

# Zine Design — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a finished, sellable zine. You will lock a format and page count, build an imposition map and a hand-folded dummy, plan editorial pacing on a flat-plan, prep a press-ready DIY print file, bind a clean edition, and price and distribute it through Etsy, distros and zine fests. Work one section per module, fill the worksheets with your own project details, and use the templates to plan pages, cost the edition and track sales.

## Formats, Folds and Page-Count Maths

Decide what you are making and prove the pages will land in order before you design anything.

### Worksheet: Zine concept and format brief

Define the zine in one place. These decisions drive every later choice, so be specific and commit before laying out a single page.

Working title

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One-sentence premise (what it is about)

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Format (8-page one-sheet / A5 saddle-stitch / accordion / other)

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Trim size (e.g. A5 148x210 mm or half-Letter 5.5x8.5 in)

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Target page count (multiple of 4)

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Black-and-white or colour

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Intended run size (number of copies)

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Who it is for (audience in one line)

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Where it will sell (Etsy / distro / fest / all)

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### Exercise: Fold a numbered dummy

Take blank sheets, fold and nest them exactly as your final zine, then number every page by hand in reader order, 1 through N. Unfold it: this is your personal imposition map. Keep it on your desk for the whole project.

- On the outermost sheet, which two page numbers sit on each side?

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- Which two pages meet as the uninterrupted centre spread?

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- Did any page land somewhere you did not expect, and why?
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- Does your content plan respect the four-page rule, or do you need to cut or add pages?
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### Checklist: Format and maths locked

- Format and trim size chosen and written down
- Page count is a multiple of four
- Surplus pages assigned (title, contents, colophon, blank, bonus)
- Cover counted within the page count (front, inside-front, inside-back, back)
- Hand-folded numbered dummy made and kept
- Imposition pairing (N&1, 2&N-1, ...) written out for this page count

## Editorial Layout and Pacing

Build a grid that survives binding and design the reading rhythm spread by spread.

### Worksheet: Grid and margin setup

Record the grid you will set in your master pages. Make the inner (gutter) margin the largest so text near the spine is not lost in the fold.

Number of columns (1 or 2 for A5)

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Outer margin (mm)

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Top margin (mm)

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Bottom margin (mm, slightly larger)

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Inner/gutter margin (mm, largest)

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Safe zone from trim for critical content (mm)

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Body type family and size

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Folio (page number) position

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### Exercise: Pacing pass on the flat-plan

Lay out every page as a small numbered rectangle and sketch a thumbnail of each. Then flip through it as a quick storyboard, not a read, and fix the rhythm.

- Do you have three or more text-heavy spreads in a row with no visual rest?
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- What is your single strongest image, and is it on the centre spread?
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- Where is the reveal that the page turn can hide?
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- Does the back cover do real work, or is it leftover white space?
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## Worksheet: Typography proof check

Export one representative interior page, print it on the exact machine and paper you will use, and assess it at arm's length.

Body typeface and point size

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Line spacing (% of type size)

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Characters per line (aim 45-75)

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Display/headline typeface

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Legible at arm's length on real stock? (yes/no + notes)

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Any strokes clogging or thin weights vanishing? (notes)

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Changes to make before final

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### Checklist: Layout ready

- Grid set in master pages with mirrored margins across the gutter
- No body text runs across the centre gutter of any spread
- Folios placed consistently and off any full-bleed images
- Spreads designed as facing pairs, not isolated pages
- Pacing alternates density and builds to the centre
- Type proofed in print on the real machine and paper

## The Photocopy Aesthetic and Print Prep

Build the high-contrast lo-fi look on purpose, then ship a clean, proofed print file.

### Exercise: Convert one image three ways

Take a single photo and produce three versions: a Threshold black-and-white, a coarse halftone (around 45-65 lpi), and a finer halftone (around 85 lpi). Print all three on your target machine and compare.

- Which conversion reads best for your subject at the zine's trim size?
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- Did the fine halftone clog or hold up on your machine?
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- What contrast (Levels/Curves) adjustment did the image need first?
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- What resolution did you export the bitmap art at, and were the edges crisp?
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## Worksheet: Press-ready file spec

Lock the technical setup for your export. Confirm each value against your chosen printer's preferred spec before exporting.

Document size (single-page trim)

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Bleed on all sides (mm, 3 if ink runs to edge)

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Safe margin from trim (mm)

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Colour mode (greyscale / pure black / CMYK)

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Black type set as true black? (yes/no)

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Line art / bitmap resolution (dpi)

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Halftone image resolution (dpi)

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Output destination (home laser / copy shop / online printer)

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Printer's preferred file format and any required marks

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### Checklist: Print prep complete

- Document built at single-page trim size, not folded-sheet size
- 3 mm bleed added wherever ink touches the edge
- Critical content kept 5 mm inside the trim
- Texture/grit on separate named layers above clean artwork
- PDF exported with embedded fonts, correct resolution and crop marks
- One complete copy printed, imposed, folded, stapled and read end to end
- Page order checked against the dummy and centre spread aligned

## Binding, Pricing and Selling Your Zine

Assemble a clean edition, cost and price it honestly, and get it to readers.

### Checklist: Binding station setup

- Long-arm or saddle stapler ready (reaches the spine), or needle and waxed thread for pamphlet stitch
- Bone folder for crisp creases
- Steel ruler and craft knife or guillotine for trimming
- Sheets stacked in imposed order, all facing the same way
- Stations set up: fold, staple, trim, quality-check
- Two staples spaced evenly down the spine (about 1/4 and 3/4)
- Fore-edge trimmed where inner pages creep on thicker copies

### Worksheet: Cost-per-copy and pricing

Work out your real numbers. Fill the material and fee figures, then use the pricing template to total them; do not guess a cover price before the costs are in.

Paper cost per copy

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Printing/toner cost per copy

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Binding cost per copy (staples or thread + cover stock)

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Run size

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Your hourly value and total production hours

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Etsy/platform fees expected

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Table/event fee (if tabling)

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Distro wholesale rate you will offer (% of cover)

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Shipping and packaging per order

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Target cover price

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### Exercise: Plan your three distribution channels

Set up at least one online listing, identify candidate distros, and target a fest. Make each channel concrete with names, dates and actions.

- Which online shop will you use, and what three photos will you list (cover, interior spread, scale shot)?
  - Which two or three distros fit your subject, and what wholesale offer will you send?
  - Which zine fest will you apply to, and when does tabling open?
  - How will you capture a mailing list so the next zine has a ready audience?
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### Checklist: Ready to sell

- Online listing live with clear photos including a scale shot
- Description states page count, size, print method, edition size and content
- Cover price covers materials, time, fees and distro margin
- Distro samples and wholesale offers sent
- Fest application submitted; table kit planned (float, card reader, price card, free mini-zine)
- Mailing-list sign-up and shop QR code prepared

## Your Action Plan

1. Lock format, trim size and page count, then fold a numbered dummy to confirm imposition.
2. Draw a full flat-plan and run a pacing pass, placing your best image on the centre spread.
3. Set up a grid with the largest margin on the gutter and proof your type in print on the real machine.
4. Convert images for the photocopy look with Threshold or halftone and keep grit on separate layers.
5. Build a press-ready file at single-page trim with 3 mm bleed and correct resolution, matched to your printer's spec.
6. Print, impose, fold, staple and read one complete proof copy before approving the run.
7. Bind the full edition in batched stations and quality-check every copy.
8. Calculate cost per copy and set a cover price that includes time, fees and distro margin.
9. List the zine online with strong photos and a complete description.
10. Approach distros, apply to a zine fest, and start a mailing list so the next edition has an audience.









