

InDesign's "Paragraph Rules" Rule

Bending

the rules and creating new ones for paragraphs in InDesign CS2 with Jeff Witchel. When I first Switched from QuarkXPress to InDesign, once I got beyond the obvious advantages of transparency and unmatched compatibility with other Creative Suite applications, I began to notice lots of advantages in virtually every feature. Some were little advantages, others huge. One of the first features to stand out with some major advantages was Paragraph Rules. Quark's Paragraph Rules work great but only within certain parameters. Once you get a little creative, the feature is an error message waiting to happen. Not true with InDesign's Paragraph Rules. You can format them to do the impossible without even a hiccup. So go ahead, get wildly creative, or even a little crazy, and you'll quickly find out why InDesign's "Paragraph Rules" rule.

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In this tutorial, after a quick definition of Paragraph Rules, and discussing some the uses of the feature, I will cover all the basics of rules, as well as some unexpected ways that they can be applied.

STEP 1: What Are the Rules?

What exactly are Paragraph Rules? Basic Paragraph Rules are strokes above and/or below a paragraph that are formatted right into the running text. This means, that unlike drawn strokes, these rules are actually part of the text and will move with a paragraph if copy is added or deleted. From a simple pull quote to complex combination Paragraph Rules and Section Dividers, all of the above are examples of Paragraph Rules.

STEP 2: Getting Into A Dialog About Rules.

Getting Into A Dialog About Rules. Rules are part of paragraph formatting, so just click with your type tool anywhere in the paragraph that you'd like to format. (You could select the whole paragraph but this will sometimes make previewing the rules impossible.) To begin, open your paragraph palette if it's

not already open (Window >Type & Tables > Paragraph), and choose "Paragraph Rules" under the Options Menu of the palette.

STEP 3: Beginning To Set Up Basic Rules

Beginning To Set Up Basic Rules. In the dialog window that opens, check the "Rule On" box at the top to turn on a "Rule Above" and check preview, in the lower left corner of the window, so you can see changes as you make them. "Type" is the Rule's style, which you have a choice of all the styles available in the Stroke palette. For "Color" of the rule, you can choose the color of the text or any swatch color from the Swatches palette. If you choose a swatch, you can also use a tint of that swatch. The "width" of the pictured pull quote rules are the width of the column. The width could also be the same as the text itself, but be aware that if the paragraph is more than one line, the length of the first line (for the Rule Above Width) is probably different than the last line (for the Rule Below Width). The final Width of the Rule can also be Indented from the left and/or right.

STEP 4: A True Measure of "Offset."

A True Measure of "Offset." I intentionally skipped over "offset" in the Paragraph Rules dialog in Step 3, because it requires some special explanation. There are two questions that students always ask me about offset. What is it and where is it measured from? Offset is the distance (A) that a rule is positioned above the first baseline of a paragraph for Rule Above. And the distance (B) below the last baseline of a paragraph for Rule Below. Using a positive offset number for Rule Above will move the rule up away from the first baseline, which makes sense. But a positive offset number for Rule Below will move the rule DOWN away from the baseline of the last line of a paragraph. A positive offset is down because with a Rule Below, higher positive numbers will move the rule further below. It's kind of like "Space After" in paragraph formatting in that, higher numbers move the next paragraph further down.

STEP 5 : An Overview of Rule Below.

An Overview of Rule Below. In Step 3, we set up a Rule Above, but our pull quote also needs a Rule Below. Press on the Rule Above button to reveal Rule Below and follow the same steps that you used for Rule Above. Because the Rule Below our pull quote is exactly the same as the Rule Above, all of the settings will be exactly the same with the exception of, you guessed – "offset." Because both Rule Above and Rule Below are offset from the baseline of the type, to make the rules equidistant from the type, the Rule Above has to be a much higher number. It has to travel the entire height of the type before its above the type. Compare distances A and B in Step 4 and this should be totally clear.

When you're entirely happy with the offsets and all other specifications, click OK to apply.

NOTE: A major advantage in Quark is that you can see the settings for Rule Above and Rule Below at the same time, which makes it easier to duplicate the specifications.

STEP 6 : Taking Rules Where They've Never Been Before.

Taking Rules Where They've Never Been Before. Now that we're through the basics of Paragraph Rules, let's get totally wild and create a look that was not possible before InDesign's Rules existed. At first glance, the sample above seems to be an impossibility in that it has FOUR Paragraph Rules. Two rules that appear above the paragraph (the red square with a thinner Thick-Thin-Thick black Rule), and duplicates of these rules below the paragraph.

To figure out how this was put together, let's dissect it one rule at a time. We'll start with the two rules below the paragraph. The "Thick-Thin-Thick" black rule is not a "Rule Below" at all. It's a "Rule Above" with a negative offset of -.32 inches from the baseline of the first line of the paragraph. This 3 point black rule is also indented .5 inches from the width of the column on both the left and the right. Try these specs in Quark. The only thing you'll get is an annoying error message.

STEP 7 : Is the Mysterious Red Square Playing By the Rules?

Is the Mysterious Red Square Playing By the Rules? Yes! It's the "REAL" Rule Below for the paragraph. Measuring 10 points in weight and indented 1.1 inches from both the left and right sides of the column, it looks more like a square than a rule. This Rule Below has been offset from the last baseline of the paragraph .0625 inches to line up nicely with the 3 point "Thick-Thin-Thick" black rule from Step 6.

STEP 8 : What About the Two Remaining "Rules Above?"

Let's just say that things are NOT always what they seem. There's a little slight of hand involved here. Or maybe I should call it slight of formatting. The red square rule and the "Thick-Thin-Thick" black rule above our paragraph have nothing to do with this paragraph at all. They are a Rule Above and a Rule Below for the previous paragraph with identical specifications to the originally

discussed rules, but they've been drastically offset from the paragraph above.

STEP 9 : Rules That Divide.

The section divider above is actually a simple Rule Below. Start with 24 point bold type, and apply a "Paper" (white) swatch. Go to the Options flyout menu of your Paragraph palette and choose Paragraph Rules. Turn on a Rule Below. Make it a 30 point rule using a dark color to the width of the column. And now the trick - use a negative offset for the rule that positions it under the white type. I offset the rule .32 inches.

STEP 10 : One Last, Very Important Rule.

This is my own personal rule about creating Paragraph Rules or any other kind of formatting. It takes time to format text just the way you like it, especially rules. So every time you set up new formatting for a paragraph, save it as a Paragraph Style. There's nothing worse than spending a lot of time formatting and then having to do it again from scratch.

To set up a Paragraph Style, click in your paragraph, and go to the Options flyout menu of the Paragraph Styles palette and select New Paragraph Style. Name the style and click OK. That's easy and more than worth the few seconds it takes. Because the next time you need to format a "List Separator" Paragraph Rule, it's just a click away.

Jeff Witchel is an Adobe Certified Instructor for Adobe InDesign CS2 and Adobe Illustrator CS2 with training clients in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. He just completed his first DVD training project with Magnet Media in New York – "Inside Adobe Illustrator CS2" and another, "Inside Adobe InDesign CS2," will be released in July. Jeff also is a regular on the Layers Forum, known to many as "AdobeAce."

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