in spell check

Cons

- ✗ No custom guides or grid
- ✗ Zooming only in big steps (Zoom to fit, 50%, 100%, 200%, ...)
- ✗ Impossible to define custom graphical objects (only whole layouts)
- ✗ Impossible to define own shortcuts
- ✗ Impossible to import vector graphics
- ✗ No support for pen tablets

Tip: To go around zooming issues enter a full screen mode in browser to get more screen real estate.

Page setup

The first step in creating an ebook is changing default widescreen format in Slides to a custom page size.

1. In Slides go to `File / Page Setup ...`

2. Select **Custom** in the format dropdown

3. Enter **8.5 x 11 inches** for Letter page size or **21 × 29.7 centimeters** for A4 page size
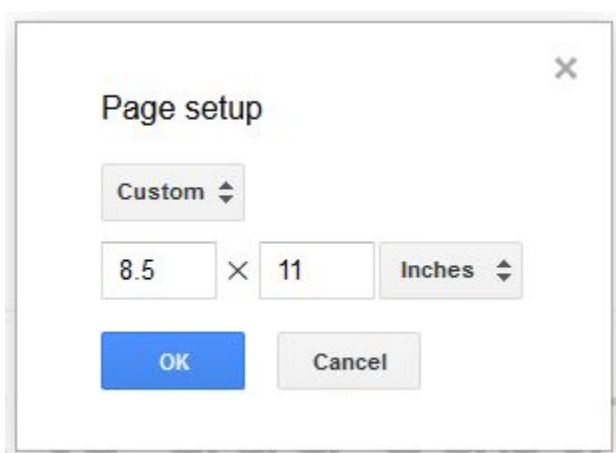
Tip: Consider using 16:9 or 16:10 format for your ebook as they better fit computer screens.

Custom themes

In the next step we will create a custom theme by updating the default Simple Light theme.

1. Right click on the first slide in the slides list and choose `Apply Layout`, select **Blank** layout.

2. Go to `Slide / Edit master`. Select Master, press ⌘ / Ctrl + A and then Delete to delete all its content.

3. Click `Rename` and rename it to your theme name.

4. Then select and delete all layouts except the Blank one. (It's not possible to delete a layout which is used by a slide, anyway.) You can delete layouts with the Delete key.

5. Now start designing theme layouts as you would design normal slides.

Notes

- You can design as many layouts as you want and then apply them to your slides.

- To insert placeholder text to your layout go to `Insert / Placeholder`. You can insert placeholders for Title, Subtitle and Body text.

- To insert page numbers go to `Insert / Slide Numbers...`

Custom themes (continued)
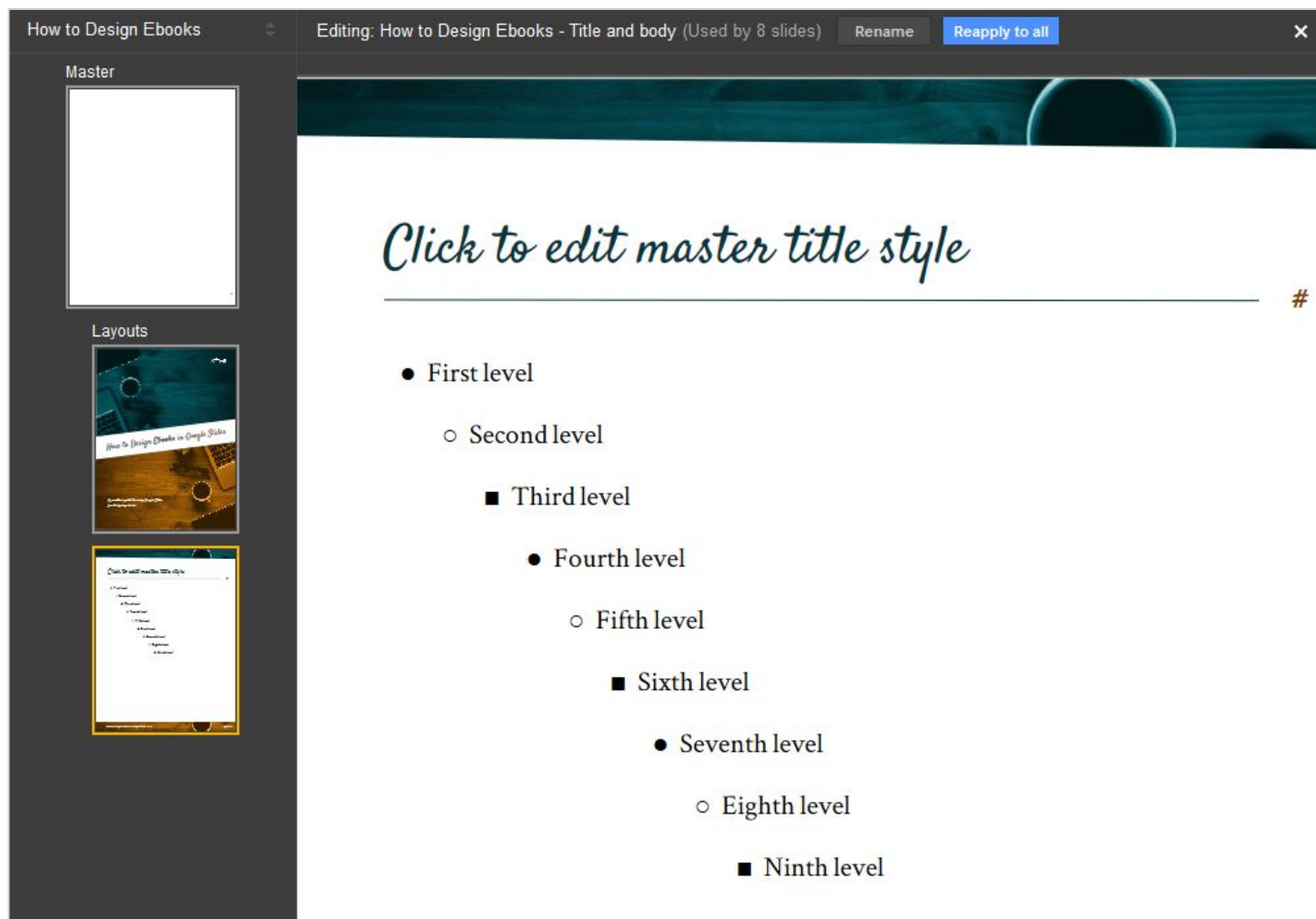
Custom themes and layouts are one of the strengths of Google Slides

Custom themes: *Reapplying themes*

If you are using your theme in more documents, you can apply changes in the master theme to existing documents.

1. Make changes to the layouts in the document where you created your theme, eg. My Theme

2. In the document with My Theme applied, click `Theme...` in the top toolbar.

3. Click `Import theme` in the bottom right corner. Select My Theme document.

4. Select your theme and then click `Import theme`. Changes in layouts in the master theme will be automatically re-applied to the relevant layouts in the current document.

Tip: You can copy an existing slide to theme layout, just ⌘ / Ctrl + A on it, then ⌘ / Ctrl + C and finally ⌘ / Ctrl + V on new theme layout.

Working with text

Working with text in Slides is very convenient as it basically is a very good WYSIWYG editor.

1. To select from a big variety of **Google fonts**, click on any text box, then on current font name in the top toolbar and then on `More fonts...` on the bottom of the dropdown menu.

2. A handy menu appears which allows you to search, filter or sort fonts and add or remove them from your collection. To add a font to your collection just click its name and it will appear in the dropdown menu.
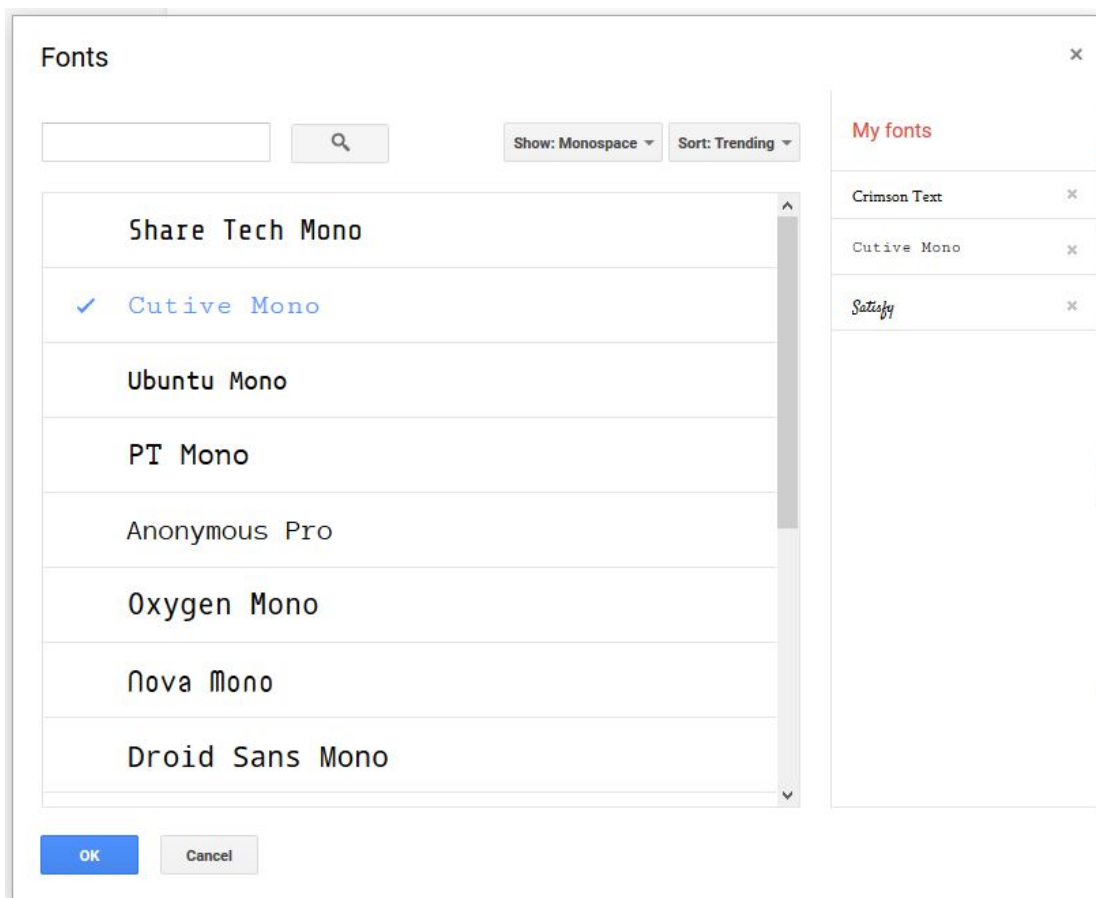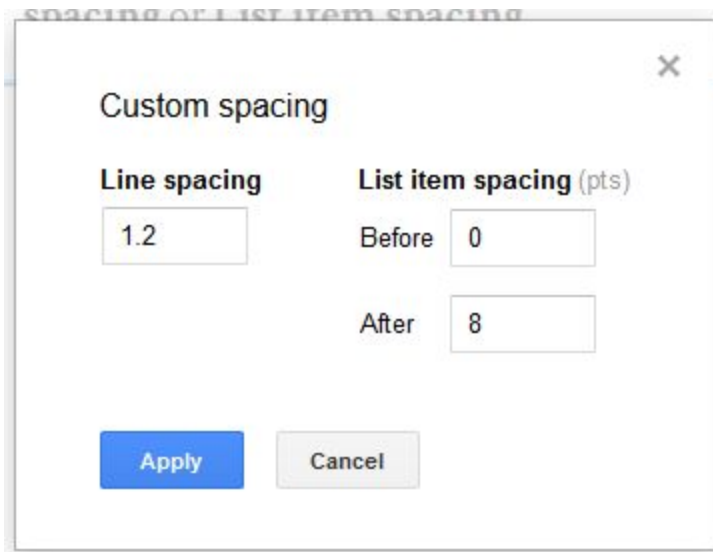
Custom line spacing can help you achieve consistent spacing in paragraphs and lists.

1. With a textbox active go to `Format / Line spacing / Custom spacing ...`

2. Enter a custom line spacing value and Before or After value for **Paragraph spacing** or **List item spacing**

Regular text cannot be transparent in Slides. However, you can create transparent text with the Word Art tool.

1. Go to `Insert / Word Art` and enter the text to the text field.

2. Change **Line color** in the top toolbar to Transparent. Then change **Fill color** to `Custom ...` and drag the second slider to set transparency level.

3. You can change the text size by dragging one of the box corners while holding the *Shift* key to retain its proportions. Basic formatting (**bold**, *italic*) is also possible.

Working with text: Fun with lists

By defining custom bullets you can create some less typical unordered lists.

1. Create a list and select it.

2. Go to `Format / Lists / List options / More bullets...` and select bullets from various categories like Emojis.

📌 Sketch   🖥 HTML

📌 Adobe XD   🖥 CSS

📌 Illustrator   🖥 JavaScript

📌 Photoshop   🖥 PHP

📌 Figma   🖥 Ruby

Tip: Check how the bullets changed after exporting to PDF, usually they are less detailed and converted to grayscale.

Working with images

You can insert JPGs, PNGs and non animated GIFs in Google Slides. SVGs are not supported for now.

1. Insert image by `Insert / Image ...`

2. Click on the image and select `Image options...` in the top toolbar

3. You can set **Recolor** style, **Transparency**, **Brightness** and **Contrast** here.

Working with images: Masking images

You can achieve some interesting effects with predefined image masks.

1. Insert image by `Insert / Image ...`

2. Click on the image and then on the down arrow next to the Crop image tool

3. Select one of the predefined masks. Masks can be manipulated as any other objects (see the next chapter) .
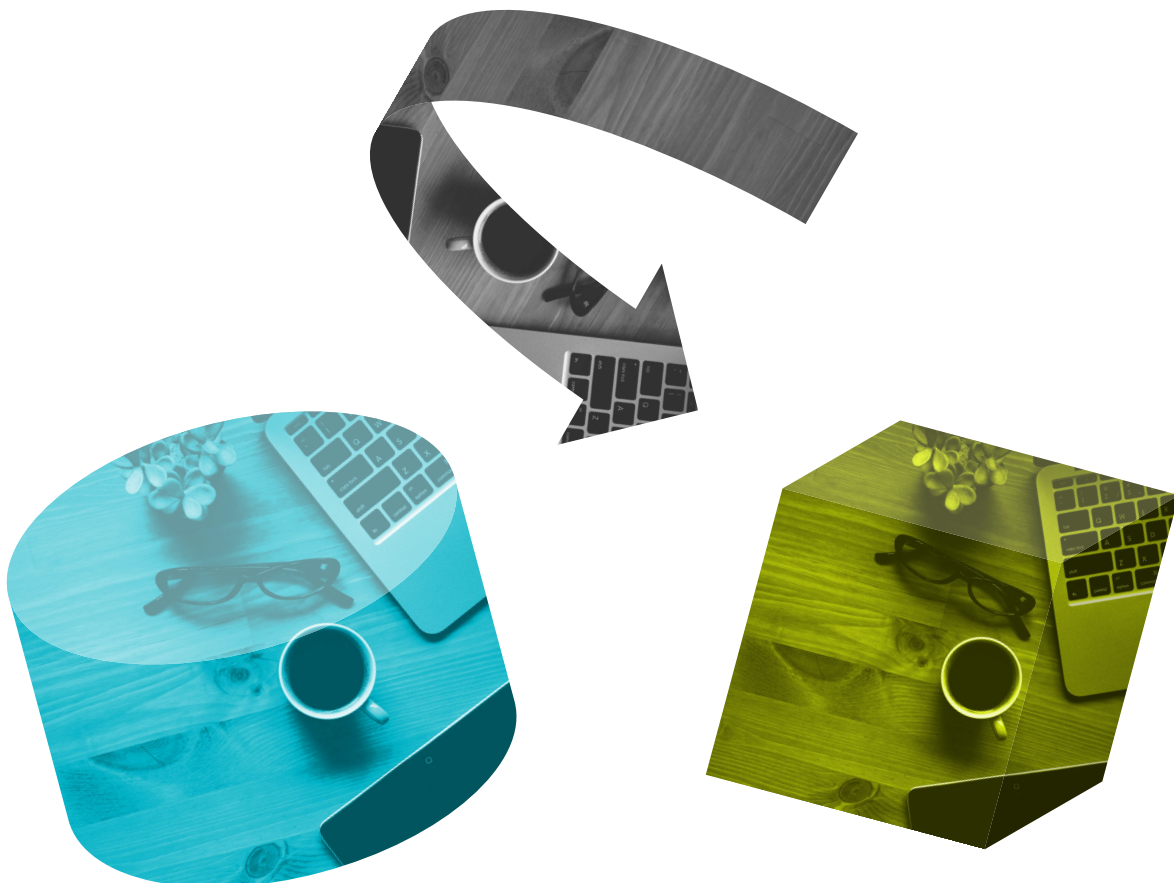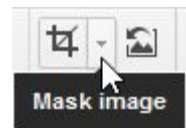
Working with objects

Same principles apply to working with all objects, whether they are text boxes, images, lines or shapes.

- There are no custom guidelines or grid but you can snap the objects to the **implicit guidelines or grid**. Go to `View / Snap to`. When dragging the object while *Snap to guidelines* is set, red guidelines matching the object's position to the surrounding objects appear.

- **Resize object** by dragging one of its corners. Hold the *Shift* key to retain object proportions.

- **Rotate object** by clicking and dragging the blue handle on the top of the object. Hold the *Shift* key to rotate the object in 15° steps.

- When you click inside the text box, you enter editing mode which is not always what you want. To select the text box to move it around (either by mouse or arrow keys), click on it while holding the *Shift* key.

- When you copy an object and paste it into another slide it appears in the same position.

Tip: To move objects by arrow keys in 1px steps, hold the Shift key when doing so.

Arranging objects

Basic arrange tools known from other design editors are available in Slides too.

- You can select more objects by dragging a selection box around them with a **Select tool** (the arrow in the top toolbar). Alternatively click the objects while holding the *Shift* key.

- To **group** the selected objects go to `Arrange / Group`

- To **align** selected objects **horizontally** or **vertically** go to `Arrange / Align horizontally` or `Arrange / Align vertically`

- To **distribute** selected objects **horizontally** or **vertically** go to `Arrange / Distribute`

- To **center** object or objects **on page** horizontally or vertically go to `Arrange / Center on page`

- To change the **order** of object or objects go to `Arrange / Order`

Tip: Duplicate selected object or objects easily by hitting ⌘ / Ctrl + D

Creating Table of Contents

Unfortunately, Google Slides doesn't have an automatic Table of Contents. Use Table and Line tools to create a custom one.

1. Go to `Table / Insert table` and create 2xX table, where X is a number of your contents items.

2. Write down chapter titles in the left cells and page numbers in the right cells. Right align the numbers in the right cells.

3. Select whole table and change **Line color** to transparent.

4. Select the **Line tool** and draw a straight line between the title and number while holding the Shift key. Change the **Line dash** to dotted.

5. Select the chapter title, press ⌘ / Ctrl + K to insert a link and select `Slides in this presentation`. Choose an appropriate slide.

Tip: Don't use leading lines among the chapter titles and numbers to make the TOC updates easier.

Exporting to PDF

Exporting to PDF is easy as Slides will make all settings and optimization for you.

1. Go to `File / Download as / PDF Document (.pdf)`

2. Save or preview file.

Tip: If you need to print your ebook, create print marks on exported PDF in Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Illustrator.

Conclusion

Google Slides by no means can compete with professional publishing software like Adobe InDesign. However, if you embrace its limits it can become a vital alternative for specific design tasks.

Thank you for downloading this guide. As you can see, you can design documents with Google Slides which not only look good but are also very practical. You can create a document template, share it with users who can then create multiple copies and easily update content according their needs.

Of course, you can use the techniques described here when creating regular slides too.

If you want to look at this guide directly in Google Slides, you will find it <u>here</u>.

Shortcuts list

Select tool	Esc
Move selected object	Arrow keys
Move selected object by 1px	Shift + Arrow keys
Zoom in	⌘ / Ctrl + Alt + +
Zoom out	⌘ / Ctrl + Alt + -
Compact controls	⌘ / Ctrl + Shift + F
Insert link	⌘ / Ctrl + K
New slide	⌘ / Ctrl + M
Duplicate selected slide	⌘ / Ctrl + D
Increase font size by 1pt	⌘ / Ctrl + Shift + .
Decrease font size by 1pt	⌘ / Ctrl + Shift + ,
Duplicate selected object	⌘ / Ctrl + D
Bring to front	⌘ / Ctrl + Shift + ↑
Bring forward	⌘ / Ctrl + ↑
Send backward	⌘ / Ctrl + ↓
Send to back	⌘ / Ctrl + Shift + ↓
Group	⌘ / Ctrl + Alt + G
Ungroup	⌘ / Ctrl + Alt + Shift + G

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