

A Beginner's Guide to Using Canva



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I. What is Canva?

Canva is a visual software program that aims to maximize usability towards an audience with minimal design experience. Made in 2013, the Australian company was founded by Cameron Adams, Melanie Perkins, and Cliff Obrecht with the hopes of creating a program with all kinds of accessible design. Gaining \$10 million in the first year of creation, Canva has become a household staple for beginner designers.¹

The program does not have the advanced features that more specialized programs may have to offer, which is why Canva prioritizes its user-friendly software. Because of this, Canva is more suited for simpler projects, which is perfect for beginner designers, or professionals who have simpler design projects.

If you are unfamiliar with Canva's features, then this tutorial is for you. The tutorial aims to help you not only navigate the website comfortably but also use Canva to its highest potential. Each chapter focuses on different aspects of Canva, so if you are struggling with one thing on the site, it is unnecessary to read the entire document.

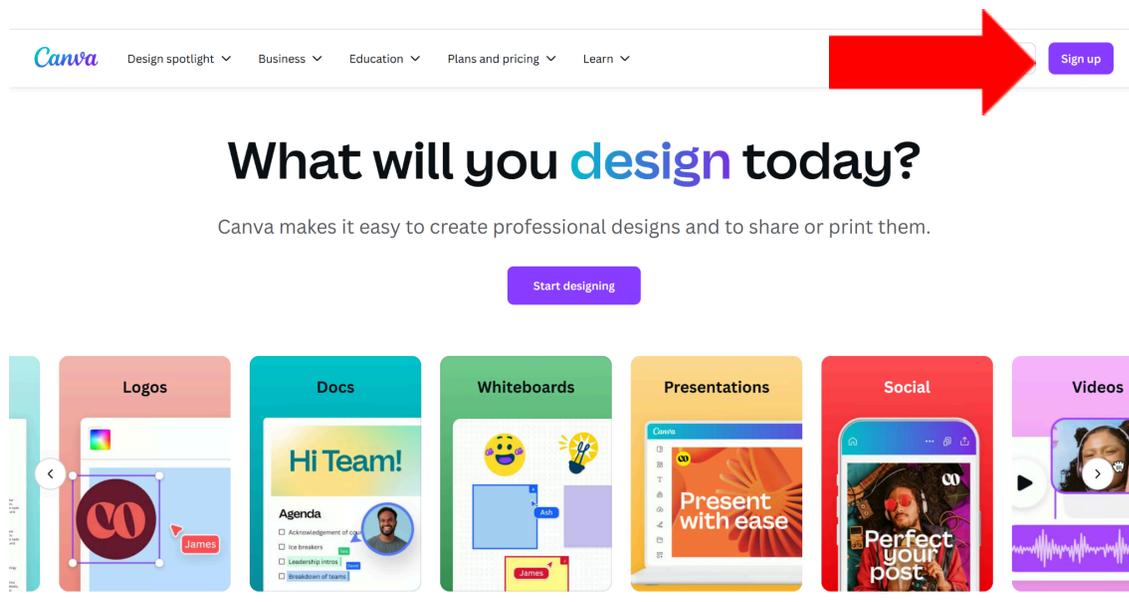
¹ "About Canva." *Canva*, www.canva.com/about/.

II. Getting Started

In order to start creating in Canva, you need to make an account. This chapter shows you how to create an account and navigate the home page when you log onto Canva.

1. Logging in

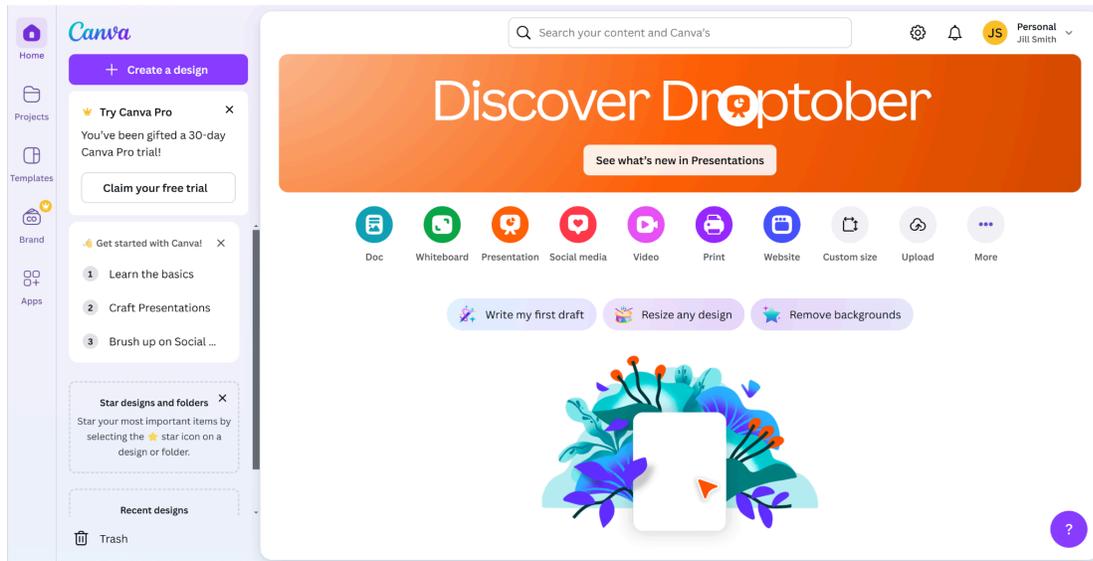
1. Type <https://canva.com> in any search engine.
2. Click the purple “Sign Up” button on the top right of your screen.



3. Create an account using your email. You will need to include your first name, last name, and a working email.

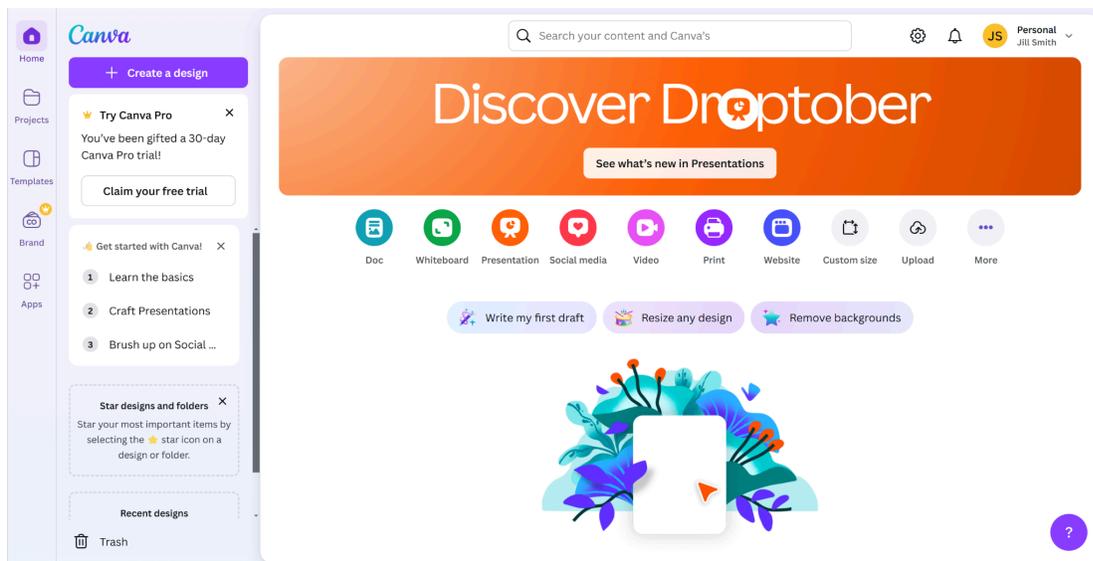
2. Navigating the homepage

After logging into Canva, you will find yourself on the Homepage:



The homepage consists of ways to create a document, access layouts, and recent designs. Here is a quick description of the options available:

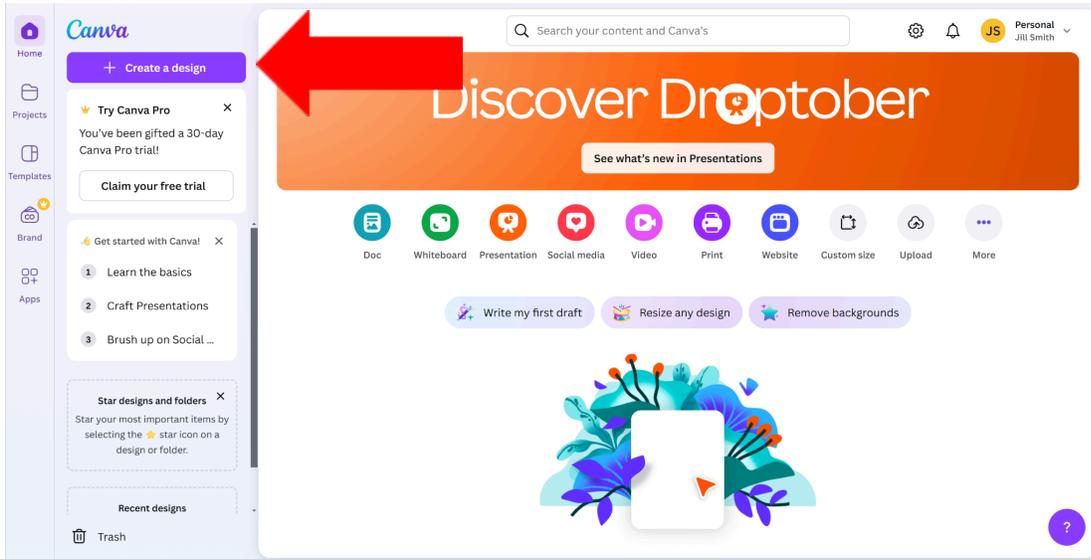
Create a Design: This button on the left side of the screen allows you to create a new design. More information about creating a design will be provided later in the chapter.



Recent Designs: Located on both the middle and left of the screen, these areas allow you to access designs that have already been created by you.

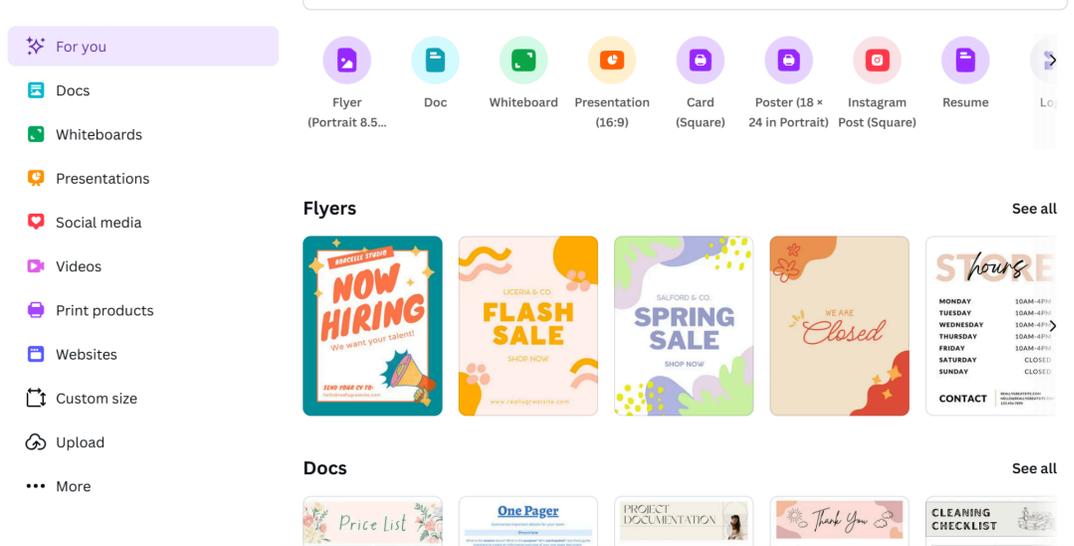
3. Creating a new design

Click the purple “Create a Design” button on the top left of your screen.



The screen will then provide different layouts which can be chosen depending on the need of the document. These layouts are located on the left of your screen. Chapter III will go into detail about the layouts that Canva offers.

Create a design



After selecting a layout or custom-size document, you can now begin designing your document.

Uploading a Document

You can also upload documents and images that have already been designed and downloaded onto your computer. Simply click the “Upload” button on the left of your screen after you click the “Create a Design” button.

4. Choosing a template

When choosing the kind of document you want to design, you can create a custom size of your document, or choose a layout. Not only are there pre-made sizes, but there are pre-designed layouts for all templates as well. Below are a few descriptions of the kinds of layouts Canva offers.

Docs

Doc layouts will not have a set vertical border size. The Docs layout is for longer pieces of writing, including essays, reports, notes, and research papers. This is for writing-centered documents rather than design-centered ones.

Create a design

What would you like to create?

For you

Docs

Whiteboards

Presentations

Social media

Videos

Print products

Websites

Custom size

Upload

More



Doc

Docs

See all



Whiteboards

Whiteboard layouts are primarily used for brainstorming and note-taking. The format is completely freeform, with no set vertical or horizontal size.

Create a design

- For you
- Docs
- Whiteboards**
- Presentations
- Social media
- Videos
- Print products
- Websites
- Custom size
- Upload
- More

- Whiteboard
- Brainstorm Whiteboard
- Flowchart Whiteboard
- Team Whiteboard
- Planning Whiteboard

Whiteboard See all

- Storyboard
- Mood Board
- Flowchart

Brainstorm Whiteboards See all

- Spider Diagram
- Mind Map
- Idea Board

Presentations

Presentation layouts are in a landscape size, made for class or professional presentations. Most of the layouts are 16x9 inches in order to comfortably fit a computer screen.

The screenshot shows the 'Create a design' interface in Google Slides. On the left is a vertical sidebar with navigation options: 'For you', 'Docs', 'Whiteboards', 'Presentations' (highlighted in purple), 'Social media', 'Videos', 'Print products', 'Websites', 'Custom size', 'Upload', and 'More'. At the top right is a search bar with the placeholder text 'What would you like to create?'. Below the search bar are five circular icons representing different presentation types: 'Presentation (16:9)', 'Presentation (Mobile-First)', 'Presentation (4:3)', 'Brainstorm Presentatio...', and 'Game Presentatio...'. Below these are two main sections of design templates. The first section is titled 'Presentations' and features three templates: 'BUSINESS PROJECT' with a light blue background and a grid pattern, 'Pitch Deck' with a light beige background and the text 'NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY', and 'Daily Agenda' with a colorful, patterned background. The second section is titled 'Brainstorm Presentations' and features three templates: 'Digital BRAINSTORM' with a light blue background and a starburst graphic, 'WORD LIST GAME' with a vibrant, colorful background and the text 'Do you know a lot of words? How in your head of glory?', and 'Brainstorm SESSION' with a light beige background and a smiley face icon. Each section has a 'See all' link to the right.

Presenting

You can add notes to your document by clicking the “Notes” button on the bottom left of your screen. When presenting, these notes can only be shown to you. For practicing, you can also time yourself by clicking the “Timer” button on the bottom left of your screen.

Social Media

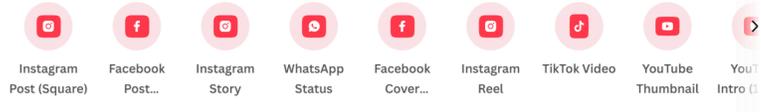
This set of layouts has sizes for each social media platform, including Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. These layouts can be used for social media management or marketing.

Create a design

- For you
- Docs
- Whiteboards
- Presentations
- Social media**
- Videos
- Print products
- Websites
- Custom size
- Upload
- More

What would you like to create?

Popular Instagram Facebook LinkedIn



Instagram Posts

See all



Facebook Posts

See all



Websites

Website layouts are used to create various websites. The layouts are primarily the size of a 14-inch computer in order to fit the size of a desktop. These layouts can be used for projects, portfolios, or events.

Create a design

- For you
- Docs
- Whiteboards
- Presentations
- Social media
- Videos
- Print products
- Websites**
- Custom size
- Upload
- More

What would you like to create?



Websites

See all



Business Websites

See all

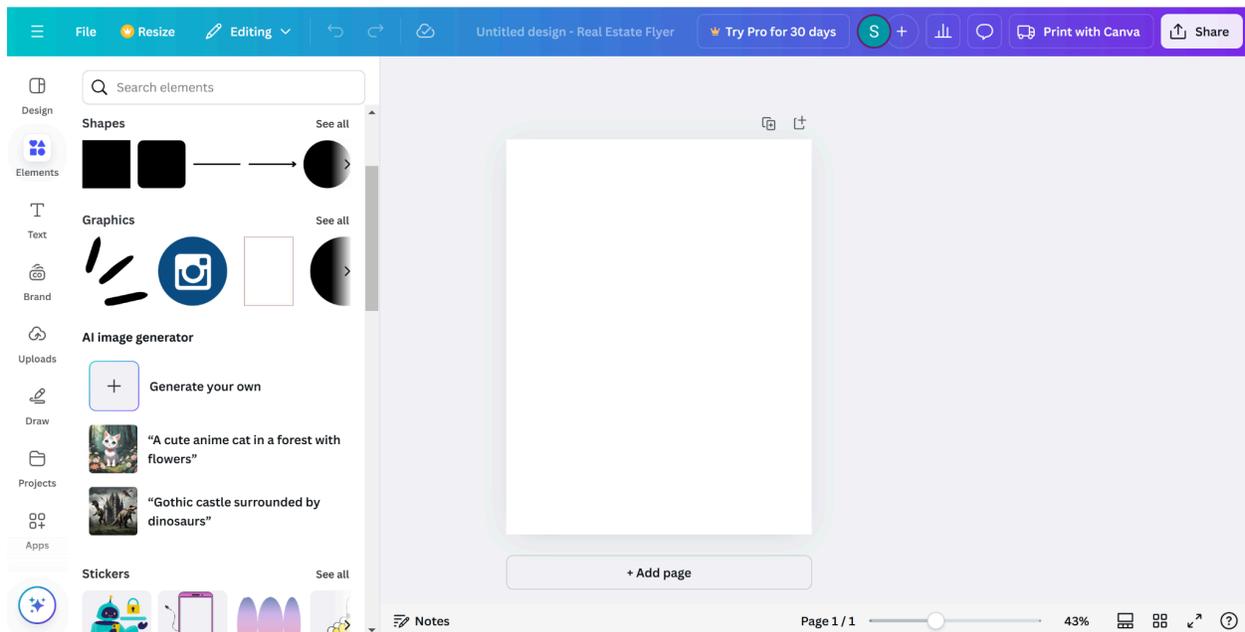


III. Designing a document

Now that you have made an account and created a document, you will now be able to design your document. This chapter shows you how to use the tools you have at your disposal when designing a document. After choosing a template, you can now navigate the toolbar on the left side of your screen. This chapter will show you what tools there are, and how you can use them.

1. Elements

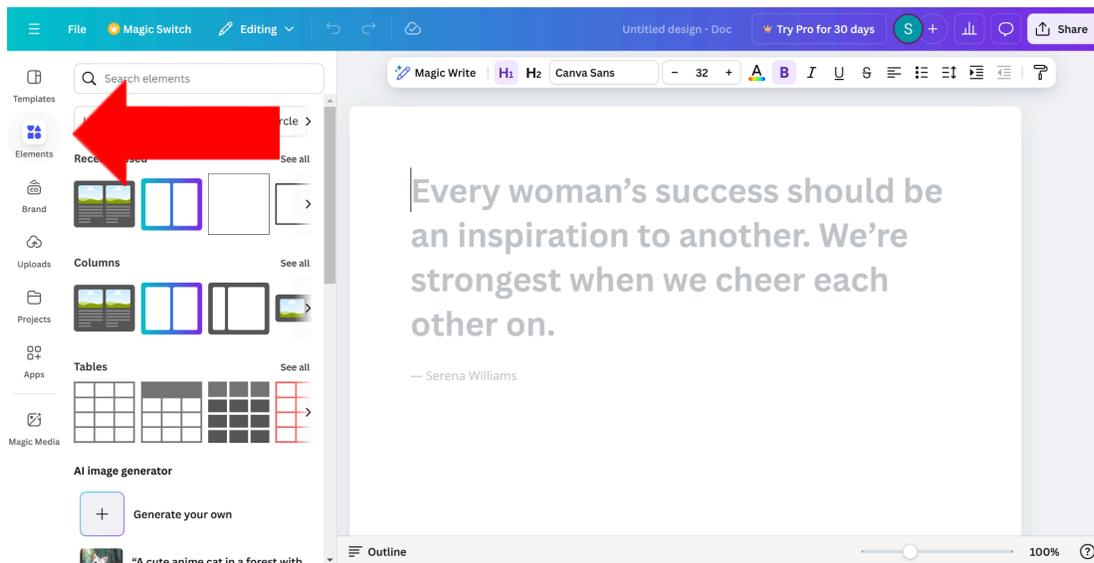
When clicking the “Elements” button on your toolbar, you can access the image-centered design elements that you can include in your document.



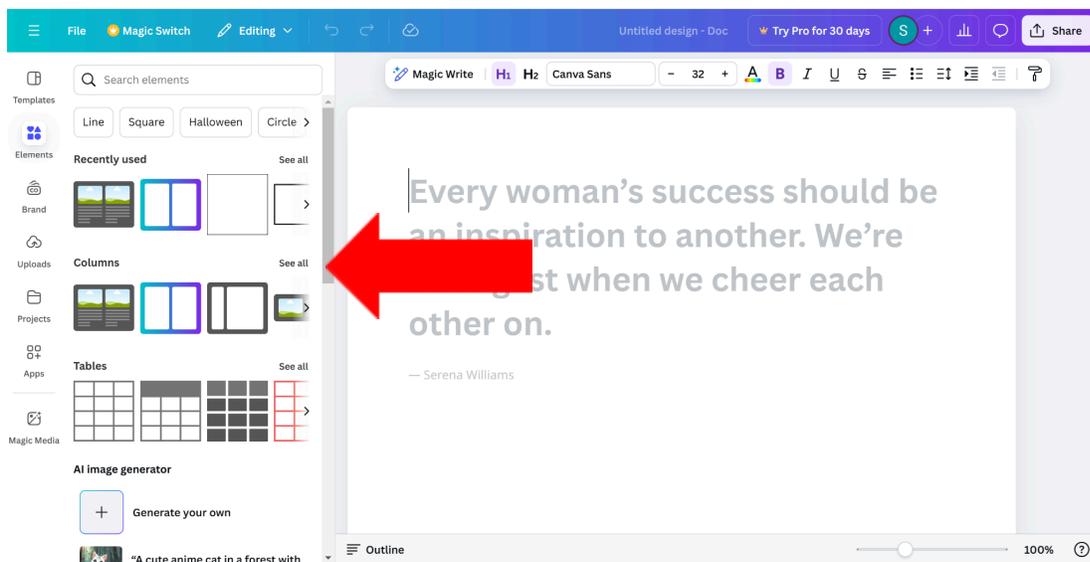
Columns

Columns can be used for Document layouts. There are many different kinds of columns, including those with pictures, colors, etc. Here is how you can add a column to your document.

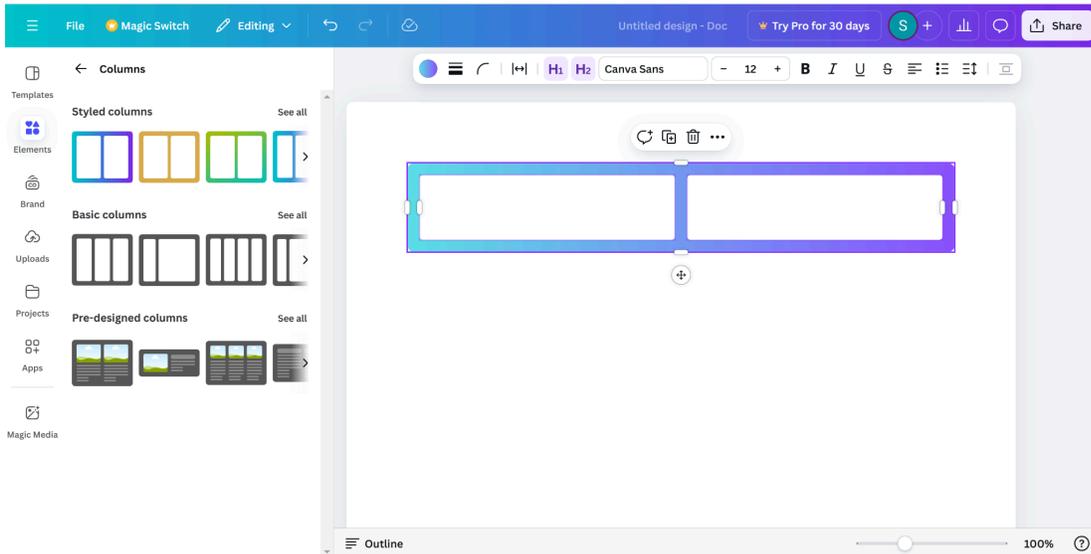
1. Click the “Elements” button on your toolbar.



2. Click the “See all” button under the “Columns” menu.



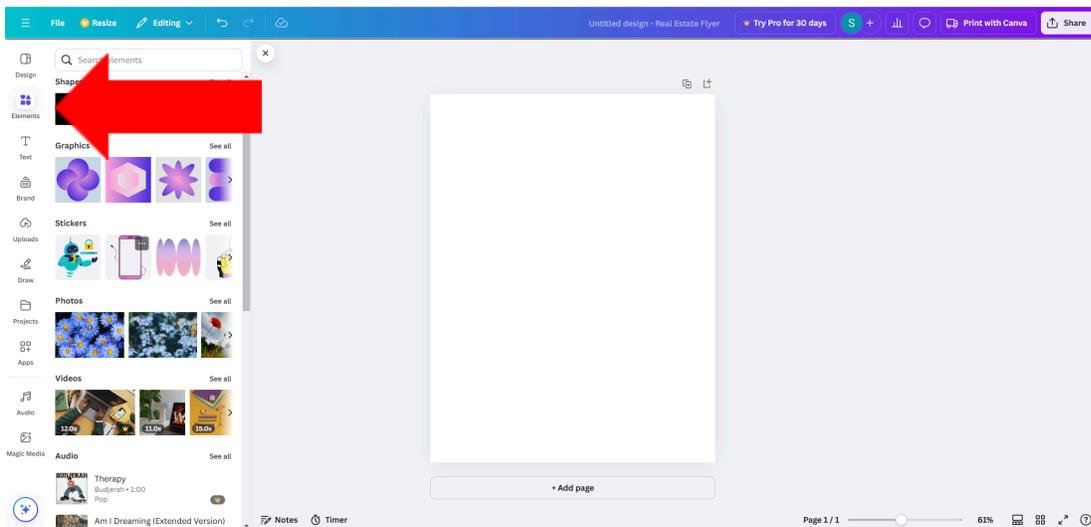
3. Select a column. It will automatically appear in your design.



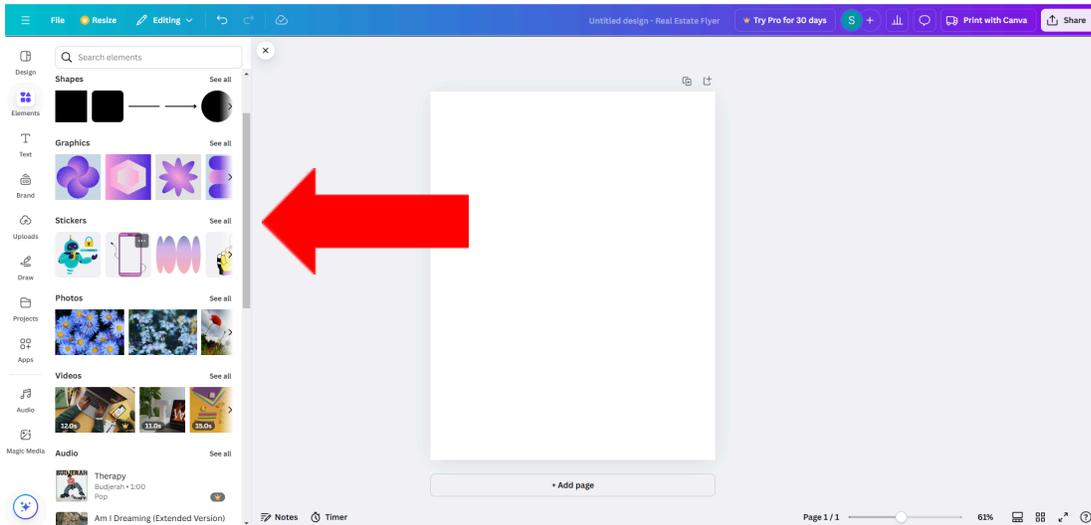
Shapes

Shapes can be used in more design-based documents like flyer, presentation, and website layouts. Each shape can be customized by size, color, and corner roundness. Here is how to add and adjust a shape to your document.

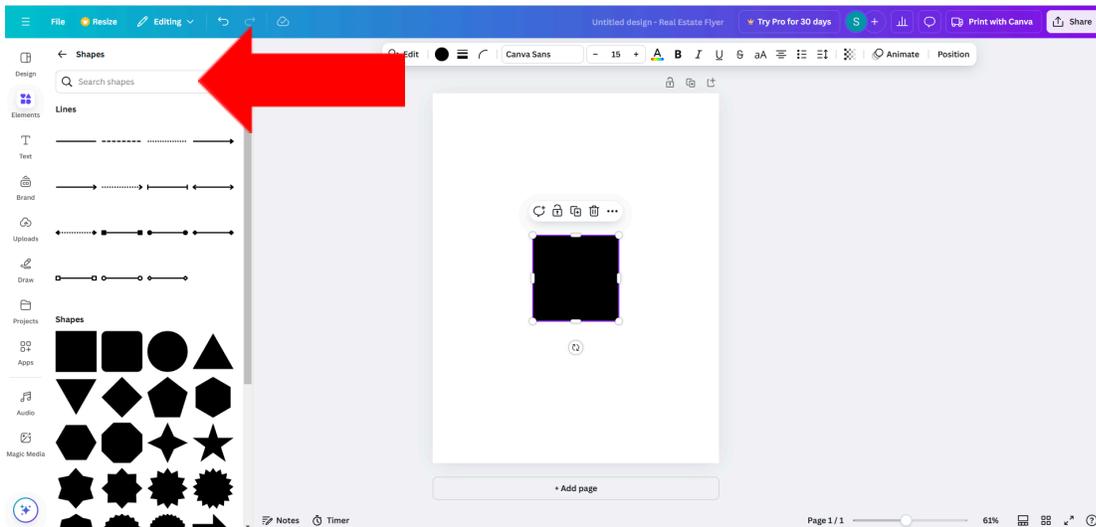
1. Click the “Elements” button on your toolbar.



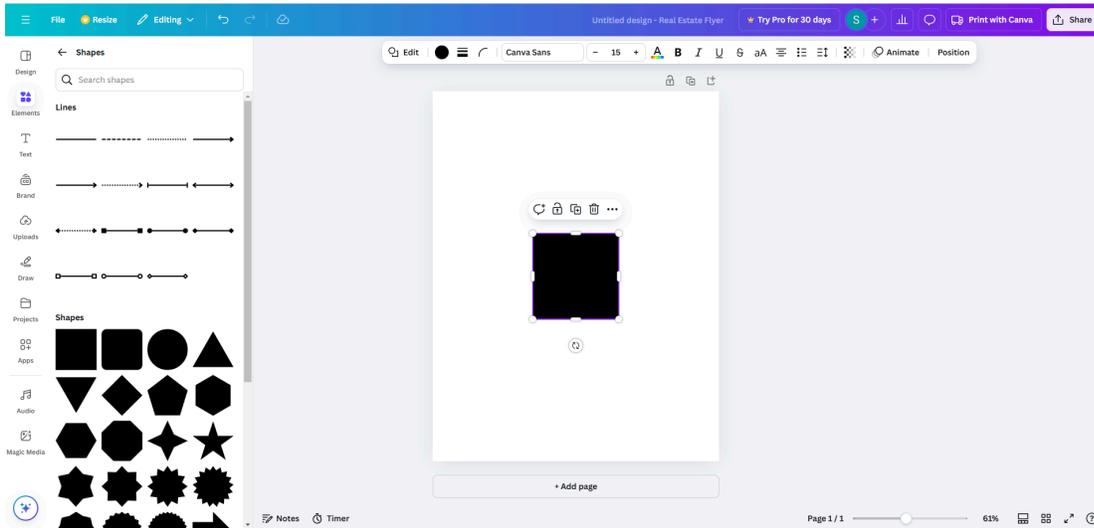
2. Click the “See all” button under the “Shapes” menu.



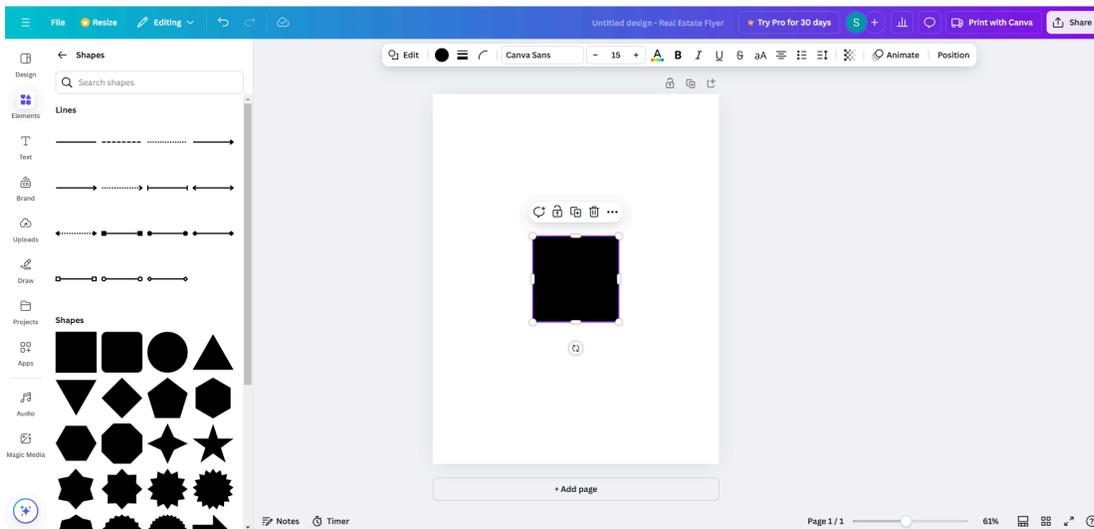
3. Click the “Search shapes” bar above to search for a specific shape.



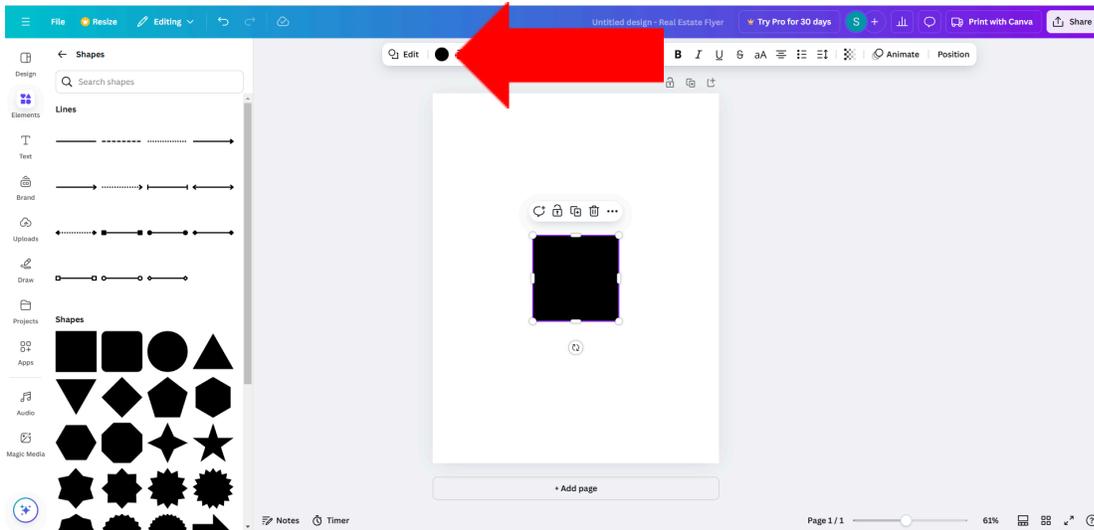
4. Select a shape. It will automatically appear in your design.



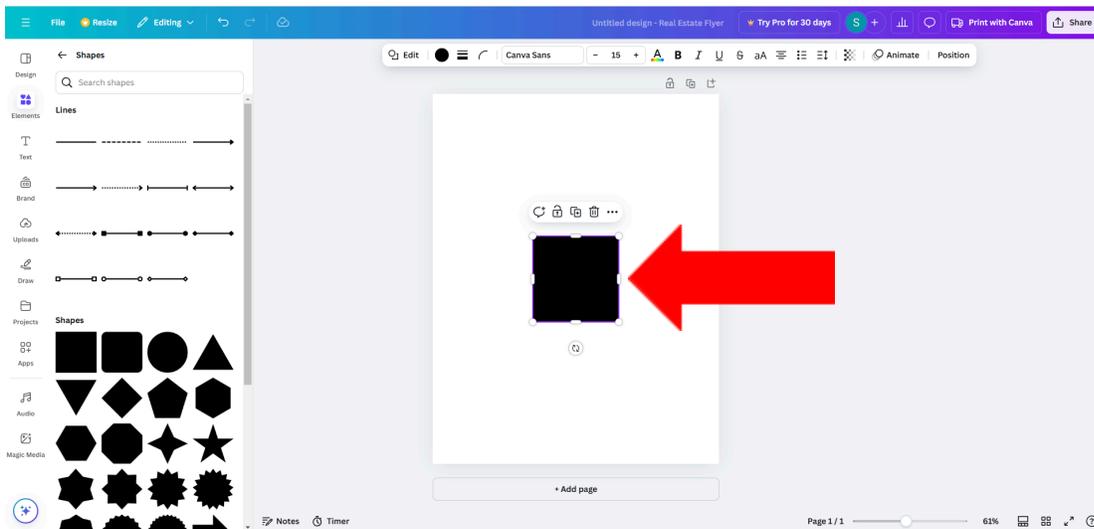
5. Click the shape on your design. A small toolbar will appear on the top of your screen.



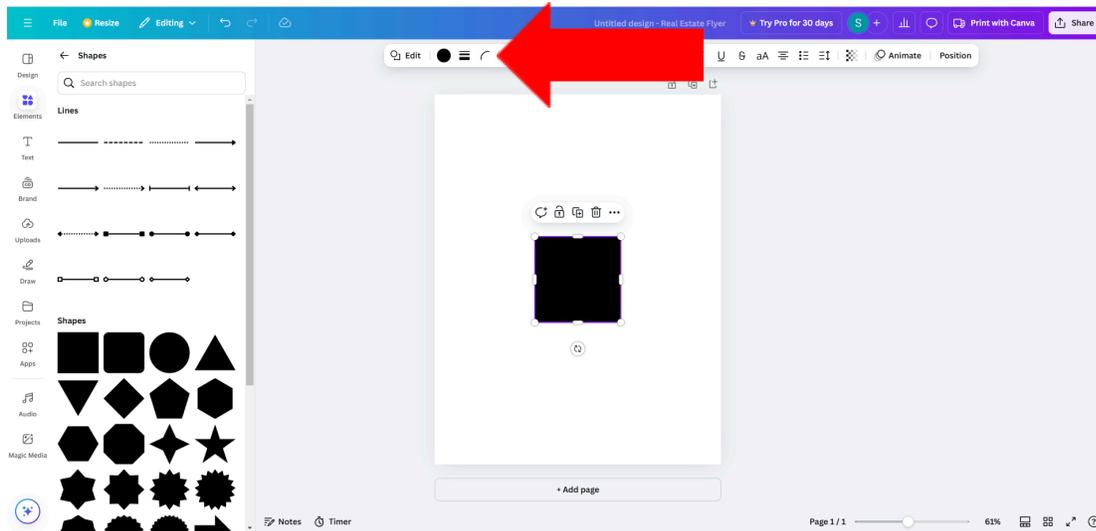
To change the color, click the circle on the left side of your toolbar.



To change the shape, click and drag the dashes outlining the shape when selected.



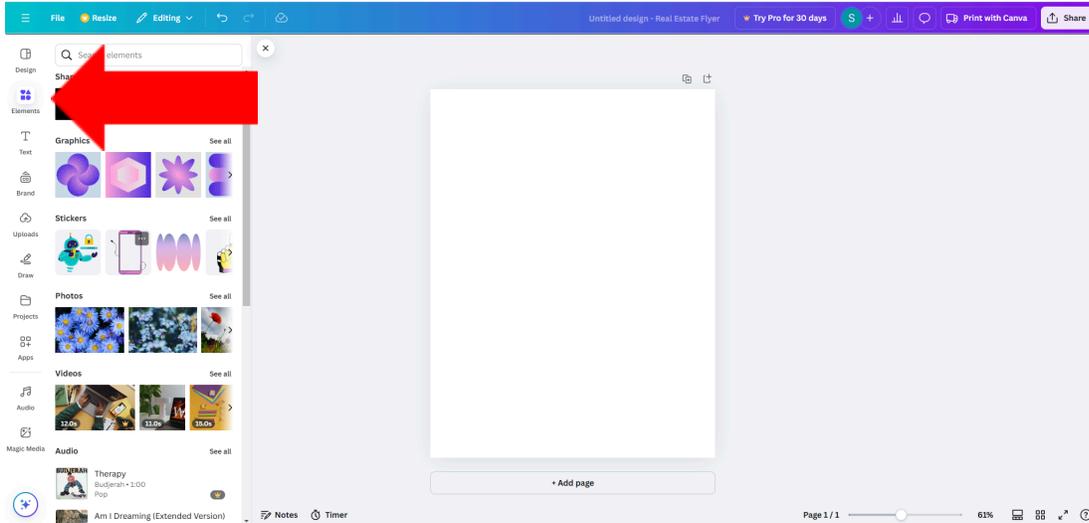
To change the corner roundness, select the curved line on the left side of your toolbar.



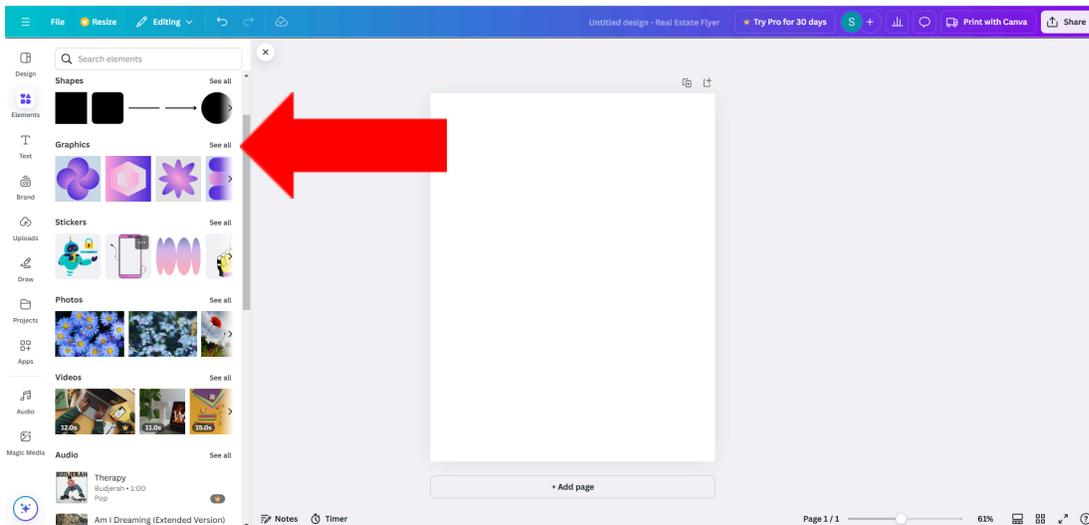
Graphics and stickers

Graphics and stickers can be used for more design-focused documents like flyers, business cards, or presentations. Graphics are still, while stickers are animated. Here is how to add a graphic or sticker to your document.

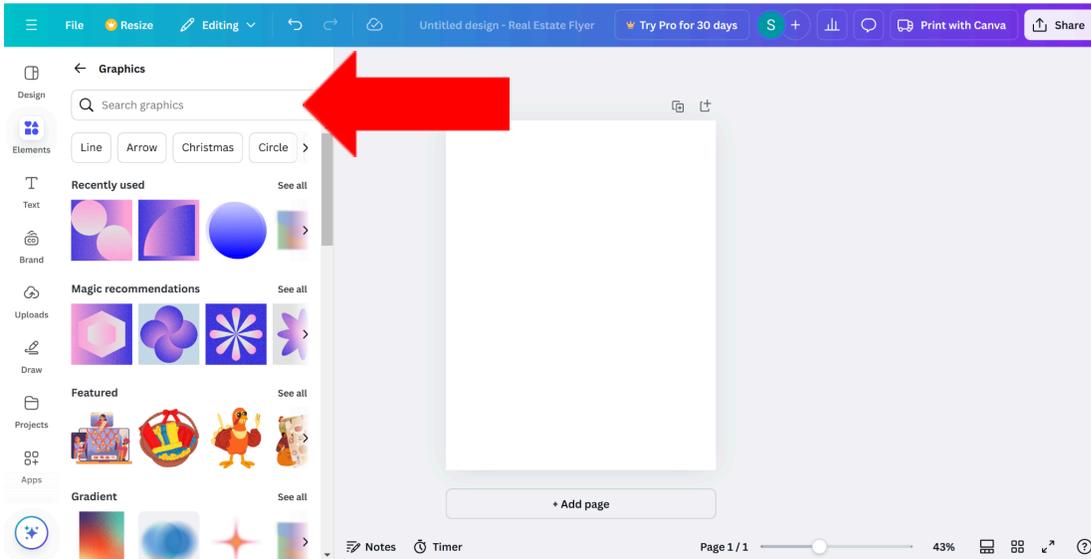
1. Click the “Elements” button on your toolbar.



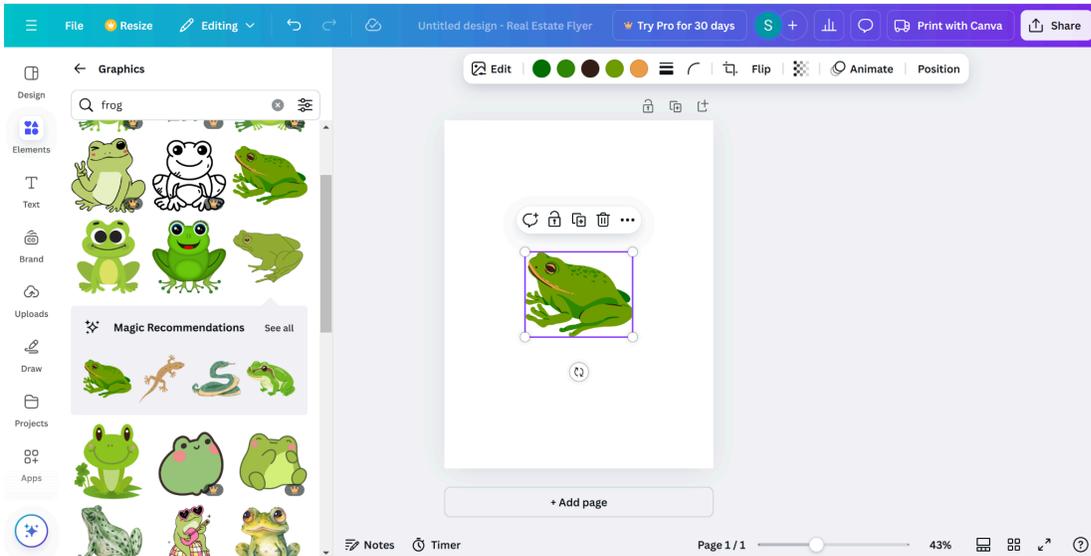
2. Click the “See all” button under the “Graphics” menu.



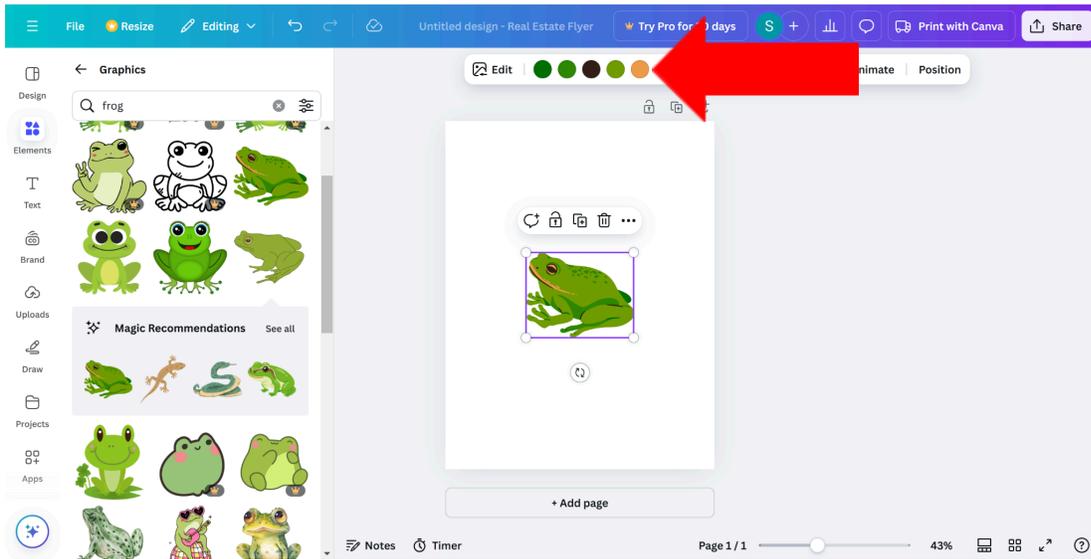
3. Click the “Search graphics” bar above to search for a specific graphic.



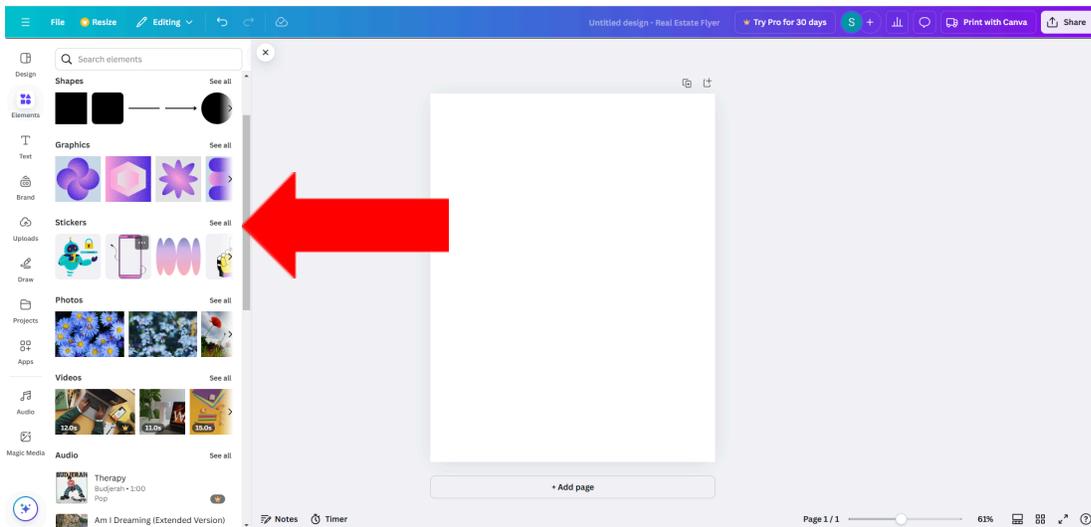
4. Select a graphic. It will automatically appear in your design.



5. To change the color, click the circles on the left side of your toolbar.



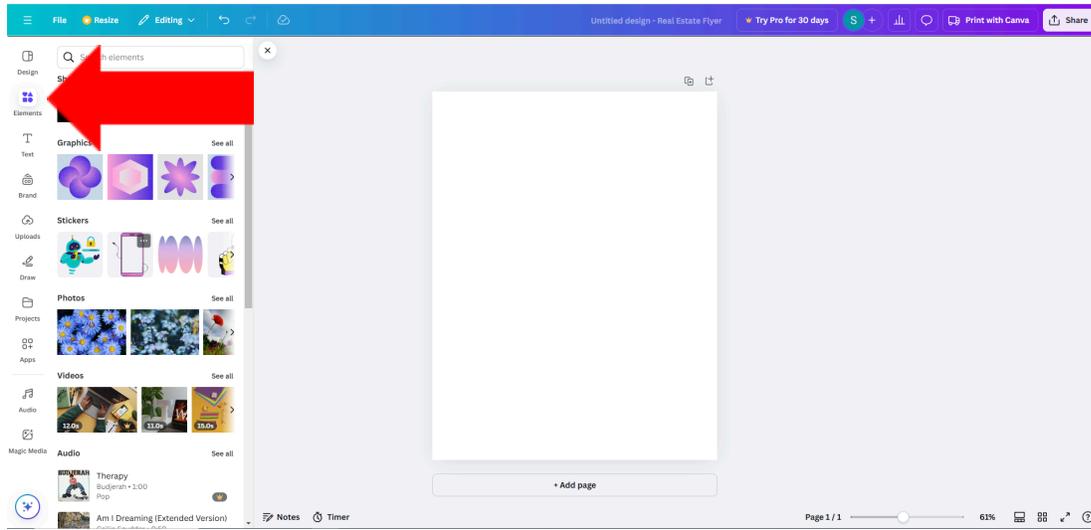
Adding a sticker to your document is similar to adding a graphic. Simply click the “See all” button under the “Stickers” menu.



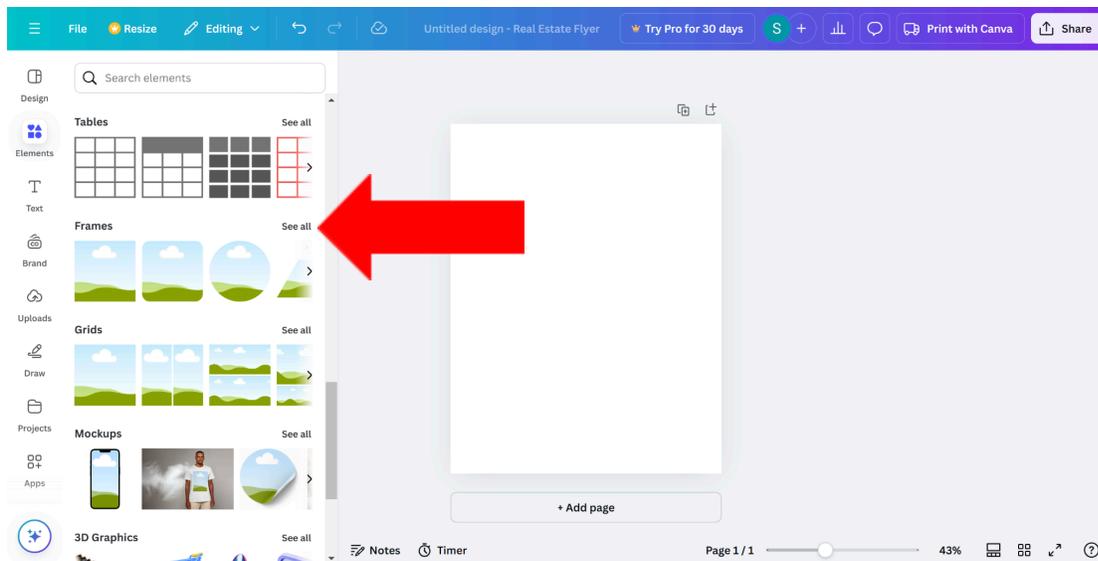
Frames and grids

Frames and grids change the shape of any photo that is inserted into it. These elements can be used for a variety of documents and can be suited for any need. Frames are for singular pictures, while grids can include multiple pictures to create a collage. Here is how to add and edit a frame or grid.

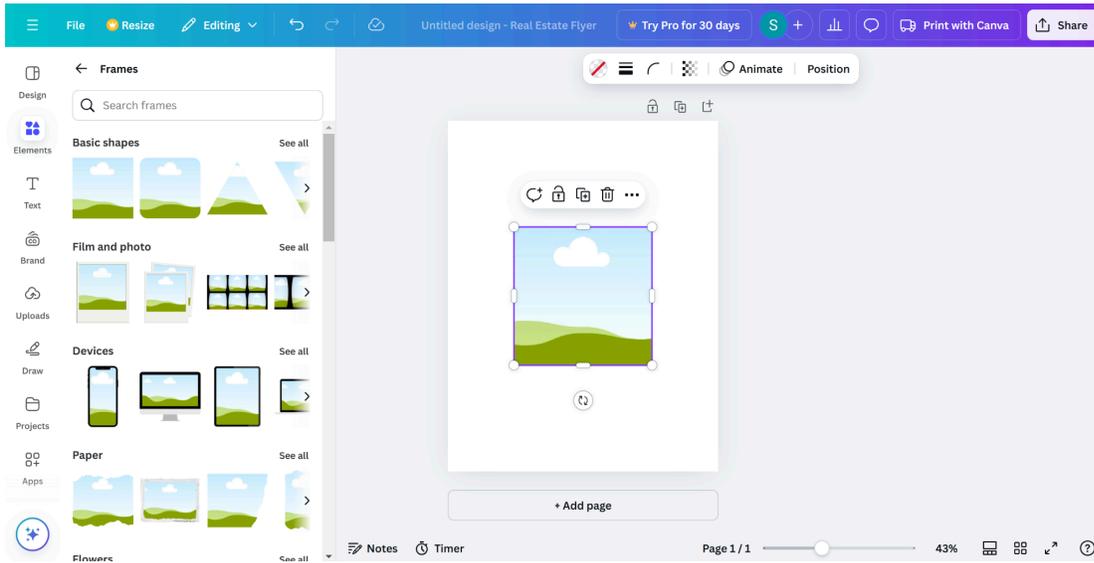
1. Click the “Elements” button on your toolbar.



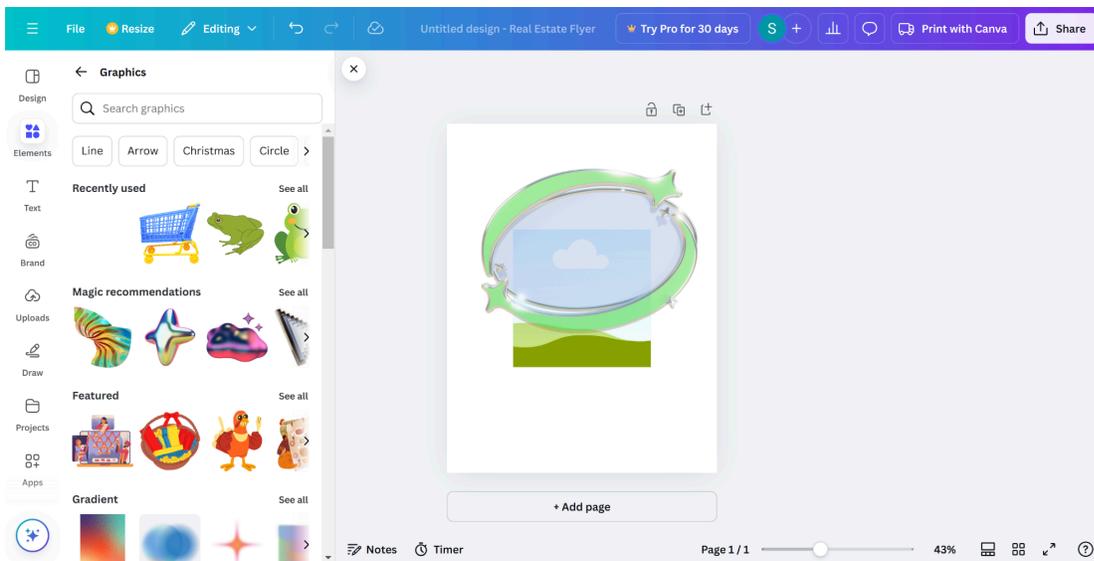
2. Scroll down and click the “See all” button under the “Frames” menu.



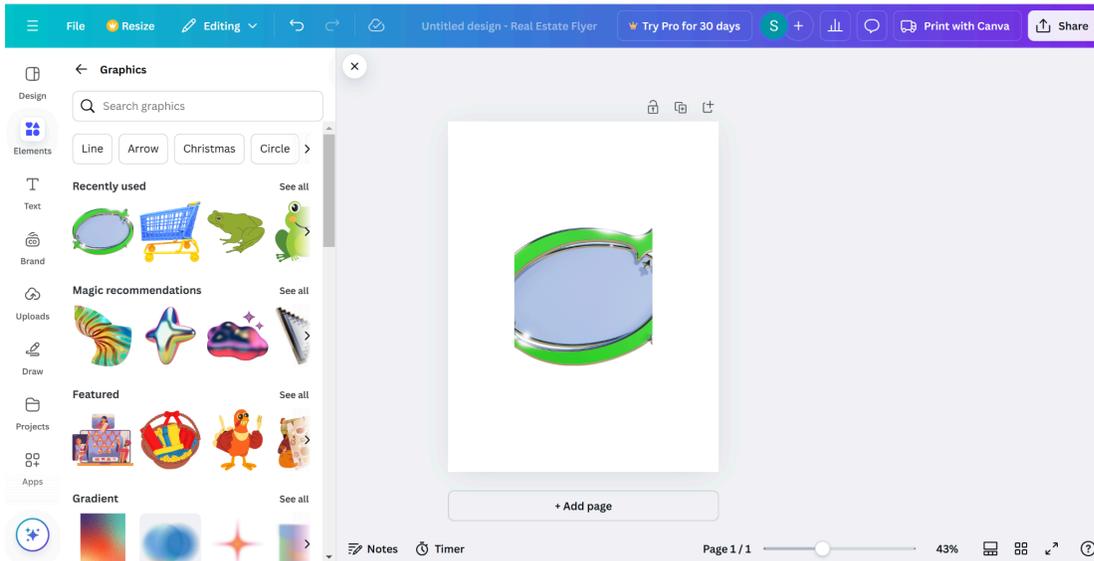
3. Select a frame. It will automatically appear in your design.



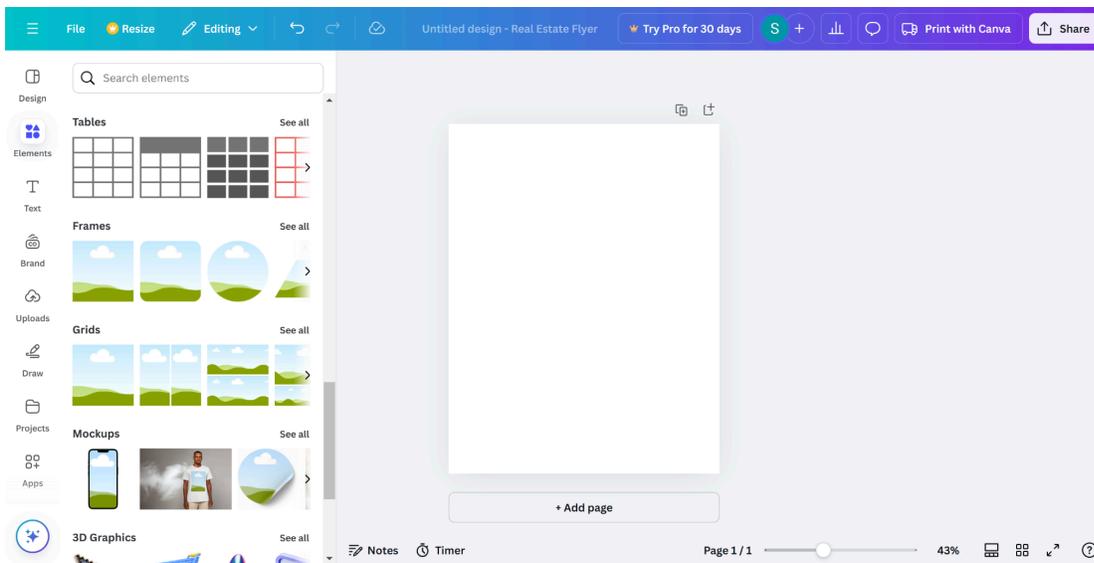
4. To add a picture to your frame, you can drag the photo over the frame. This can be done with graphics, or any pictures from your device.



5. The photo will automatically take the shape of the frame.



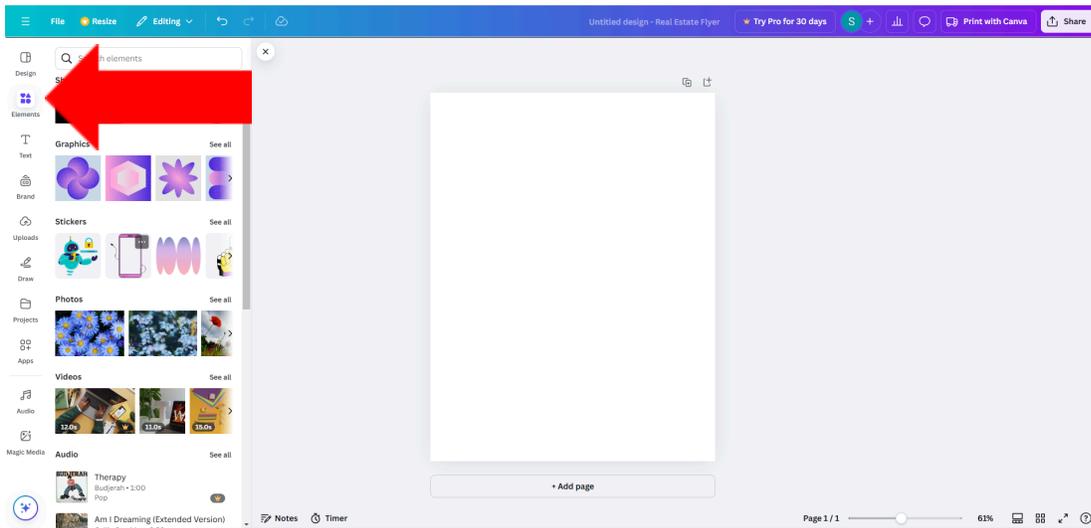
Adding a grid to your document is similar to adding a frame. Simply click the “See all” button under the “Grids” menu.



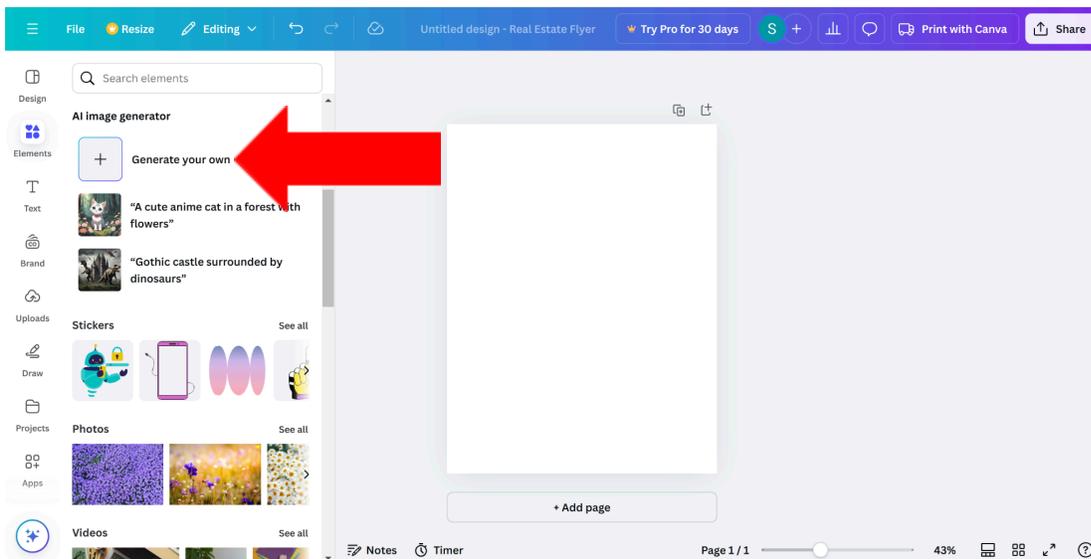
AI image generator

Canva has the ability for you to create your own unique images using AI. This element is useful for specific design needs in a project. Here is how to add an AI-generated image to your design.

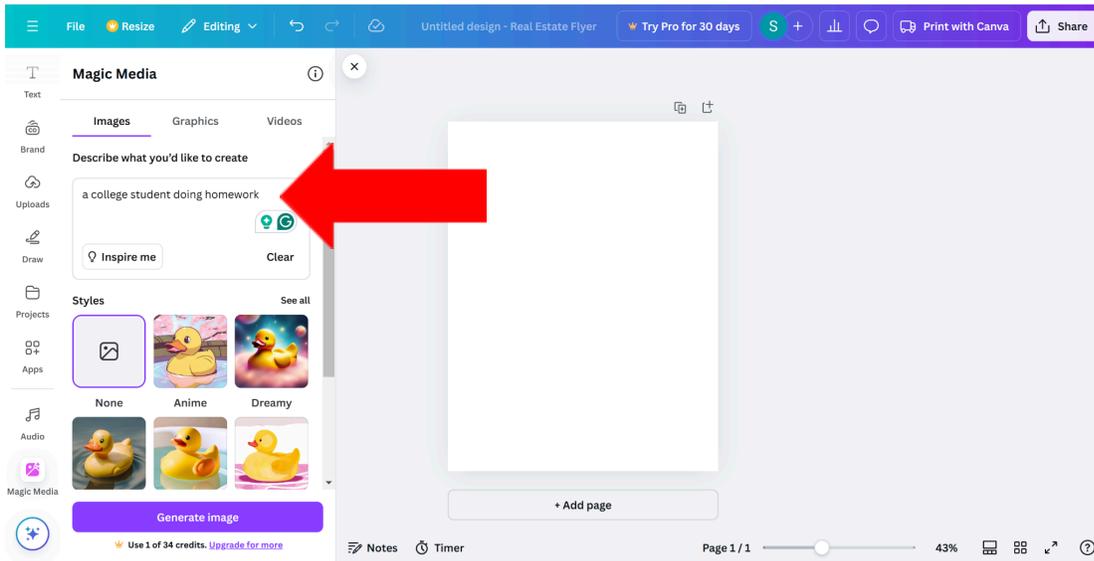
1. Click the “Elements” button on your toolbar.



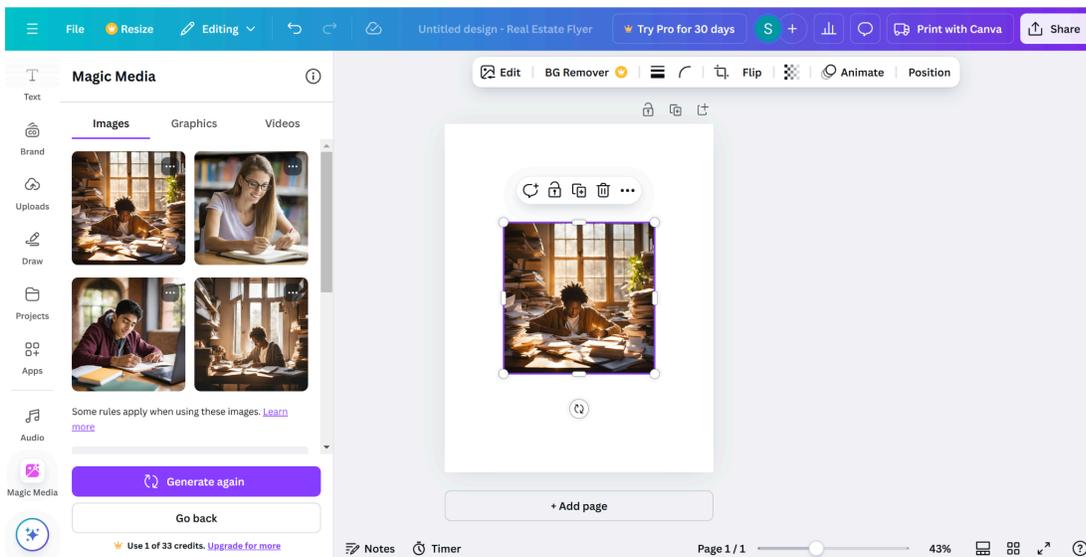
2. Scroll down and click the “Generate your own” button.



3. Type into the textbox what you would like to generate.



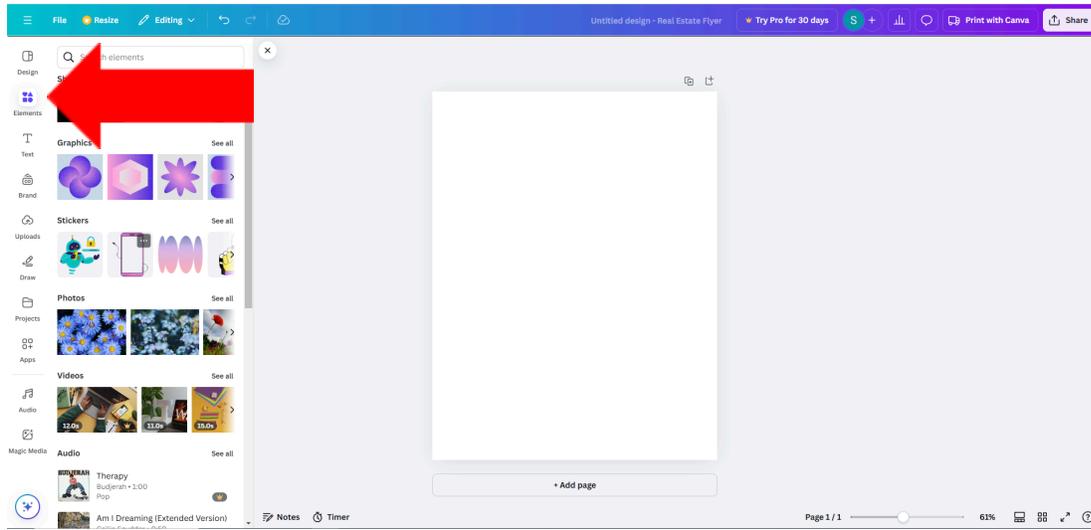
4. Multiple images will appear adhering to your request. Add an image to your design by clicking one.



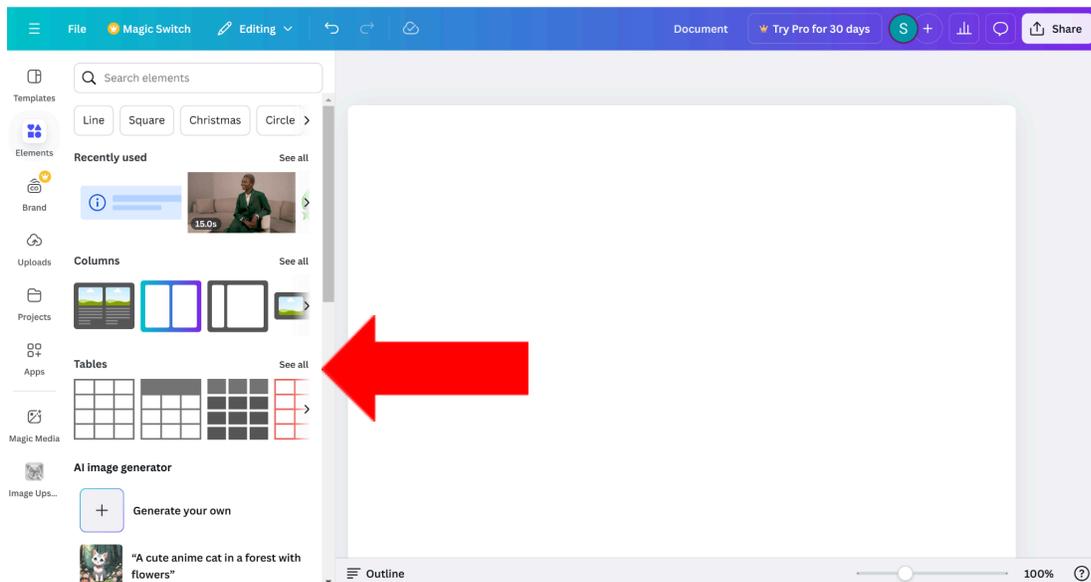
Charts and tables

Charts and tables can be used for document layouts. These elements make it simple to convey a visual representation of information or to organize different variables. They can be used for projects, statistics, or scheduling purposes. Here is how to add a chart or table to your document.

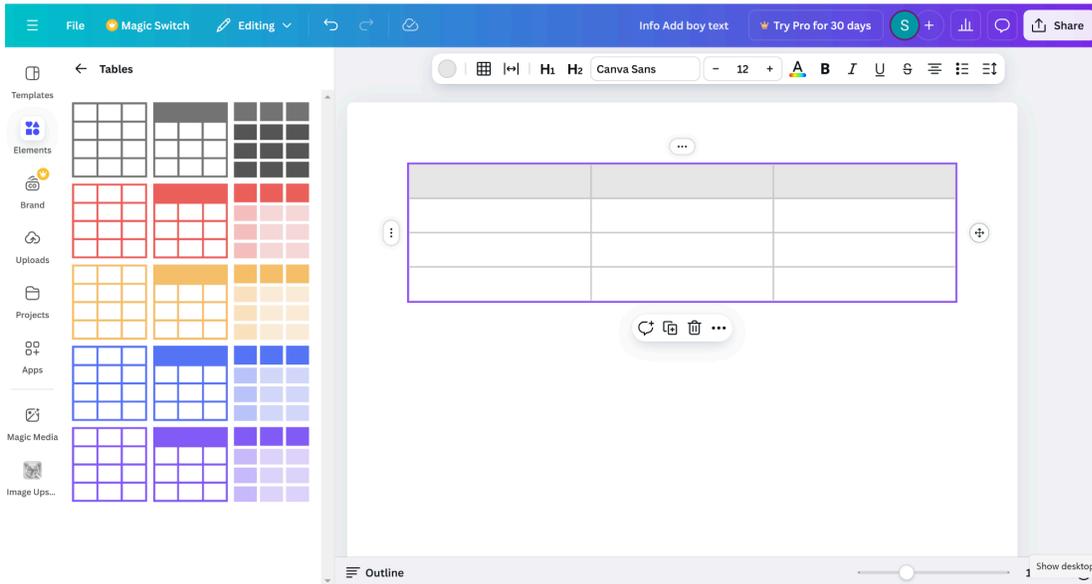
1. Click the “Elements” button on your toolbar.



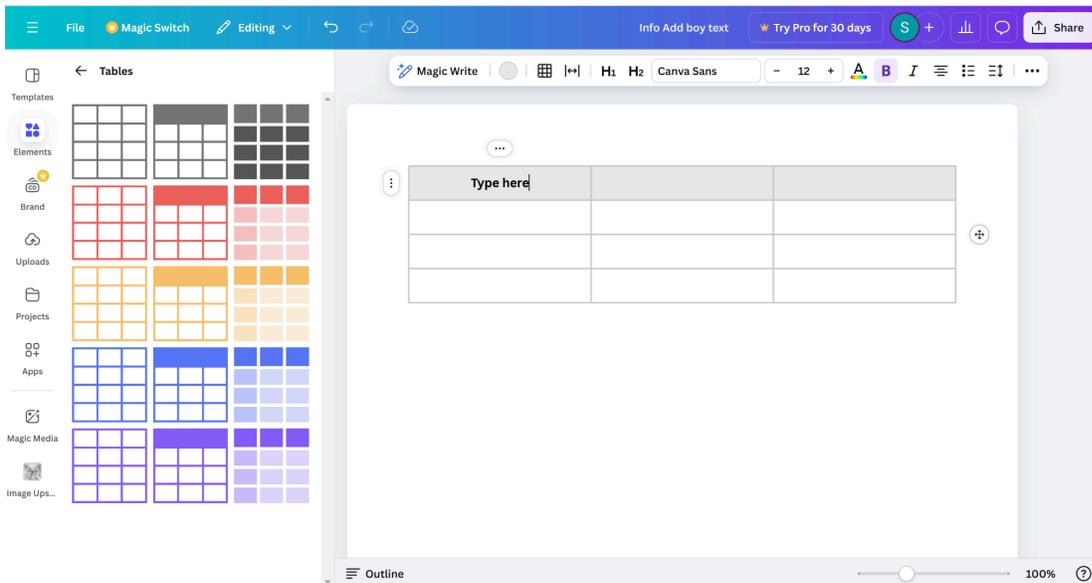
2. Click the “See all” button under the “Tables” menu.



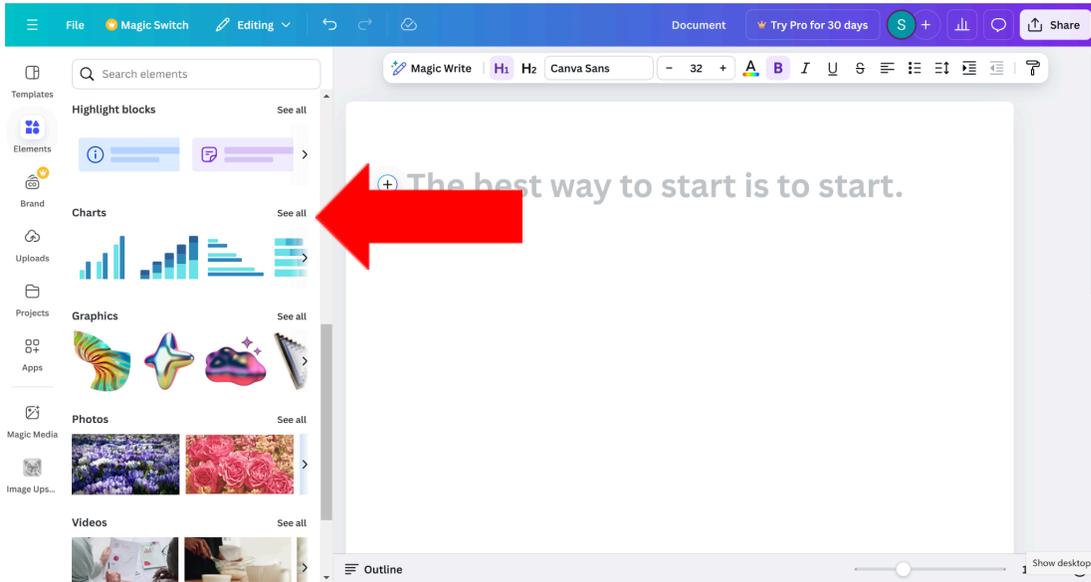
3. Select a table. It will automatically appear in your design.



4. To add text to a cell, simply click on the cell you would like to type in.



Adding a chart to your document is similar to adding a table. Simply click the “See all” button under the “Charts” menu.



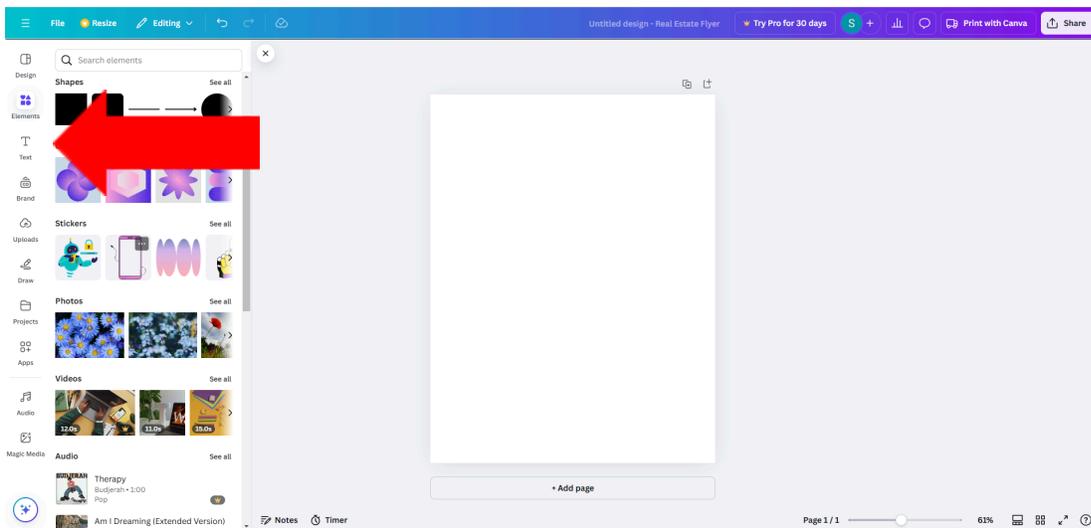
2. Text

When clicking the “Text” button on your toolbar, you can access the different kinds of text you can use in your document.

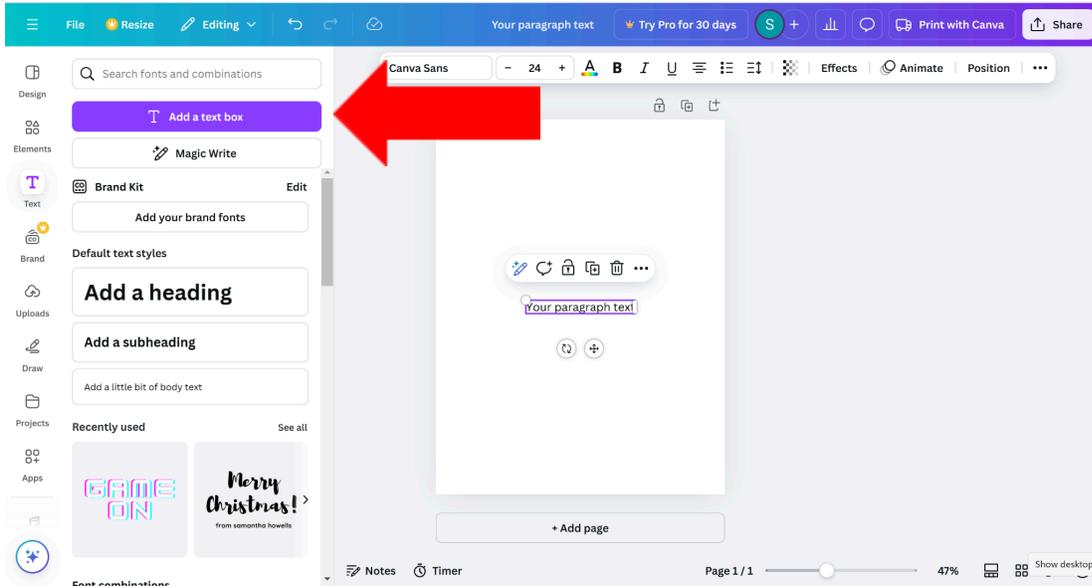
Textboxes

Textboxes can be used to insert text onto your document. They can be adjusted by size, font, and location. Here is how to add and adjust a textbox.

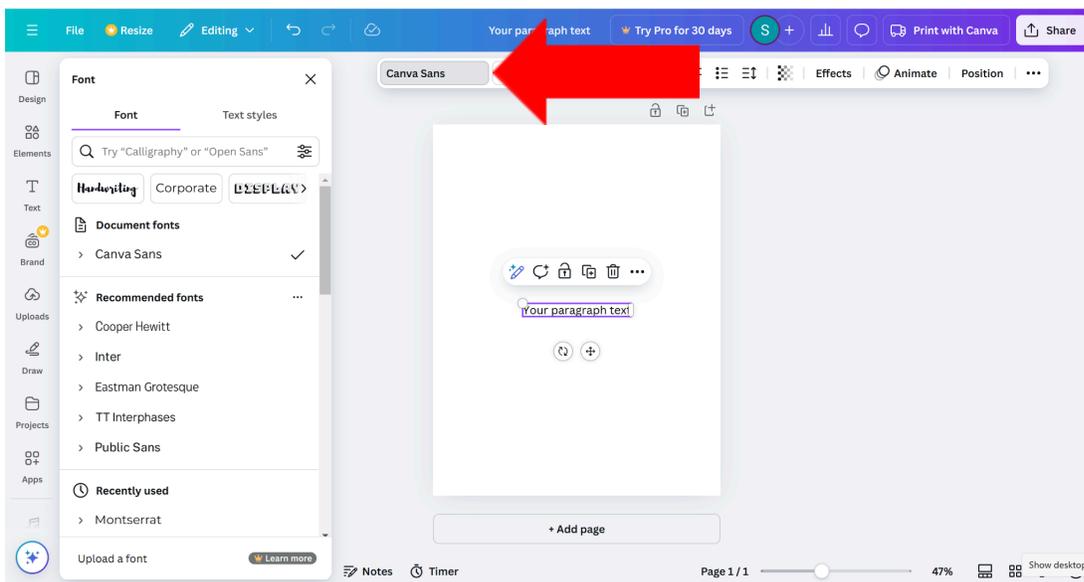
1. Click the “Text” button on your toolbar.



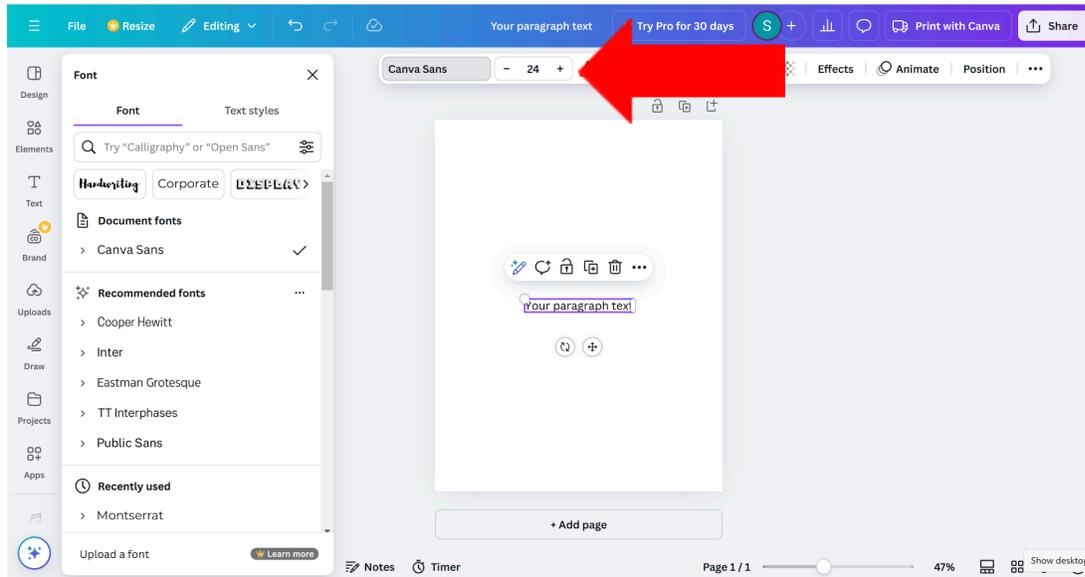
2. Click the “Add a textbox” button. A textbox will automatically appear in your design.



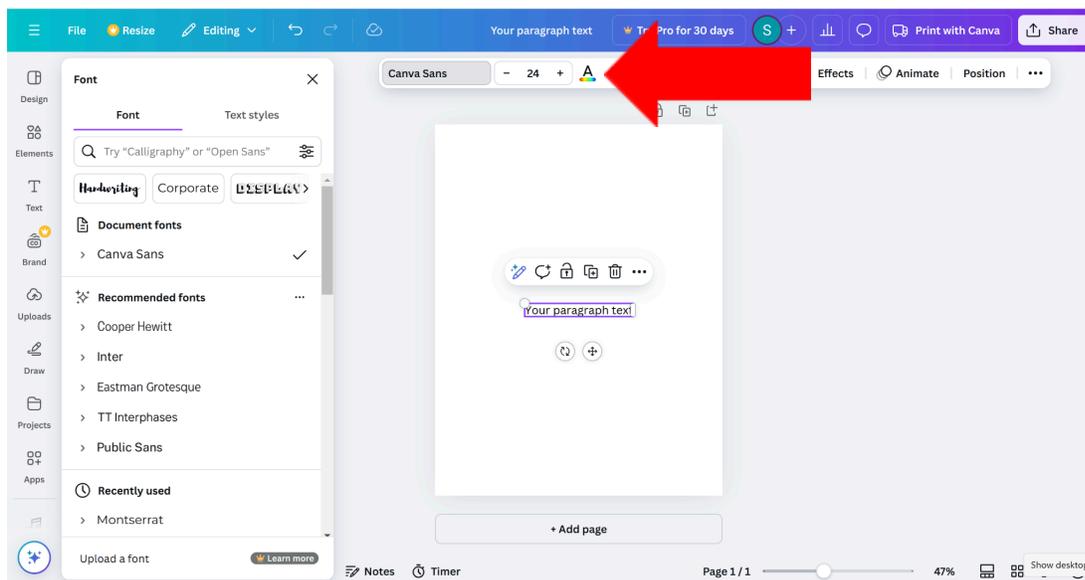
To add a font, click the first button from the left on the toolbar at the top of your screen. A table of different fonts will appear on the left of your screen.



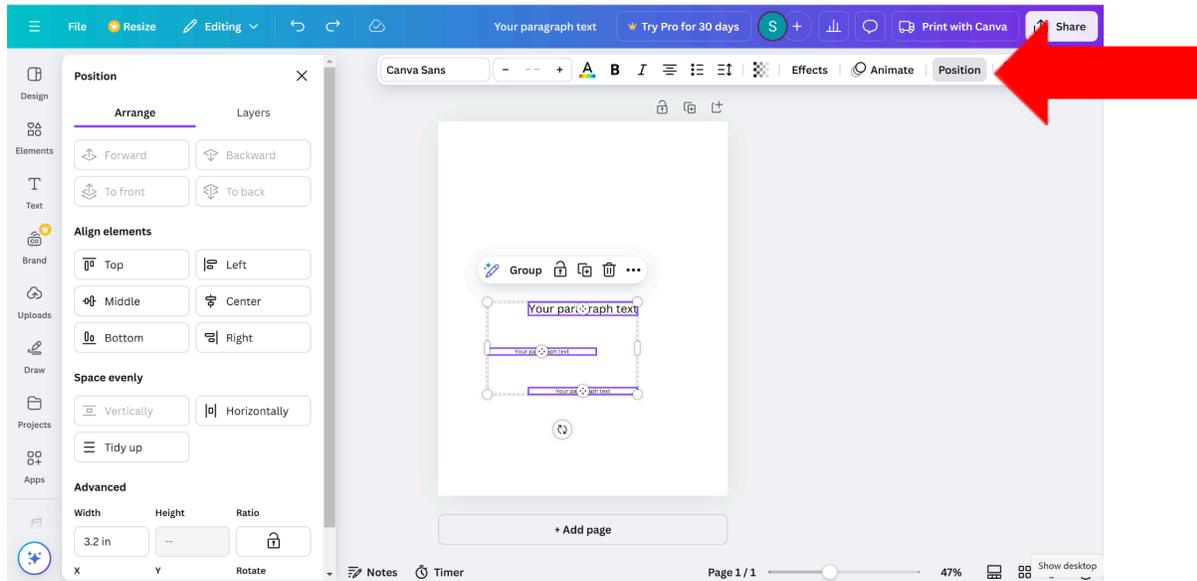
To change the font size, click the second button from the left on the toolbar at the top of your screen.



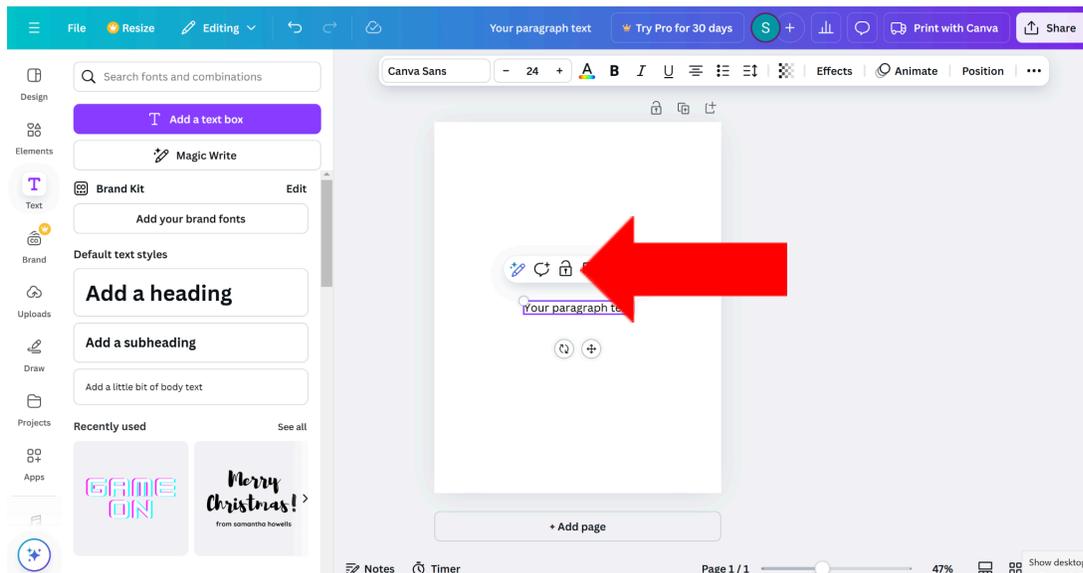
To change the font color, hit the third button from the left on the toolbar at the top of your screen.



When using multiple text boxes, you can align them by highlighting all of the text boxes and clicking the “Position” button on the toolbar at the top of your screen.



To lock the placement on a textbox, click the lock icon on the toolbar above your textbox.



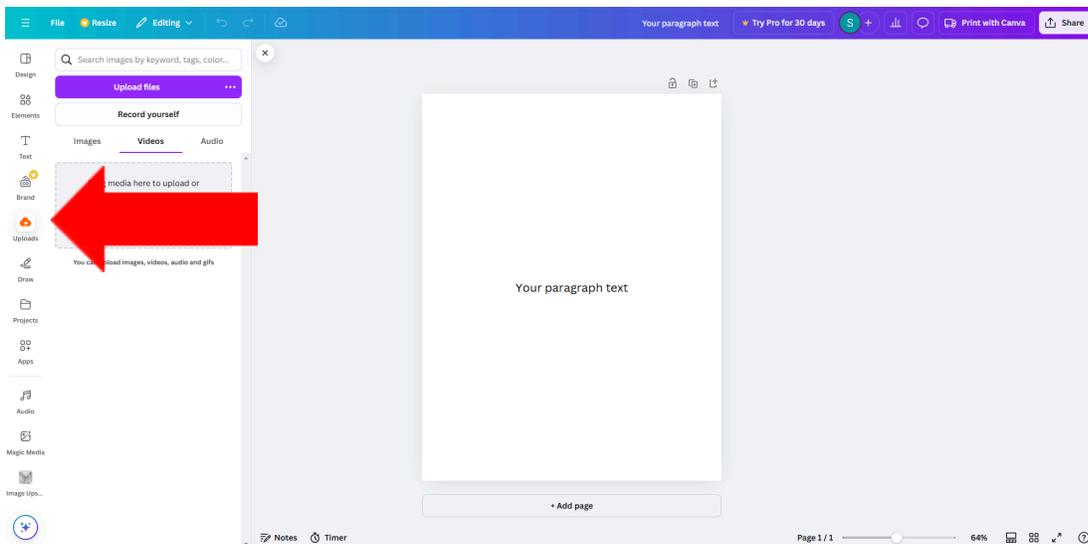
3. Uploads

Canva allows you to upload your images, videos, and audio from your own computer, Google Drive, DropBox, Instagram, and Google Photos. Here are different ways to upload a file.

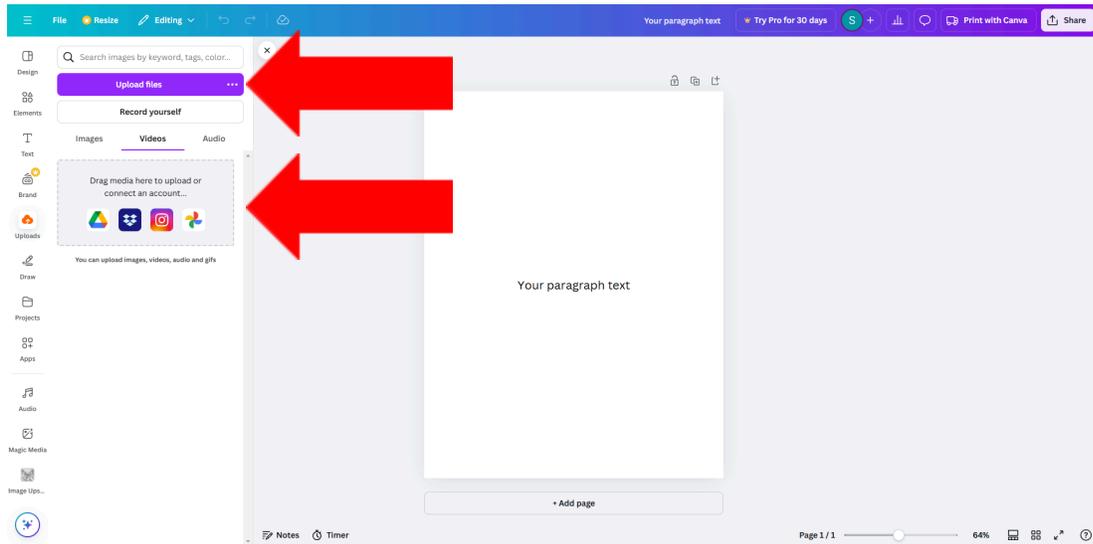
Uploading files

When opening a new design, you can upload pre existing documents, images, or stickers to your design.

1. Click the “Uploads” button on your toolbar.



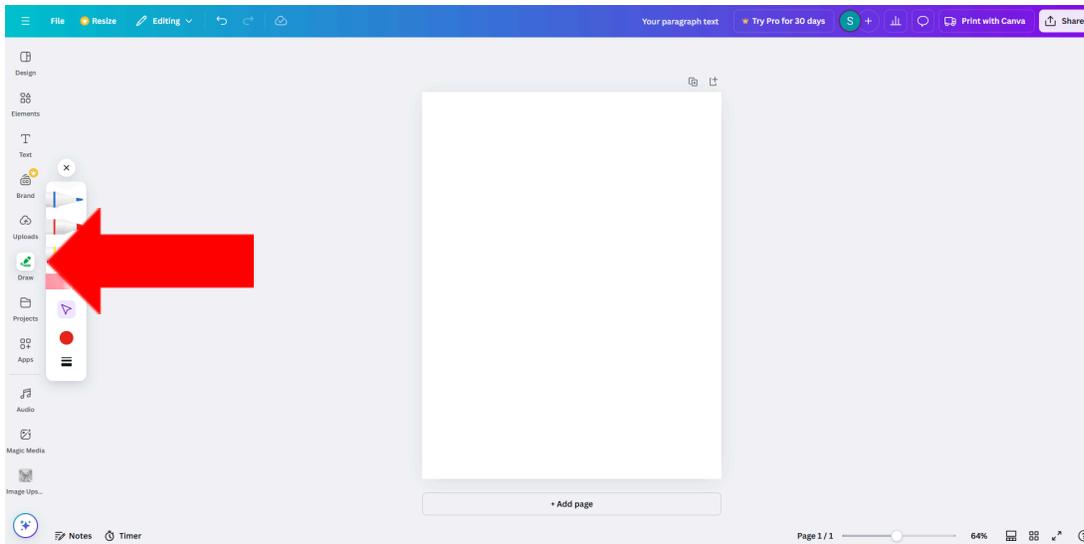
2a. Click the “Upload files” button. Alternatively, you can drag your image from another tab and onto the gray box on the left side of your screen.



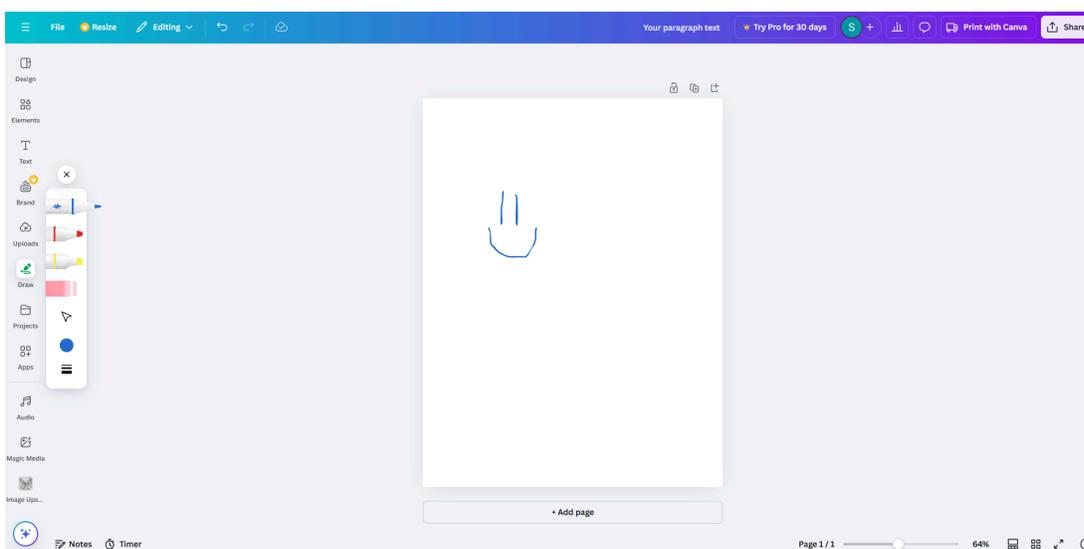
4. Drawing tools

Although Canva is not designed as a drawing program, the drawing tools can be useful for note taking, editing, and collaborating with another person. The drawing tools include a pen, marker, highlighter, and eraser. Here is how to navigate the drawing tools.

1. Click the “Draw” button on your toolbar.



2. Click the tool you would like to use. To draw, hold down your mouse or keypad.



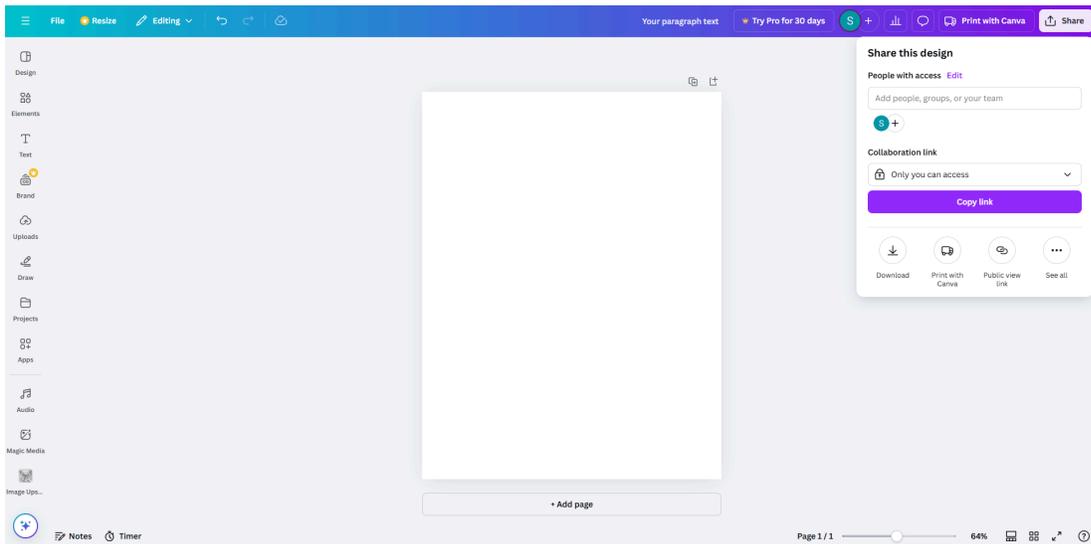
IV. Sharing and exporting

After designing a document, Canva offers many different ways to export your document.

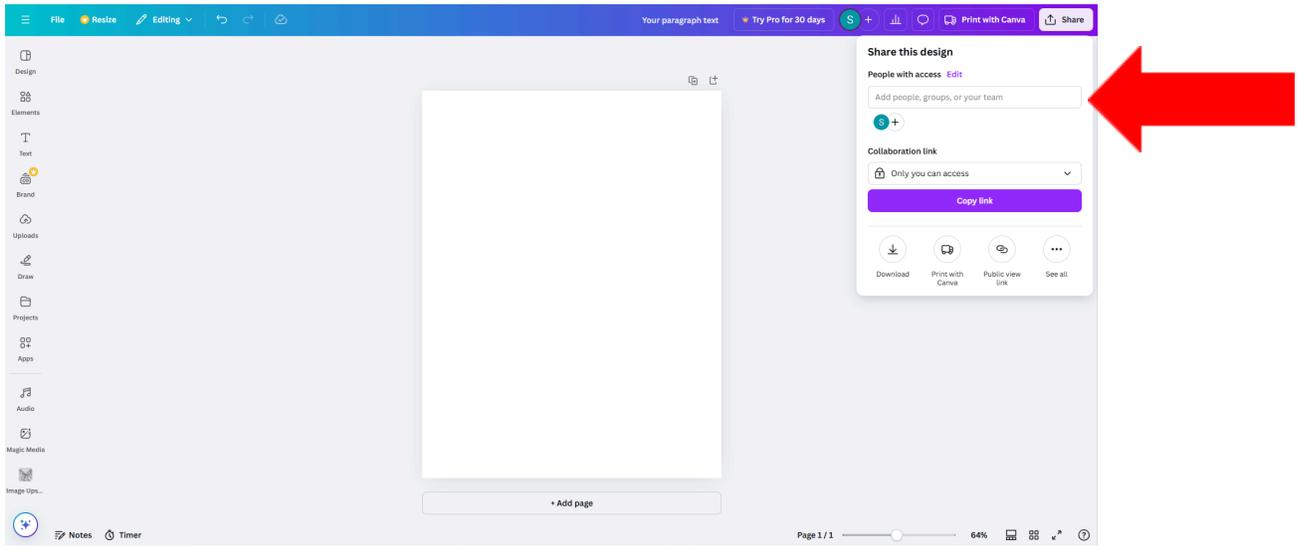
1. Sharing your document

By sharing a document, you can allow other people to get access to your document. You can allow them to edit, comment, or view the document. Here is how to add people to your document.

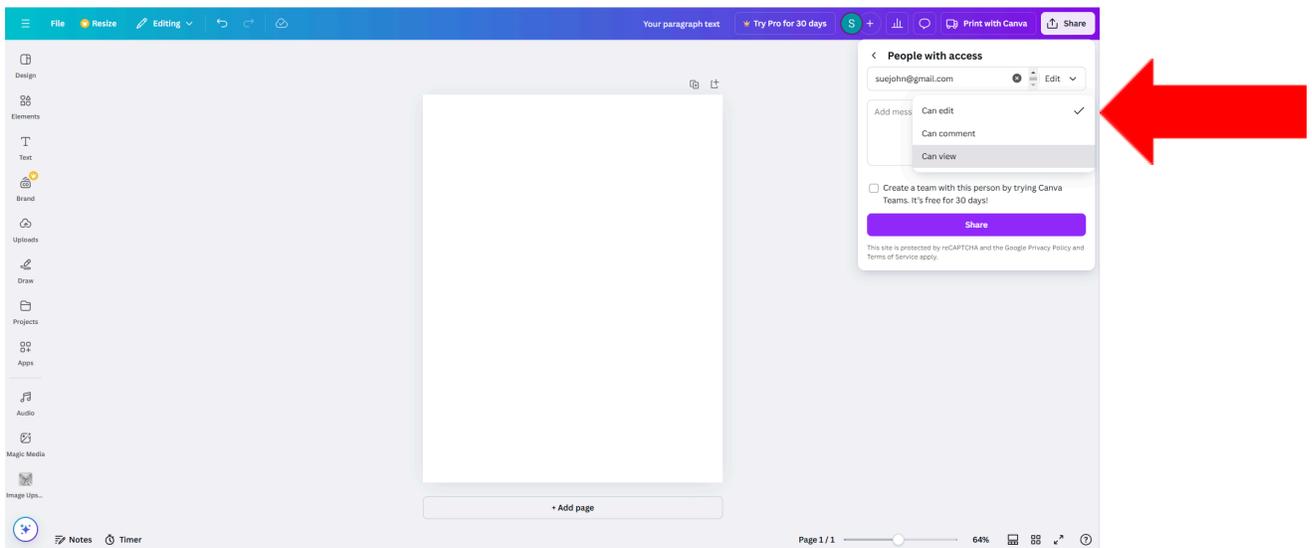
1. Click the “Share” button on the top right of your screen.



2. In the textbox, insert the email(s) of the people you would like to share your document with.



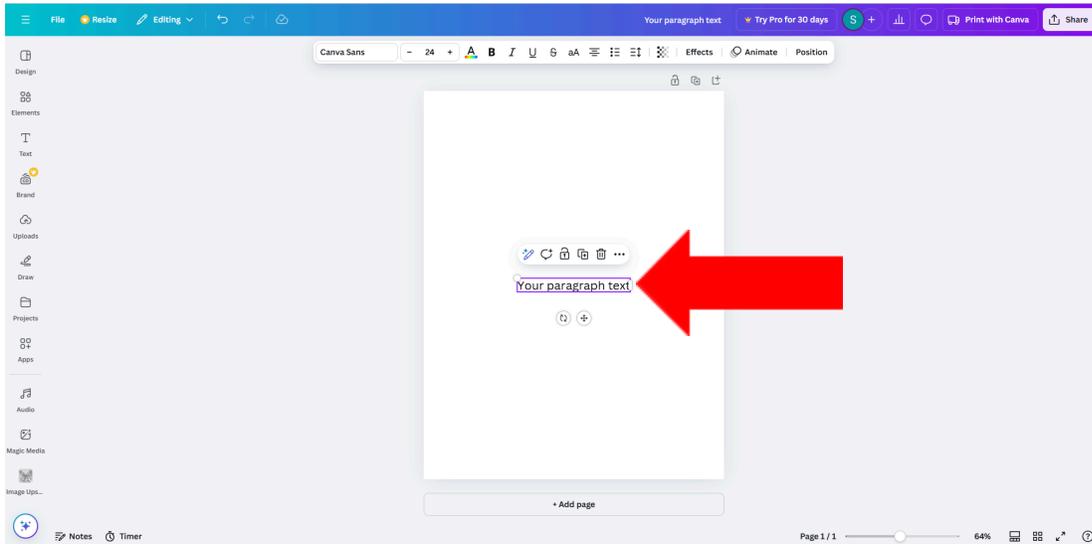
3. On the left of the textbox, specify which permission you would like to give them.



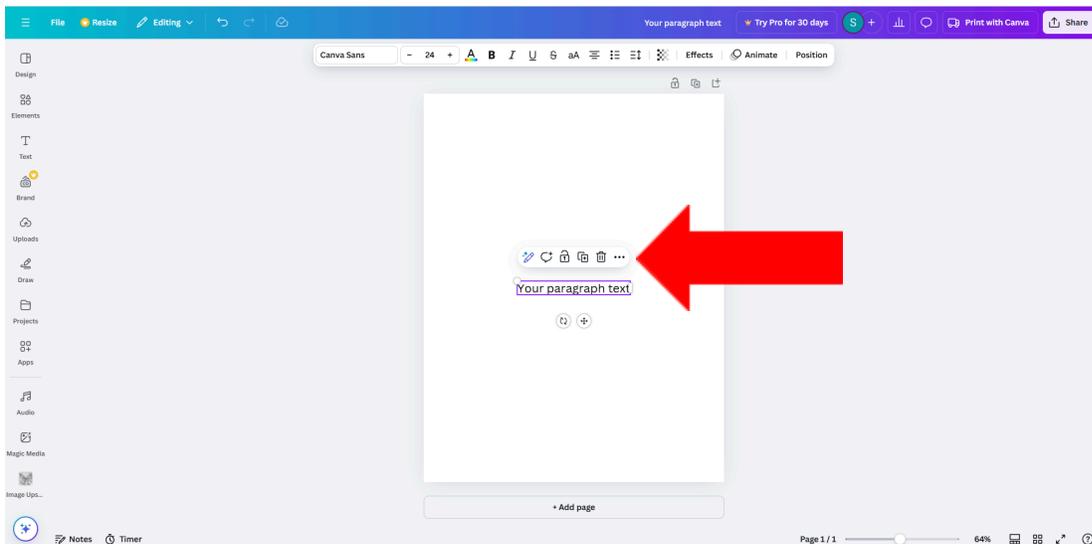
Commenting

When collaborating with someone else, you are able to make comments on different elements in your document. This is useful for peer reviewing, brainstorming, or collaborations. Here is how to add a comment to a document.

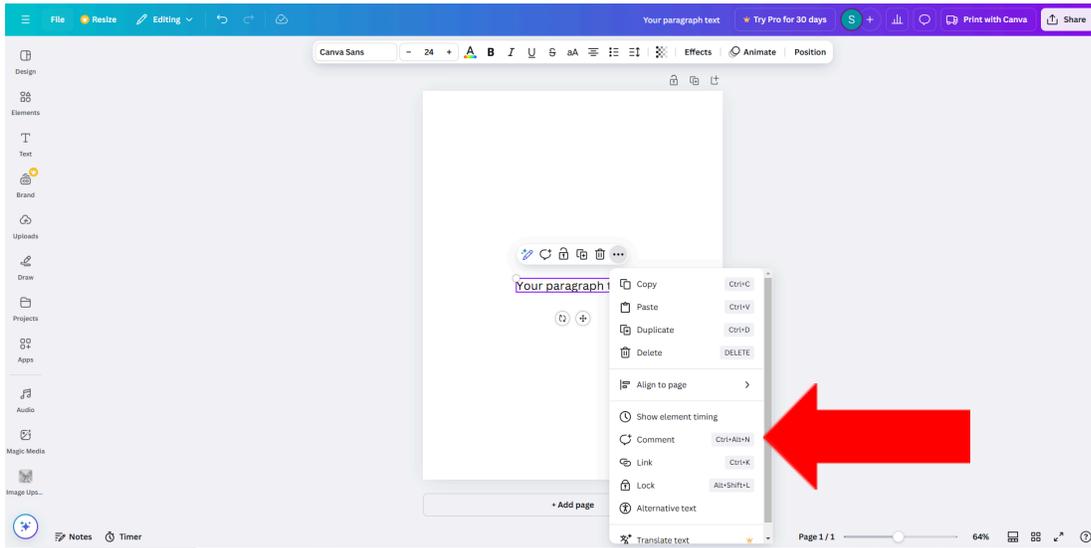
1. Click the element on the page you would like to comment on.



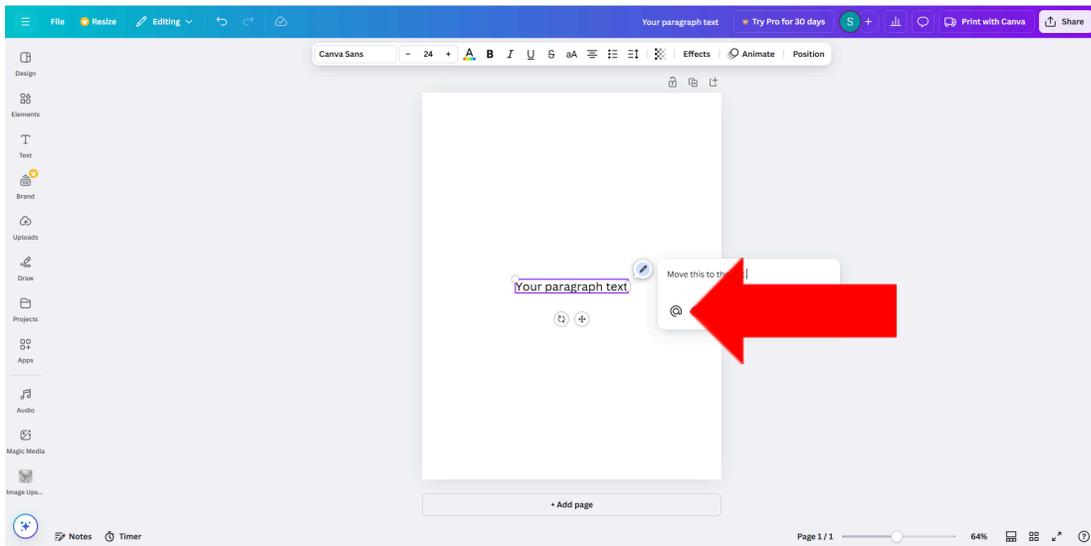
2. Click the three dots on the toolbar above the element you clicked.



3. Click the “Comment” button.



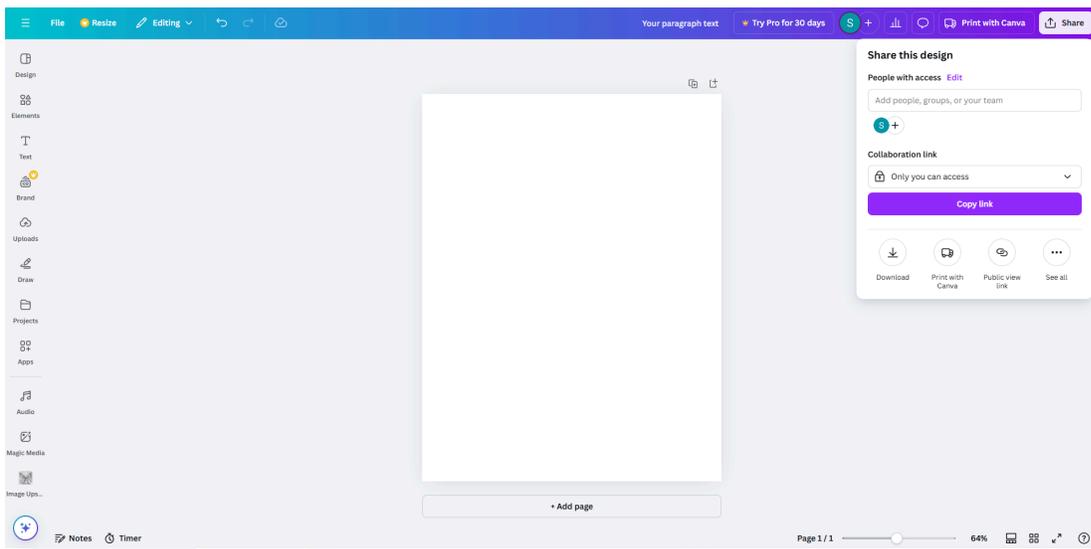
4. Type out your comment. You can also mention specific people by using the “@” button at the bottom of the comment box.



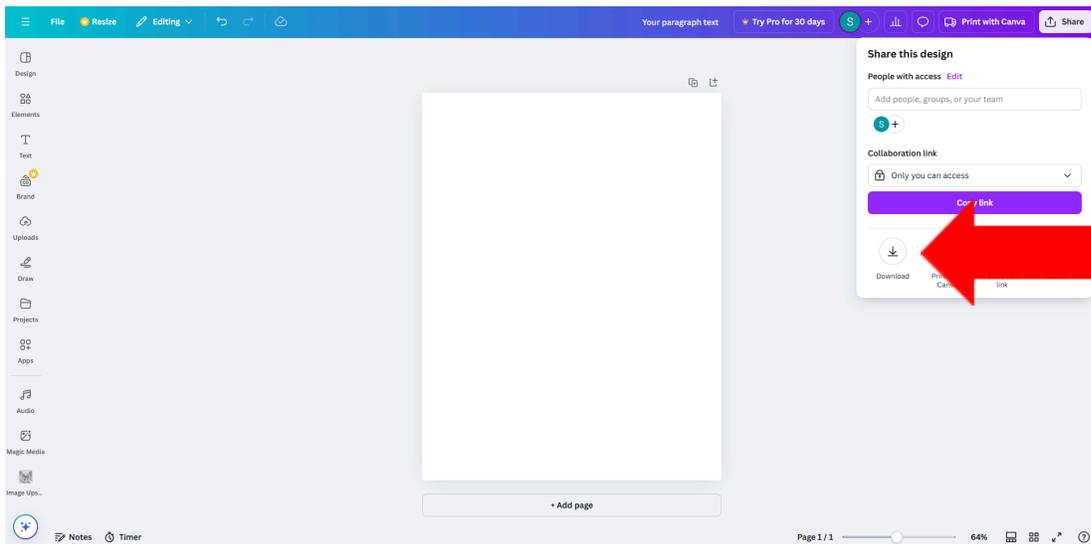
2. Exporting your document

Canva allows you to export your document in a variety of document types. Here is how to export your document.

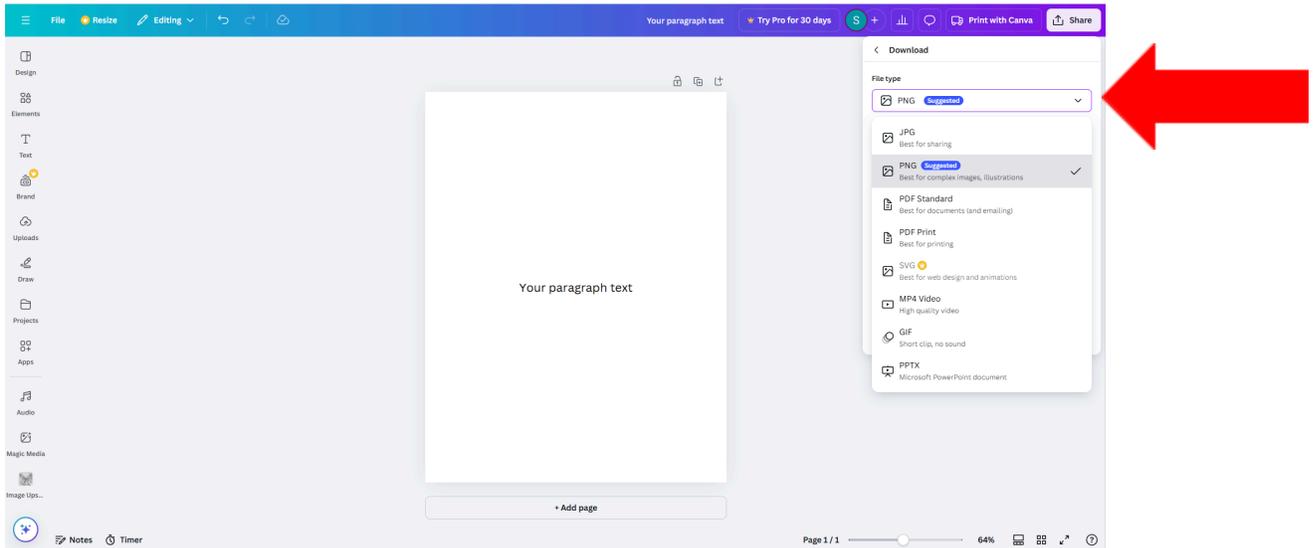
1. Click the “Share” button on the top right of your screen.



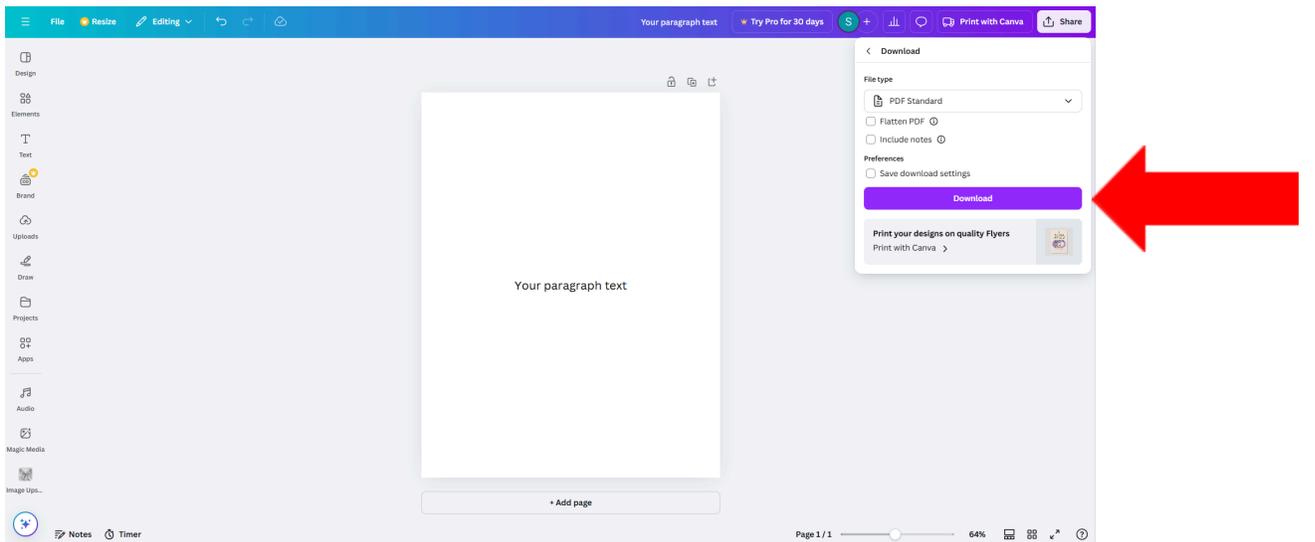
2. Click the “Download” button at the bottom of the tab that pops up.



3. Change the file type by clicking the drop-down under “File type”.



4. Click the “Download” button.

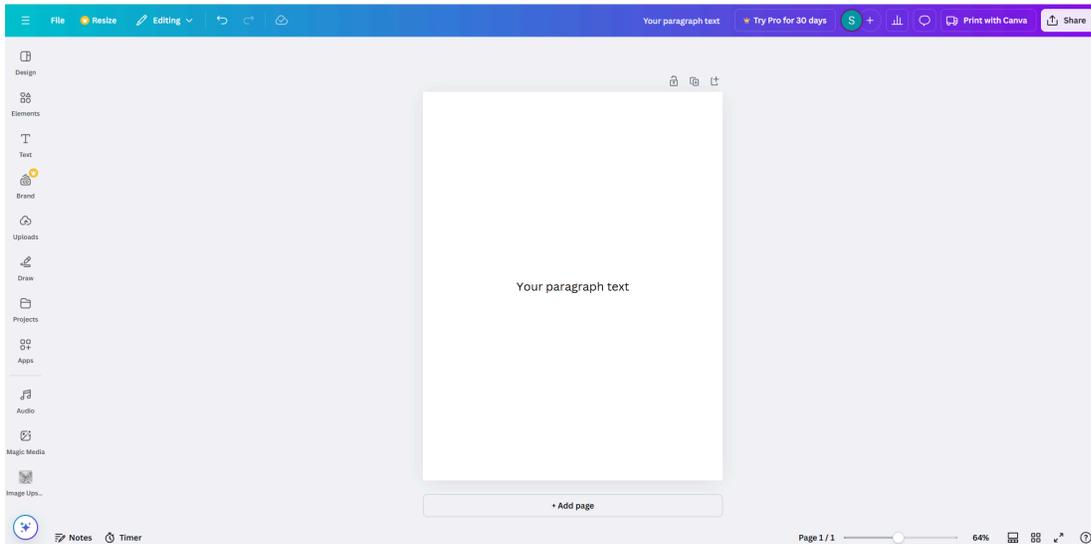


V. Conclusion

Congratulations! You have successfully navigated all of the beginner elements Canva has to offer. Feel welcome to come back to this document any time you may need a refresher.

Troubleshooting

If you are having any problems with your document that this tutorial cannot solve, you can press the “?” button on the bottom right of your screen for more help.



You can also visit the Canva Help Center at <https://www.canva.com/help/> which has in-depth tutorials, as well as an FAQ page.

Credits

“About Canva.” Canva, www.canva.com/about/.

“Canva Help Center.” Canva, <https://www.canva.com/help/>.