

An Intro to Canva

Making Flyers

Hey CQers!

We wrote this **Canva design guide** to help you with the following **design challenges**:

- Figure out a **brand look** for your web presence and images
- Create images to use on **social media**
- Design **flyers** and other graphics to promote your **events**
- Make graphics for your **website and newsletter**

It takes a **collaboration** between the publisher and author to market and promote a book! We need your help to spread the word about your book, and a great way to do this is with visual images.

Why do we recommend Canva?

It's not just because they're Australian.



“Where’s the Harry’s?”

Canva’s our recommendation because even if you have virtually no design skills whatsoever, you can create great-looking graphics—and they have a huge library of templates to start with.

Other benefits of Canva

- You can either upload your **own photos** or choose from over one million **stock images**, graphics and illustrations, most of which are free
- You can **change** the images, fonts, background, and colors
- Their layouts are **pre-formatted** to the optimum size for each social media site

Before we start our first project, take a minute to think about how your images can look **consistent** across the board, especially with your web site, newsletter, and social media graphics.

You want all of your images to have the same look, and this can be achieved with **colors** and **fonts**.

How do I figure out my visual brand image?

(For the brand-averse: How do I figure out the overall style for my graphics?)

Do a quick self-assessment. Are you serious or fun-loving? Practical or whimsical? Do you like modernist lines and curves, or an eclectic combination of stuff? Are you future-oriented or nostalgic? Contemporary or retro? What kind of interiors are you most comfortable in? What colors are in your closet? What art exhibit would have you lining up the first day? Are you season one Sansa or season six Sansa? (Though after the 2016 election, we're all season six Sansa).

The fonts and color palette you use should reflect your **personality**—and **writing style**. Think about your books—the aesthetics of your covers, your most popular series, etc.

What kind of stuff should I make?

- **Flyers or posters**—A one-page flyer to put up locally and tape to the backs of people who are staring at their phones. And in the store where you do your readings and signings, and at cons where you have a table and/or panel appearances.
- **Blog and newsletter graphics**—Header images for your blog and newsletter, blog post titles, and more. Make a template for an image that goes with each blog post.
- **Social media headers and graphics**—For headers, titles, ads, quotes from your books or favorite reviews, and more.
- **Facebook ads**

What fonts and colors should I use for this “brand” BS?

Choose **three or four colors** and **three fonts**. This way, you won't have to wonder what the font should be for every item. It streamlines things, gives you consistency, and lets you make more fun images to use to help get your book to more readers.

Use this [font pairing lists](#) for suggestions and inspiration: it will tell you what fonts go well together. Pick a complementary **heading** font, a **body text** font, and maybe a **script** font.

This article on [Best Practices of Combining Typefaces](#) is another good resource for learning how to combine fonts.

For **colors**, you can get some ideas for palettes at [Colour Lovers](#), and at [Color Combos](#) (where you can click on a specific color and get palettes that use that color).



When you find a palette you like, you can go into Canva, select *Your brand* on the left navigation bar, and **select three brand colors**. (Note that you can't do this for fonts unless you have a paid subscription to Canva for Work.)

Your first Canva project: a flyer

Months ago, I made a flyer in Canva to promote a reading within a con I was speaking at, and I think that was the variable that really made a difference in attendance.

(The flyer did mention that David J. Peterson would be playing the zither while singing selections from Janet Jackson's music catalog in both Valyrian and Dothraki, but I doubt that had anything to do with attendance.)

Most flyers are horrible—have you noticed? You can barely discern the text, the color is muddy, and the look of it isn't interesting at all, because Lee Pace isn't on it.

But if you use Canva's templates, you'll be golden. Or at least gold-plated.

TIP: Although Canva tries to save changes automatically, I go to *File > Save* after each set of edits. Then, open a new tab on the main Canva page, and look at *All your designs* to make sure that your saved design is on that page. Open the image in a new tab to make sure it shows the current version.

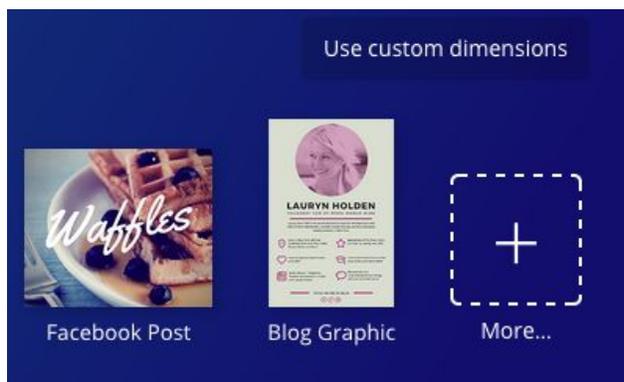
TIP #2: Save your flyers in PDF. PDF standard is fine—there's no noticeable difference in quality between standard and "for print."

OK! Put on your lucky BBQ-master fez and make a flyer!

Flyer #1 - Zombie Neighbor

Step 1: Go to canva.com and create an account.

Step 2: At the top header, where it has *Create a Design*, click on the *More* box on the right. This will show you all the available templates:



Mmm, waffles.

Step 3: Scroll down to the *Marketing Materials* section and choose Flyer.

Step 4: On the left-side gallery, you'll see the Flyer layouts. This is what it looks like at the top of that category:

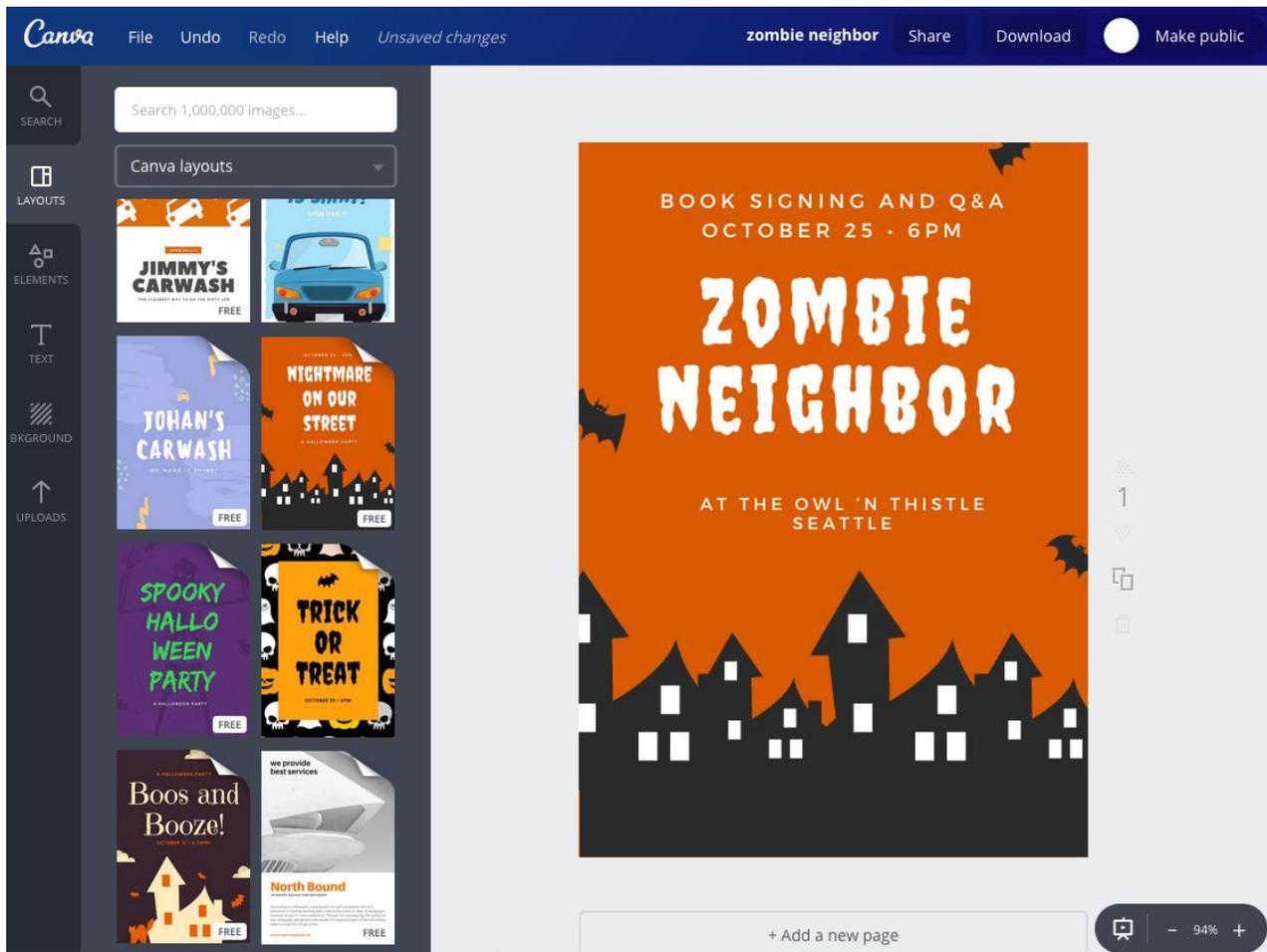


Here's what you're looking for:

- In *Layouts*, you can look for a **stock image** in one of the templates that complements the book you're promoting, like a spider web or clouds. If you find a flyer that has a background that goes with your concept, that's great—use one of those layouts.
- The **layout** should be one that **pops out** at you, catches *your* attention. And check that it says FREE in the corner of the layout, unless you're okay with paying for elements (at 1\$ a pop). Sometimes they're grouped, and sometimes they're mixed. You don't want to work on a project for ten minutes only to realize it's a paid element. We're writers, after all!

TIP: Each template category has different images. If you don't see something you like in one category, try a similar category.

In the **screenshot** below, you'll see the Flyer template **gallery** on the left, and the original flyer, "Nightmare On Our Street," in the gallery. In the **editor** on the right, you'll see my modified version of the flyer:



I kept all the **fonts** the same on this one, and just **changed the text**. I also shifted the placement of some of the text boxes. There's more on that later.

If you hover over a piece of text in the flyer, the **box** will appear (don't worry, it's not a *Hellraiser* kind of box), and you'll see options for the **font** and **font size**.

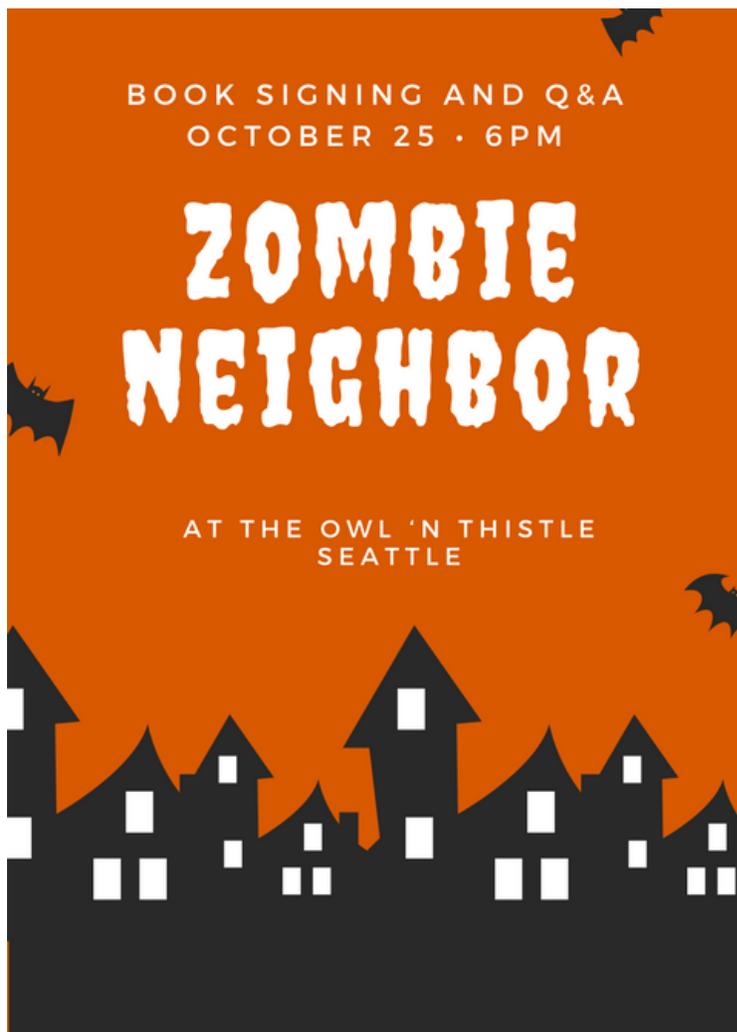
Each box is moveable, and when you click in the box, you can adjust the **line height** and **letter spacing** as well, using *Text Spacing* on the top right.

In the **screenshot** below, you can see how the box appears when selected:



If you click on the **rotate** arrow button under the box, you can use the arrow keys to **shift** the box up or down, left or right.

Here's the finished flyer:



Remember to go to *File* > *Save* to **save your work!**

Flyer #2 - Space Vicar

Let's make a second flyer from one of the available layouts to **promote the launch party** of a book I made up for this tutorial, called *Space Vicar*:



Space Vicar is a light-hearted sci-fi mystery—*Grantchester* in space—and the look of the launch party flyer **fits the tone** enough for our purposes.

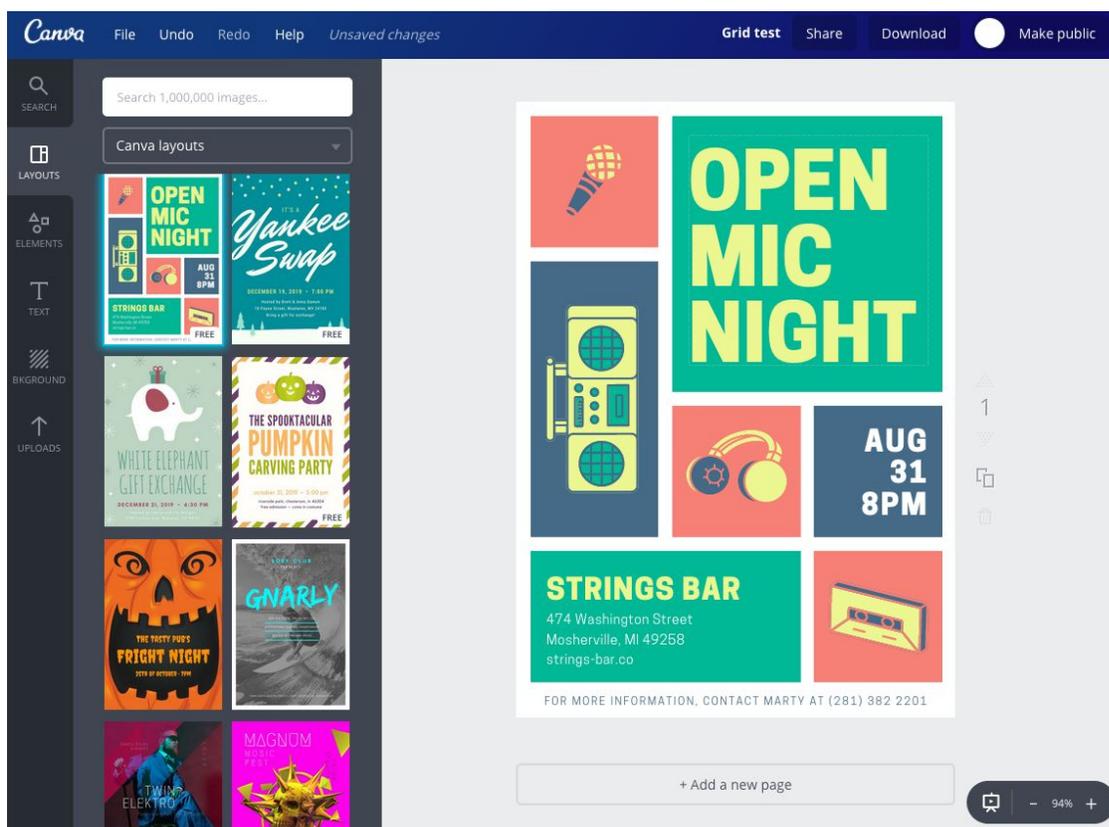
Arguably, the design may seem more targeted to kids, but it could go either way, and the point is to show you can make a flyer layout work for your purposes.

The only elements I **changed** were the text. Easy! And eye-catching. I like orange for flyers.

Flyer #3 - The Station Magician

For our third flyer project, let's modify a **grid layout** to promote a **reading and signing** of *The Station Magician*, a fantasy book I just made up about a cynical, burned-out magician who goes back in time and holes up in an old train station to stop the ascendance of a dark time king.

You can see some of the layouts in the left-side gallery, and our **selected** layout in the editor:

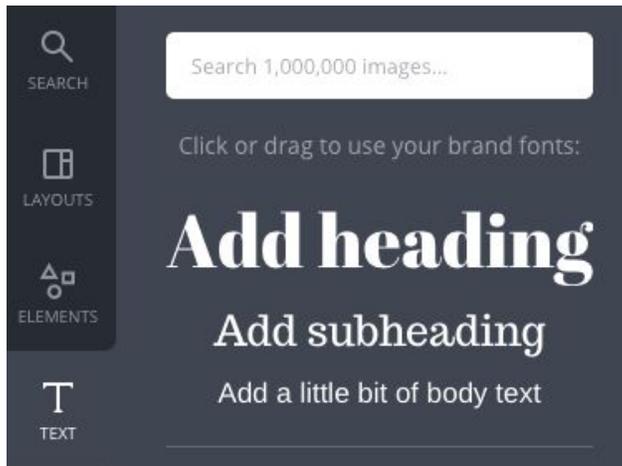


As you can see, the tone of this layout is all wrong for this fantasy book, but it doesn't matter—we're interested in completely **modifying the sections** of the grid.

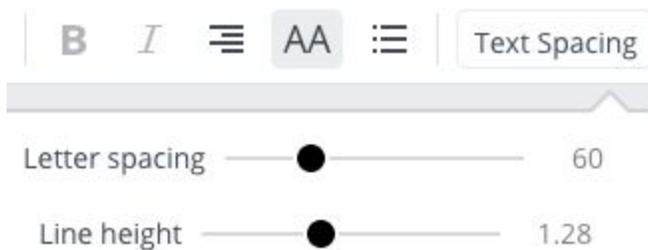
Step 1 - Delete

- Click on each **icon** (like the boom box) and **delete** them one by one, until we have nothing but color. If only we could do this in real life.

- **Delete** the text at the very bottom of the flyer then click outside the frame.
- **Delete** the text “Open Mic Night.” Click out of the frame to delete the box.
- Select *Text* from the left-side navigation bar, and **drag** *Add Heading* to that space.



- In the flyer, resize the heading to 32 and change the **font** to something more conducive to fantasy: **IM Fell English Small Caps**.
- Finally, select the Heading box and go to *Text Spacing* in the toolbar. Adjust the **line height** until the text box fits in the top half of the green section.



Step 2 - Add Headings

- Select *Text* from the left-side navigation bar, and drag *Add Subheading* to just below the new Reading & Signing text.
- Change the *Heading* text to “The Station Magician.” Change the font to **IM Fell**, and the font size to 32.

Here's what the fonts look like:

IM Fell

IM FELL ENGLISH SMALL CAPS

- Adjust the **line height**.

Remember to go to *File* > *Save* to **save your work** :)

Step 4

- At the bottom left, change the **location** text to "Wortcunning Apothecary." Resize the font to 16, and change the font to **IM Fell English Small Caps**.
- Click on the **color** in the toolbar and change the color of the location **text** to black (in Default Palettes).
- In *Text Spacing*, adjust the **line height**, then click on the rotate button and move up the block about four ticks.
- Change the **address** text to "555 Ravenclaw Ave Seattle, WA," resize to 14, change the color to black, and adjust the line height before you move the box until it's well-placed.
- Make the **date and time** IM Fell Small Caps in black, but leave the font at 24.

The flyer as a whole may look hideous for now, since we haven't changed the colors yet, but it's fun to picture a burned-out magician showing up to a book signing to put on a DJ set (though the turntable is missing).

Step 5 - Change the Colors

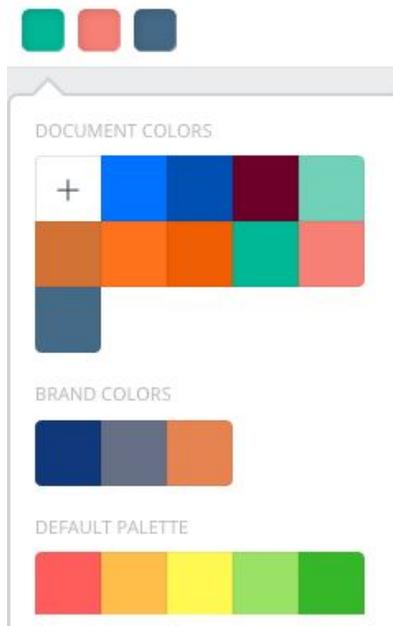
- Just click in a color block, and you'll see all **three document colors** are on the top; here, in green, peach, and slate blue:



- You may need to **move** some boxes/elements out of the way to get enough of a color area to click on.

- In the grid, select the **peach** color and choose the + in Document Colors. In the color wheel, find a dark red. I used #6c0028. When you have the right color, you can **copy** the **Color Code #** at the bottom to use consistently through your graphic.
- Without leaving the color menu, select green. Under *Default Palette*, choose the second-lightest gray. Keep the same blue.

If you click on **one** of the colors in the toolbar shown above, you'll get a drop-down menu. You can either select one of your **brand** colors, a color from the **default palette**, or a color from the **wheel**. To access the wheel, choose the top-left + in *Document Colors*:



Generally, in a grid layout, you can **delete** the images in the grids and then **insert** backgrounds or photos or illustrations from the left side of the page: *Elements > Free Photos*, *Elements > Illustrations*, *Background*, and/or *Text*.

TIP: I've encountered some grid layouts that have stubbornly refused modification. If this happens, just select a different layout, and don't try to force it. It should be pretty **intuitive** to replace default elements.

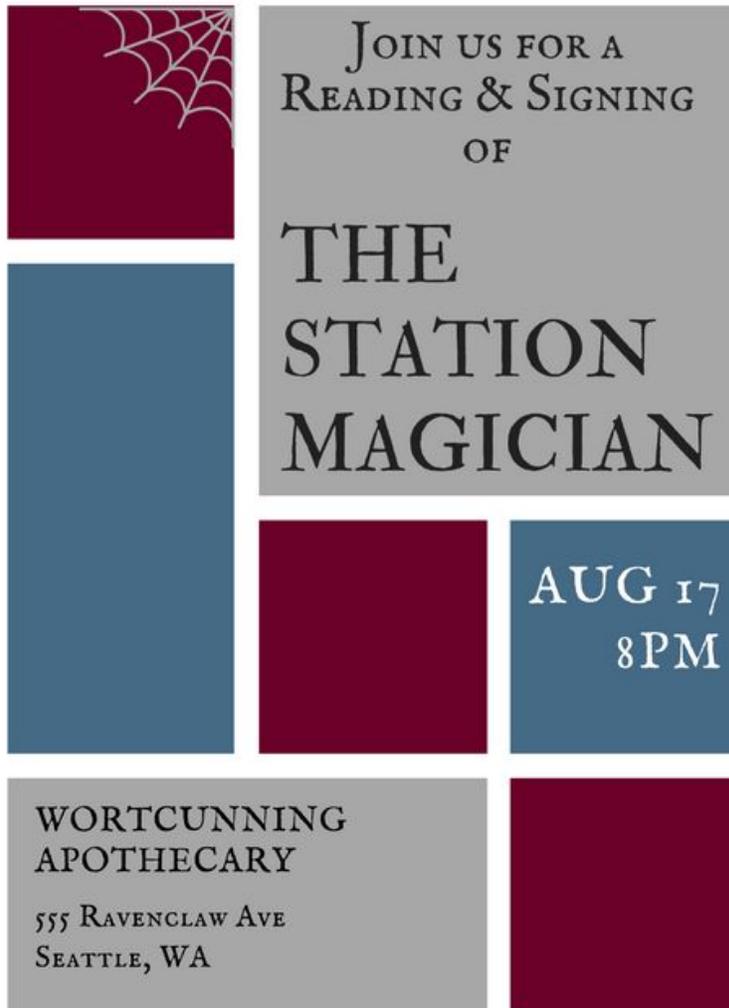
Step 6 - Add Elements

In the screenshot below, in the left-side gallery, you'll see the spider web I found (notice it's free, but mixed with paid elements) after scrolling through *Elements > Illustrations*. On the right, you'll where I temporarily placed it in our flyer:



There are many more **backgrounds** you could use if you were willing to pay \$1 per element, but this is good practice for changing the **elements** on a flyer and modifying a **grid** layout.

And here's our finished flyer:



I was going to show you how to do **transparent overlays**, but the overlays I used with a previous flyer have disappeared. I looked *everywhere*, and they're nowhere to be seen. Canva may be gaslighting me.

On top of that, my flyer with the overlays didn't save correctly, so I made a new version of the same flyer. But I'll show you the first flyer, which has two different **overlays** at 50% transparency over the gray boxes with text, and the long blue section:



Here's a **quick recap** of what we've learned:

- How your **brand image** should have a consistent look across your platform and social media sites—and reflect your personality and writing style.
- How that brand image should consist of **three fonts**—a heading font, a body text font, and a script font—and a **color palette**.
- How to use a **layout** that fits the tone of our book.
- How to modify the **text** in a flyer template, change the line height and text spacing, and move the text elements.

- How to modify a **grid layout** by deleting images, changing the font and colors, and adding elements from the gallery including illustrations, icons, background, etc.

So go to canva.com and start making flyers to promote all those readings and signings you're doing :) **Good on ya!**

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