

# Automate Your Lettering, Save Your Wrists!

NIB & INK FESTIVAL 2026

Sara Linsley

# Why you should listen to me

## Sara Linsley

- she/her
- Manga Letterer since 2012
- OGN Comics Letterer since 2022
- Font Designer since 2019
- Senior Software Engineer, Publishing Specialist at VIZ Media

## Works

- *Dandadan* (lettering and logo)
- *Sweat and Soap*
- *39 Clues Graphic Novel #1: The Maze of Bones*
- *Fushigi Yugi: Byakko Senki*
- *Revolutionary Girl Utena: After the Revolution*
- etc, etc

## Pain

- Lettered full-time for three years, and had to give it up because of shoulder pain :')



# Agenda

Automation Ideology

How to Pick Things to Automate

General Advice

InDesign-Specific Advice

Illustrator-Specific Advice

Questions & Answers

# Automation Ideology

## Time is Money

When you're paid a flat rate, the less time you spend on a project, the better your wage.

## Injury Prevention

Repetitive motions cause Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI).

## Your computer is your assistant

It should be assisting you not slowing you down

## Time is Time

The less time you spend on boring stuff, the more time you have to spend on aspects of lettering that you enjoy!

# How to Pick Things to Automate

## Tasks that feel boring, repetitive, or tedious

- Copying and pasting text from a script

## Tasks that slow you down

- Manually applying font style to every text frame
- Clicking through two menus just to reflect an object

## Tasks that are a pain in corrections

- “The art doesn’t quite go to the bleed. Can you scale all the art up 2%?”
- “Change all -- to em dash”

# General Advice

# Pick the Right Font

"smart quotes"

"straight quotes"

## Swapping Fonts on a book is a huge waste of time

- Make sure the font has all the glyphs you need, like "smart" quotes and the crossbar-l
- If you're having to manually add accents, fix kerning, etc, you need to pick a different font
- Figure out font licensing BEFORE you letter the book

### Desktop & Base Webfont License:

Up to 2 users

Up to 5 users [Add \$139.00]

Up to 10 users [Add \$278.00]

Up to 25 users [Add \$417.00]

Up to 50 users [Add \$695.00]

Website pageviews up to 100K/month [Add \$139.00]

Website pageviews up to 250K/month [Add \$278.00]

Website pageviews up to 500K/month [Add \$417.00]

Meet  
me at the  
caf☐!

# Pick the Right Font

## Comicraft:

- <https://www.comicbookfonts.com/>

## Blambot:

- <https://blambot.com/>
- Some fonts are **free for indie use!**

## My Fonts :)

- <https://sara.pizza/fonts>
- All completely **free** for commercial use

## Fando Fonts

- <https://fandofonts.com/>
- Paid, pay-what-you-wish, and **free** fonts

## Don't make your own font to use as the main dialogue font

- Unless you're very very confident in your type design skills!
- You'll likely be wrestling with it more than you need to.
- Designing a font while meeting your deadline is like building the airplane while flying it

# The Mouse is the Enemy



- Dragging and dropping all day is stressful on your wrist, arm, and shoulder.
- Even “ergonomic” mice still force your dominant hand to do the same small motion thousands of times per day

# The Keyboard is the Way



## Pros:

- A single keypress is easier on your body than move, click, move, click, move, click.
- Stress can be shared equally between dominant and non-dominant hands
- Many common tasks already have keyboard shortcuts assigned to them!
- Pick a keyboard with low resistance for better results!
- For more buttons, you can connect your existing joycons to your computer!

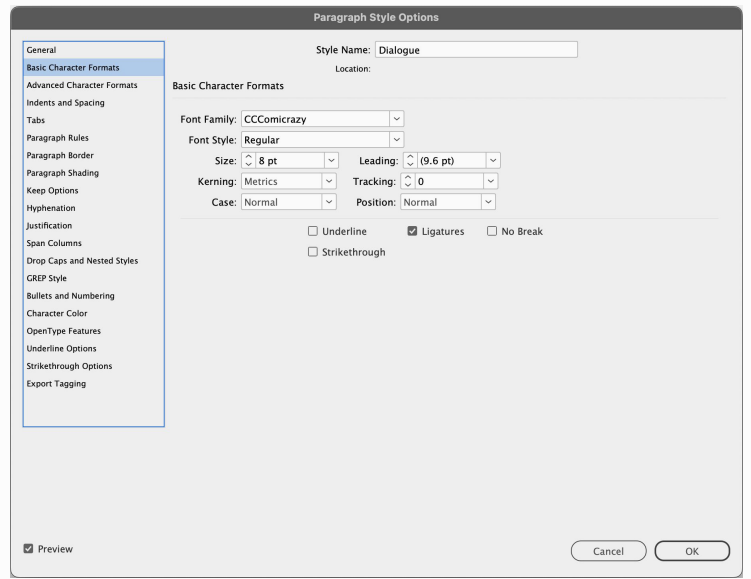
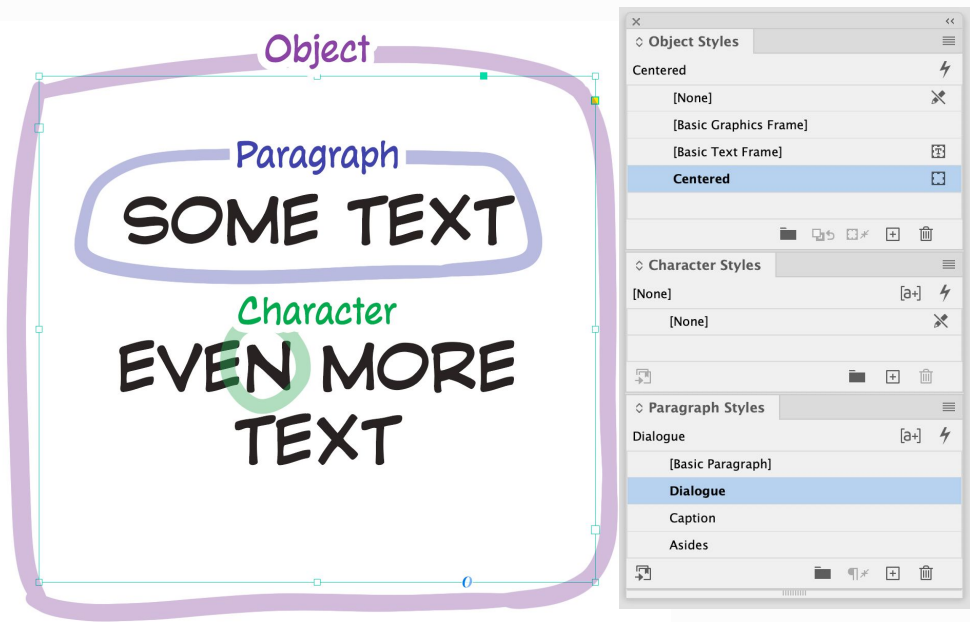
## Cons:

- ??? none probably

# InDesign Advice

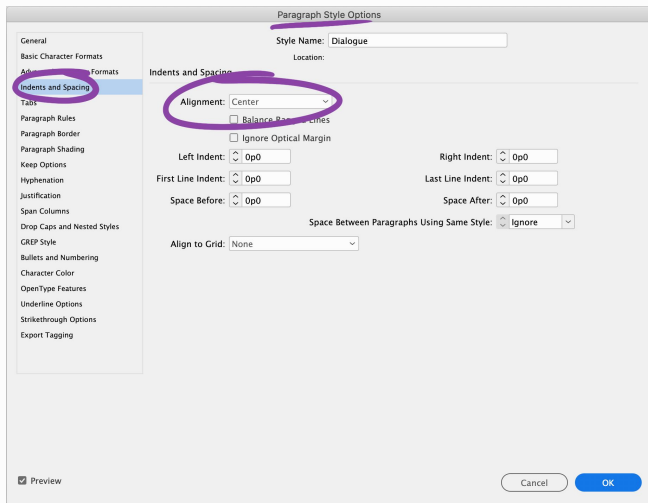


# Use Paragraph Styles

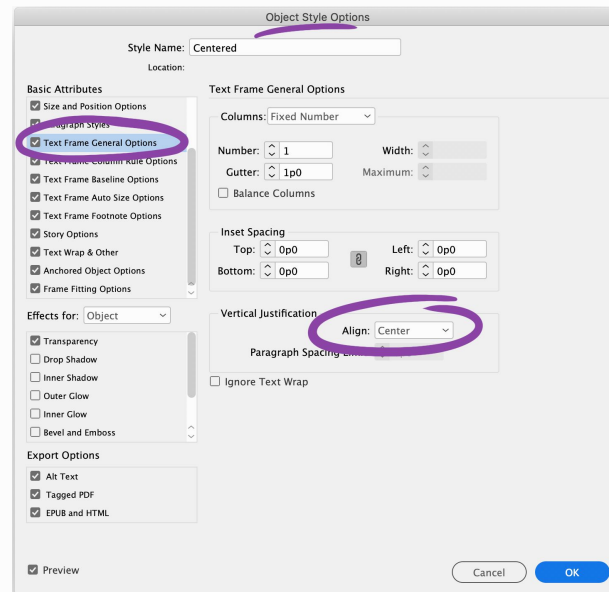


# Use Paragraph Styles

Align text horizontally in Paragraph Styles

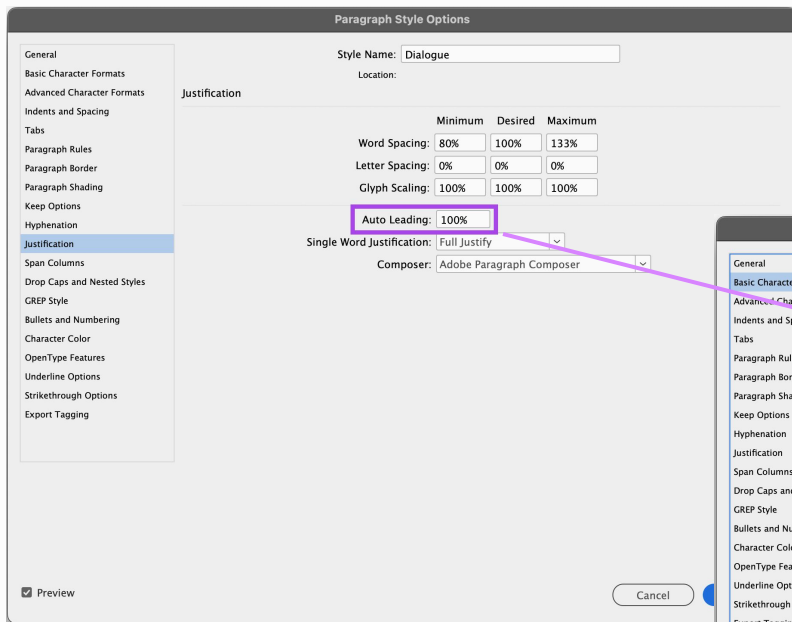


Align text vertically in Object Styles

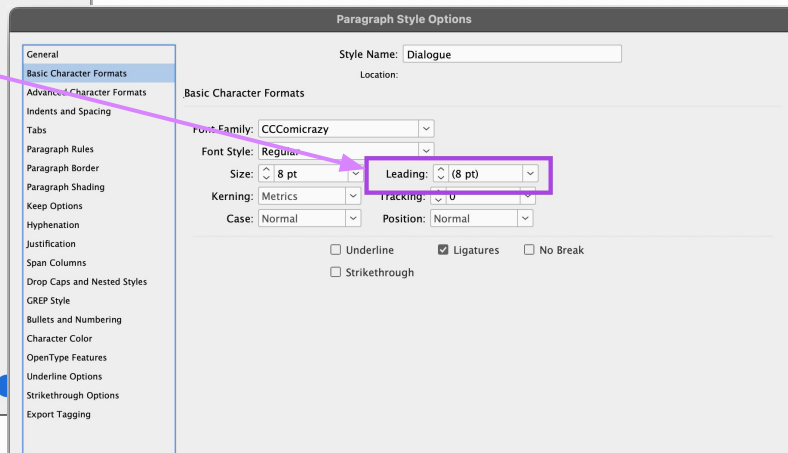


# Use Paragraph Styles

Set the automatic leading amount

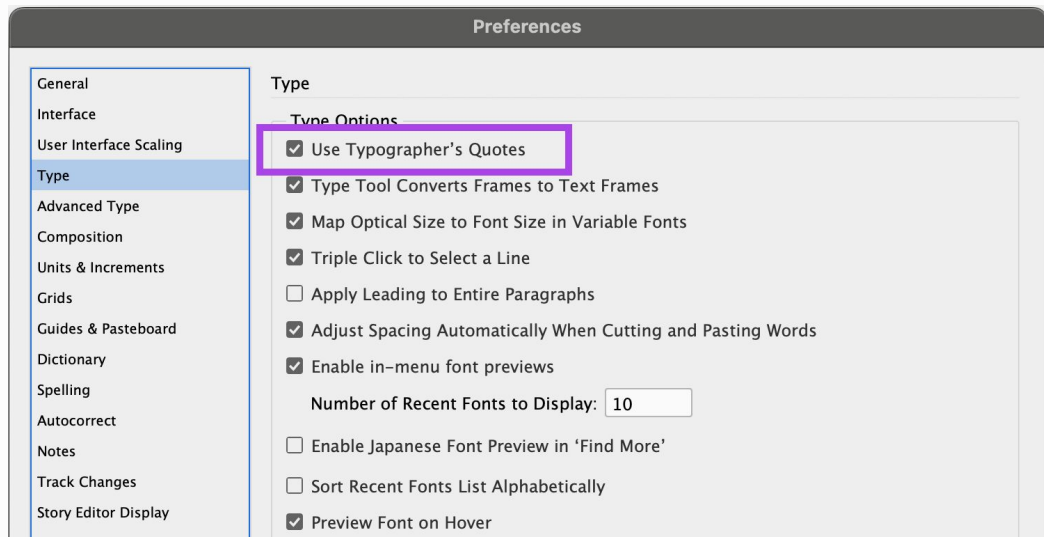


- InDesign will automatically calculate the leading based on the font size for you
- This can be **different for every font**



# Use Typographer's Quotes

- To get “smart quotes,” go to Preferences > Type > **Use Typographer's Quotes**
- This will change all quotes to “smart” quotes that your editor is probably asking for
- This is a document-specific setting, so make sure it's turned on for each new document
- You can set your own default by closing all documents and changing the setting. This make your setting apply for **new** documents only.

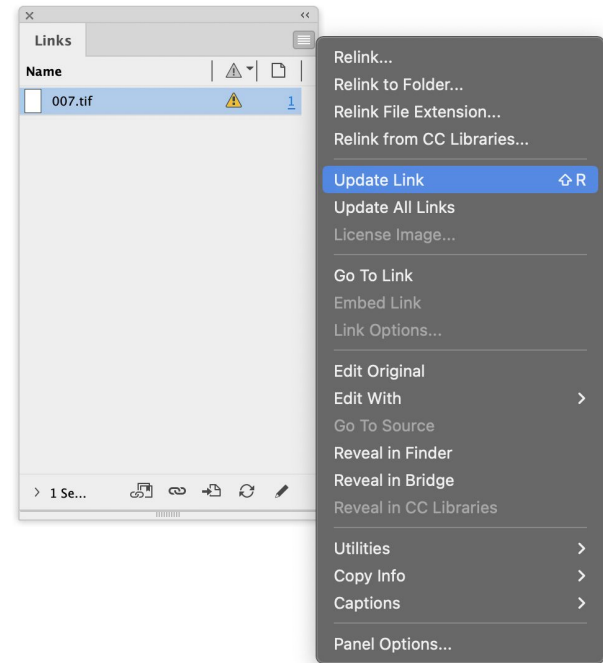
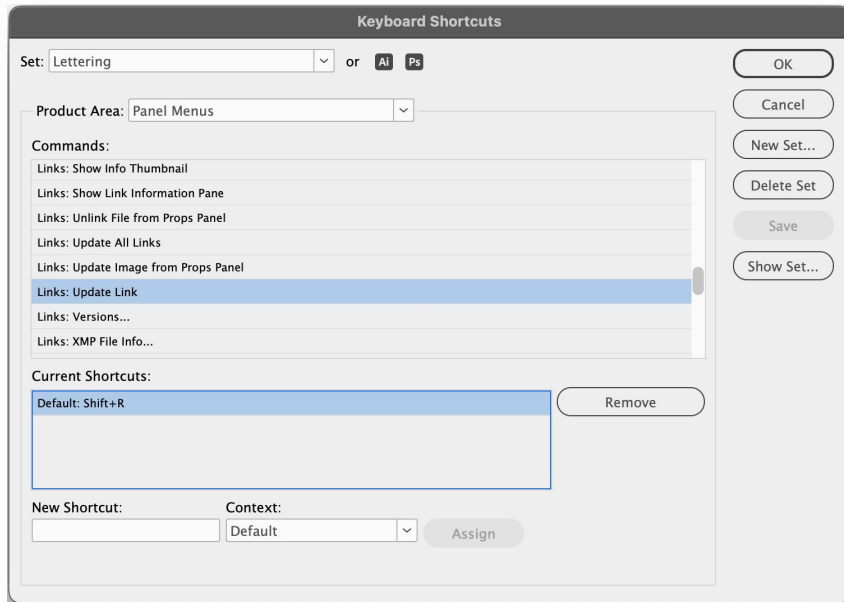


# Use Keyboard Shortcuts

- Go to Edit > **Keyboard Shortcuts...** to see the full list of default shortcuts
- Go through this list here: <https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/using/default-keyboard-shortcuts.html>

- Some great default shortcuts:
  - **Quick Apply:** Cmd/Ctrl + Enter
  - **Go to Page:** Cmd/Ctrl + J
  - **Make text bold:** Shift + cmd/ctrl + B
  - **Select container of selected content:** Esc
  - **Decrease scale by 1%:** cmd/ctrl+,
  - **Increase or decrease point size:** Shift+cmd/ctrl+> or <
  - **Increase or decrease kerning and tracking:** Alt+Left Arrow/Alt+Right Arrow
  - **All caps (on/off):** Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+K

# Set Custom Keyboard Shortcuts

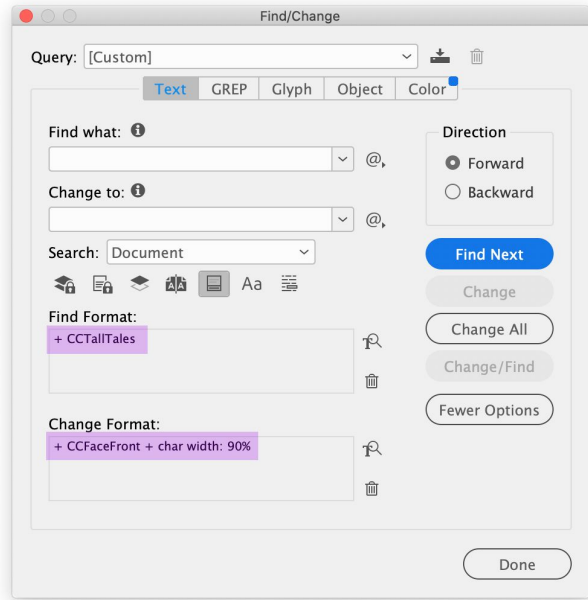


I have Shift + R set to Update Link from the Links panel because I use it constantly.

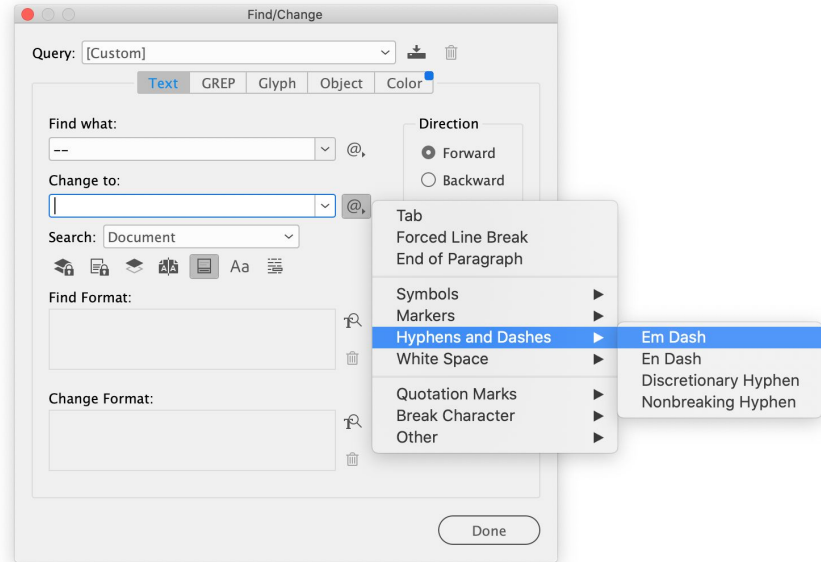
Many panel menu options like this are available to set as keyboard shortcuts

# Use Find/Change

Replace one font with another



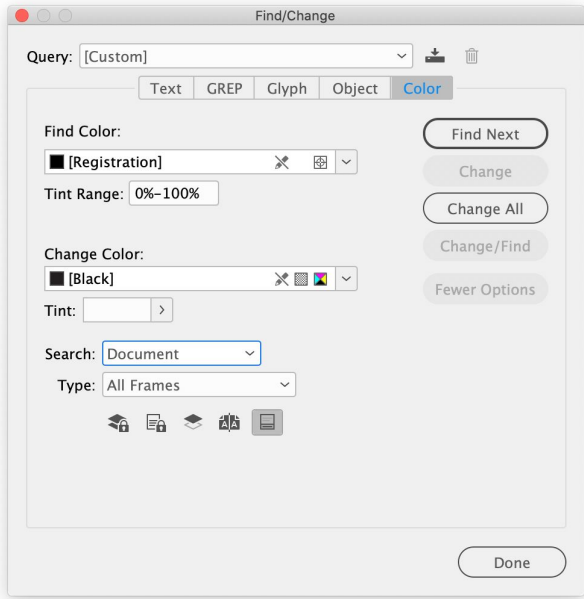
Replace all -- with em dash



**Keyboard Shortcut:** Cmd/Ctrl + F

# Use Find/Change

Replace Registration with Black



**Keyboard Shortcut:** Cmd/Ctrl + F

# Use Find/Change

<https://github.com/saraoswald/lettering-tutorials/wiki/Text-Placement-and-Balancing>

Description	Find what:	Change to:
Replace two hyphens with an em-dash	--	^_
Straight double quote to typographer's quote*	^"	"
Straight single quote to typographer's quote*	^'	'
Convert an ellipsis into three periods on three lines	(?<!.)(~e ...)(?!.)	.\n.\n.
Add a line break after an honorific	(-)((san) (sama))((kun) (chan) (senpai) (sempai))	\$1~b\$2
Make capital l's at the beginning of a word lowercase	l(?:=[\u-])	i
Convert uppercase l's in the middle of a word to lowercase	(l?)(l)(\w)	\$1i\$3
Remove extra whitespace at the end of a text frame*	\s+\$	

**Keyboard Shortcut:** Cmd/Ctrl + F

# Use Scripts

When default features fail, turn to scripts!

InDesign doesn't have recordable Actions like other Adobe applications, so you'll need to do things like:

- [Place text automatically from a text file](#)
- [Resize already-lettered pages](#)
- [Jumble characters randomly](#)
- [Add a stroke to outlined text](#)
- [Resize a text frame using key presses](#)
- [Place and size art in a document based on file names](#)

I wrote a tutorial on how to install scripts here:

<https://github.com/saraoswald/Manga-Scripts#how-to-use-scripts-in-indesign>

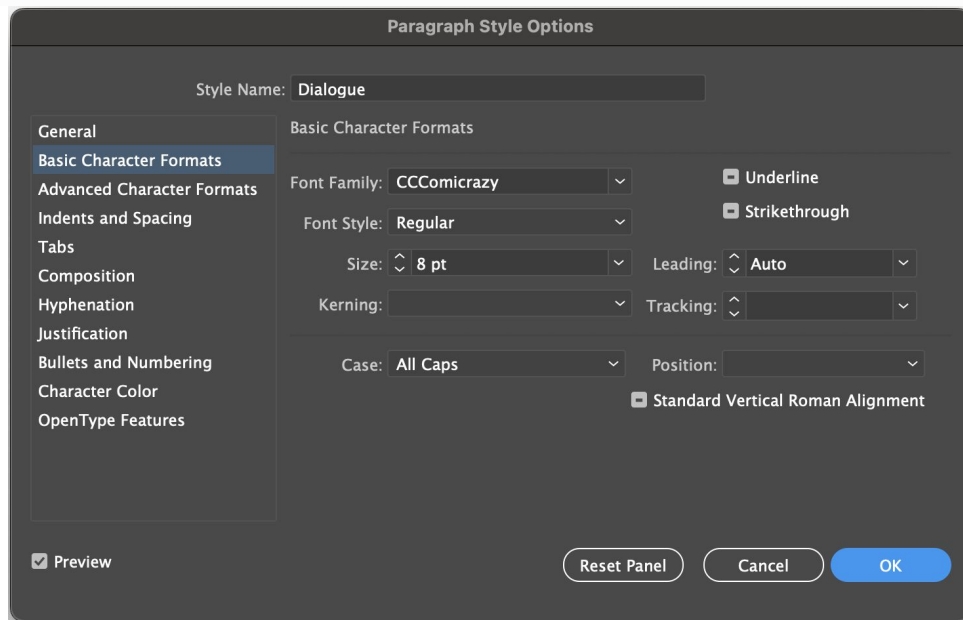
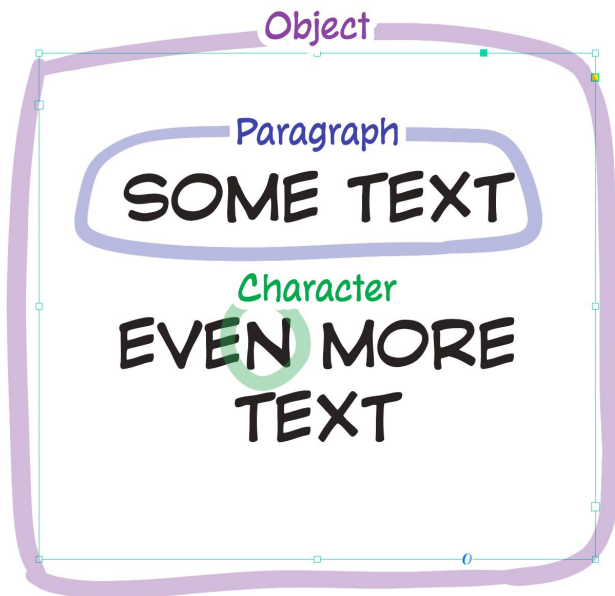
# Demo time!

Files: [sara.pizza/nif2026files](https://sara.pizza/nif2026files)

# Illustrator Advice



# Use Paragraph Styles

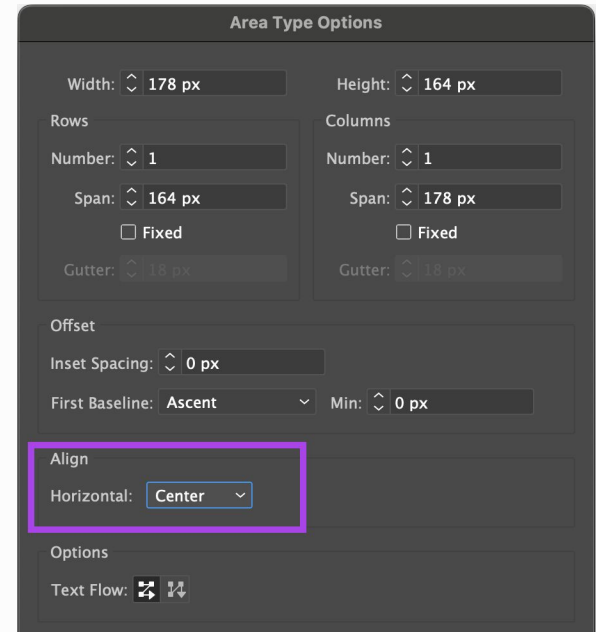
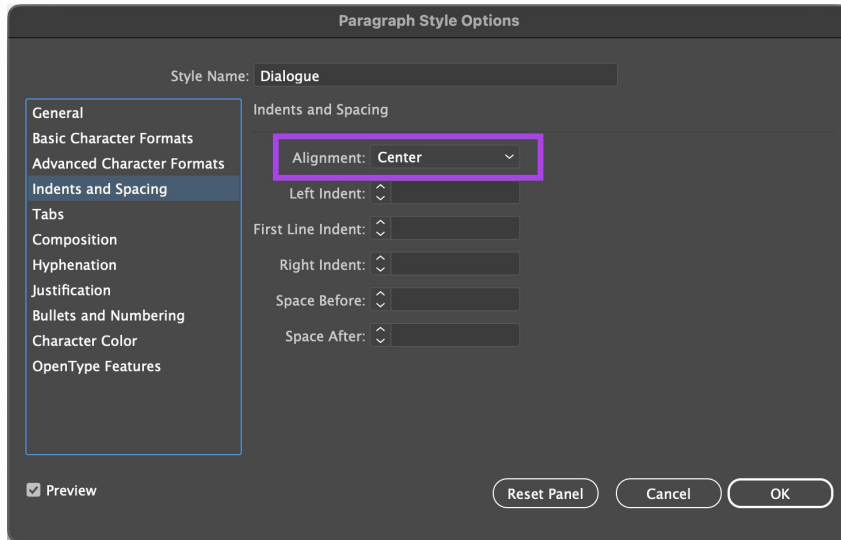


# Use Paragraph Styles



Align text vertically in Type > Area Type Options

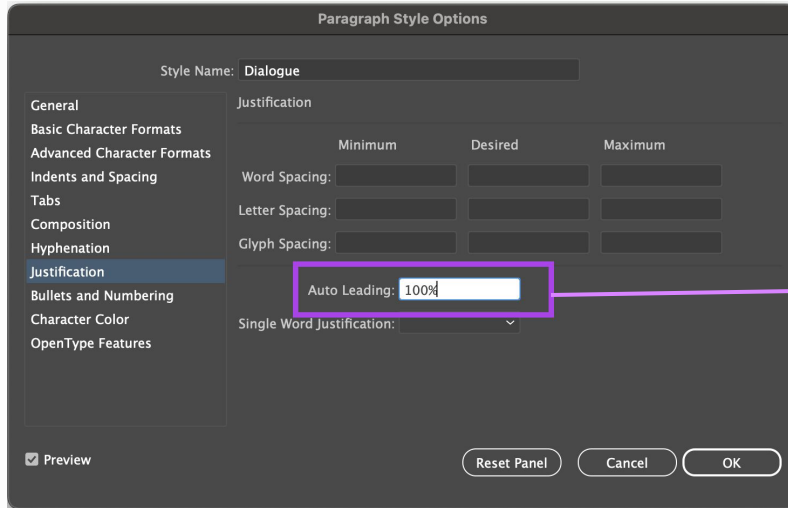
Align text horizontally in Paragraph Styles



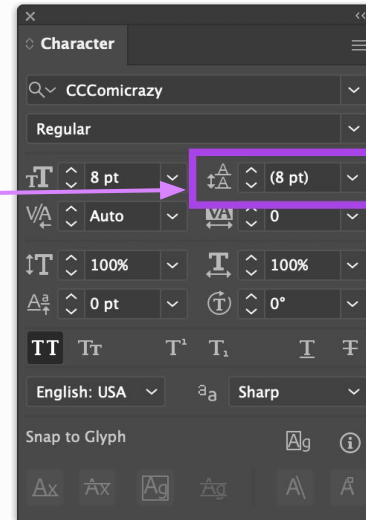
“Horizontal”  
is an error  
\\_ (ツ) \\_ /-

# Use Paragraph Styles

Set the automatic leading amount

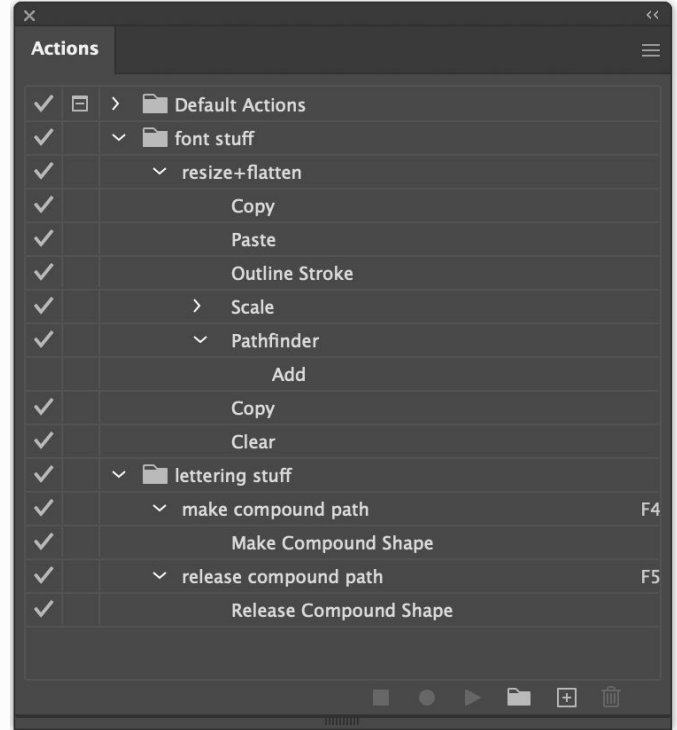


- Illustrator will automatically calculate the leading based on the font size for you
- This can be **different for every font**



# Use Actions

- Record actions and reuse them!
- You can only bind these to function keys :/



# Main Takeaways

**Small adjustments to your workflow add up**

**Mouse is the enemy**

**Automation can be as simple as a keyboard shortcut, and as complex as a script**

# Additional Resources

- (Tutorials, Scripts, Fonts) My website: [sara.pizza](http://sara.pizza)
- (Book) [The Essential Guide to Comic Book Lettering by Nate Piekos](#)
- (Website) [Blambot's Lettering Tips](#)
- (Course) [Manga Lettering with Adobe Suite - Beginner to Professional](#)
- (Scripts) [Paul Starr's InDesign Scripts](#)
- (Scripts) [Madeleine's InDesign Scripts](#)

# Questions?