

LEARNING MADE EASY



Canva[®]

for
dummies[®]
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Explore the various
versions of Canva

Use templates to unlock
your inner designer

Create flyers, posters, and
social media posts

Jesse Stay



Canva[®]

by Jesse Stay

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Canva® For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2024951716

ISBN 978-1-394-28560-0 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-394-28561-7 (EPUB); ISBN 978-1-394-28562-4 (EPDF)

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Introduction

Welcome to *Canva For Dummies* — your step-by-step reference for unlocking the power of Canva, no matter your experience level. If you've ever thought that creating beautiful designs requires a degree in graphic arts or years of experience, you're in for a surprise. Canva makes professional-quality design accessible to everyone.

Before diving in, I want to share a little about myself. I'm not a graphic designer by trade. In fact, I started my career in software development. Back then, whenever I needed marketing materials or visually engaging content, I would hire graphic designers to help me. As my career evolved and I began to shift into marketing and running my own digital marketing agency, I quickly realized that being able to create my own visuals would save both time and money. That's when I discovered Canva, and it completely changed the way I approach design.

If you're feeling a bit out of your depth, trust me — I've been there. Canva's user-friendly interface enables anyone — even those of us without formal design training — to create stunning visuals quickly and easily. Whether you're a small business owner, a teacher seeking Canva knowledge for yourself or your students, or simply someone looking to spruce up their social media presence, this book guides you through everything you need to know to make the most of Canva's powerful tools.

By using this book as a guide, I predict that you won't just be using Canva — you'll be creating designs that grab attention and help elevate your brand. And you can save hours of time thanks to Canva's AI and automation tools!

My mantra throughout this book is that you don't have to be a graphic designer to use Canva! But this book might make you one.

About This Book

This book is packed with hands-on, practical guidance to help you master Canva. I divide its structure into parts and chapters that cover distinct topics. Here's what you can expect to find in the various parts of the book:

» **Part 1: Getting Started with Canva:** I walk you through the essentials — how to sign up, navigate the interface, use templates, and create your first design in Canva. Part 1 gives you all the info you need to feel confident in using Canva, even if you've never opened a design tool before.

» **Part 2: Exploring Canva for Any Purpose:** Whether you need designs for social media, business, or personal projects, this section shows you how to create tailored, professional-quality visuals. In this part, you find out how to customize templates, work with text and images, and apply professional design principles to make your projects stand out. No design degree needed!

Also in Part 2, you can find out why Canva is a dream for business owners and marketers. I show you how to create stunning social media posts, business presentations, logos, and branded assets.

» **Part 3: Expanding Your Canva Adventure:** Here, I dive into advanced features such as video creation, animations, AI-powered tools, and collaboration features that take your Canva skills to the next level. Canva is constantly evolving, and its powerful tools are a game-changer. In this part, you discover how to use AI to generate content and how to automatically adapt your designs to various formats (to match the requirements of specific social media platforms, for example). You also find out how to automate tasks, such as publishing social media posts, so that you can streamline your workflow and save hours of time.

» **Part 4: The Part of Tens:** As always in a *For Dummies* book, this last part offers lists of ten items (such as quick tips and tricks) to give you special insights and help you maximize your Canva experience.

While you read the book, take note of the following conventions for presenting information that you find throughout:

» **A hierarchical chapter structure:** Each chapter uses two to three levels of headings to break up the text into manageable chunks.

» **Use of italics:** When you see a word or phrase presented in italics, look for that term to be defined for you in the surrounding text. Italics can also indicate a search term for use in Canva.

- » **Numbered or bulleted lists:** The numbered lists are step-by-step instructions that lead you through a process for creating designs, delivering your designed messaging, and so on. The bulleted lists break down a topic point by point.

Foolish Assumptions

Serving you, the readers, is the reason for this book's existence. While writing, I made the following assumptions about you related to your desire for Canva knowledge:

- » **You are either a beginner** with using Canva or have set up an account and are looking for help with navigating the Canva interface.
- » **You are not a graphic artist** nor are you particularly experienced with design theory — such as use of color and contrast, placement of design elements, and visual consistency.
- » **You want to become confident** when you use Canva, and you have a compelling reason for needing to design great materials.
- » **You may see a slightly different Canva experience** due to the browser you're using and other differences in the hardware or software you use.

Icons Used in This Book

Scattered throughout the book, you find colorful icons that point out a tidbit of information that you may find particularly useful in various ways. These icons are



REMEMBER

This icon emphasizes information that you should attempt to retain in your memory. If you can remember these special points, you'll quickly become a Canva wizard!



TIP

This icon calls attention to any tip or trick that you can use to enhance your Canva experience.



WARNING

If you see this icon, read its information! Heeding the advice here can help you avoid costly mistakes like losing your work.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the content you find in this book, I also provide an online Cheat Sheet that offers you tips and insights into how to use Canva. To find it, go to www.dummies.com and search for *Canva For Dummies Cheat Sheet*.

But there's more! As you read through this book, I highly recommend also visiting the companion website, <https://jessestay.com/canvabook>. There, you can find a treasure-trove of additional resources designed to help you succeed with learning and using Canva:

- » **Downloadable templates:** Each chapter has matching templates and figures that you can use directly in your own Canva designs. These templates are perfect for following along or for jumpstarting your projects.
- » **Exclusive resources:** Explore additional content mentioned throughout the book, such as my advanced courses on Canva and getting an additional, unofficial certification in Canva from me that you can put on a resume, interactive whiteboards, and design examples. I also offer live events such as workshops with insider tips and Q&A sessions.

The website also includes links to my social media handles on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly known as Twitter), so feel free to connect with me for updates, exclusive offers, and tips. I also offer coaching and training for individuals and teams. If your company is looking to improve its visual branding or integrate Canva into your daily operations, I can help. Whether you're just starting or looking to master the Canva platform, I've created this site to help you succeed. Be sure to bookmark it and refer back often as you progress through the book.

Where to Go from Here

Feel free to read the *Canva For Dummies* book from cover to cover. Or you can refer to the Table of Contents, find a section of interest, and go directly to it. Or look up topics in the index and skip around to the sections that interest you most.

No matter where you start, you'll find clear, practical advice to help you make the most of Canva.

1 Getting Started with Canva

IN THIS PART . . .

Get to know Canva's features and how Canva helps users design beautiful visuals with ease.

Create designs with pre-made templates and simple tools.

Dive deeper into professional techniques, discover how to build a brand, and apply design principles.

- » Finding out what Canva is all about
- » Establishing an account with Canva
- » Exploring the Canva editor
- » Discovering Canva resources
- » Looking into the Canva community

Chapter **1**

Familiarizing Yourself with Canva

Welcome to what I'm sure will soon become your new favorite design tool — Canva! Canva is for everyone, and with Canva at your disposal, you can create stunning visuals quickly and easily. Looking to whip up a flyer? How about a presentation? Or perhaps you're looking to spice up your social media graphics.

Whatever your design needs are, Canva's simple interface — combined with the design platform's extensive library of more than 4.5 million templates — makes professional-quality designs accessible to everyone.

In this chapter, I show you the basics of how to set up a Canva account. You also discover how to navigate through the Canva interface and get a first look at the Canva Editor. I dive into various components of the Canva Editor so you can dig in and start your first design, immediately!

Discovering the Value of Canva

Canva transforms complex design tasks into simple, quick actions with its user-friendly interface. This tool is perfect for users of all skill levels, from small business owners to teachers, to individuals wanting to enhance their digital presence, and even kids!

A few examples of the value you can get from Canva include the following:

- » **Simplicity:** Are you worried about another complex app to learn how to use because you're not a designer? Neither am I (a designer that is), and I want you to worry no more! Canva's easy-to-use, drag-and-drop interface makes design as easy as clicking or tapping on the graphic or other element you want in your design and dragging it to a pre-made template. I show you how to do this in this chapter and then dive deeper in Chapter 2.
- » **An extensive library of templates and design elements:** Canva has more than 4.5 million templates and many more figures, icons, images, videos, and so on that you can use to your heart's desire. In minutes, you can create anything you can think of. Do you need a resume? Canva has a template for that! How about invitations for a birthday party? Canva has that template, as well. Or what about an Instagram or Facebook reel, or TikTok video? Canva even has templates to create those. If you want to start browsing these templates immediately, skip to Chapter 3 and I show you how!
- » **Collaborative features for your team:** Canva can enhance productivity by enabling collaboration across teams in real time. Users can co-edit projects, share feedback directly on the design through comments, and even manage team roles and permissions (see Chapter 9 if you want to know why that's important).
- » **Cost effectiveness:** Even with Canva's free plan, you still get a robust suite of features that meet most of your basic design needs. For advanced features, Canva Pro is available at an affordable monthly or yearly cost (which many employers, schools, and other organizations will cover) and offers capabilities such as
 - A brand-kit builder that helps you maintain a certain look and feel of design projects for your business or school across all team members (see Chapter 6 for more).
 - A background remover that enables you to clean up the backgrounds in your photos (shown in Chapter 10).
 - A vast stock photo and video library you can access to add pizzazz to your designs (as you can find in Chapter 3).



These pro features (and others) are cost-effective solutions compared to traditional design software (such as Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, or even Adobe Express). You even get some pretty impressive AI features.

The best part is that Canva makes their Pro features free for the first 30 days! Canva has the potential to replace many costly parts of building a business by helping you automate processes (such as creating social media posts in bulk) that could typically cost thousands of dollars! If you find this unbelievable, skip to Chapter 12 for specific tips.

Canva democratizes design by providing tools and templates that are easy to use for any person, in any role, with any skillset. The result? Beautifully crafted materials that look so amazing that — and be careful — your boss or teacher might just assign you as the officially designated designer for your team or class!

Understanding Canva's reach

The beautiful thing about Canva is this: Virtually anyone (not just a graphic designer) looking to create a visually appealing design can benefit from Canva. Consider it “the graphic designer in your pocket.” With Canva at your disposal, you can have a virtual graphic designer available to you anywhere you go. Check out Canva for these roles,

- » **Entrepreneurs:** As an entrepreneur, you can use Canva to create marketing materials that capture attention and engage viewers. Or use it to map out your business plan in a visually appealing way.
- » **Job seekers:** Getting to know the Canva editor interface later in this chapter, Canva is a great tool for creating resumes and cover letters, or just to show off your newfound Canva skills through design portfolios, or even pitch decks for those seeking investment.
- » **Teachers and students:** If you are a teacher, you can use Canva to design educational materials that make learning exciting and visually stimulating. Even students — such as my kids — use Canva in their classrooms to create presentations and prepare visually stimulating reports and assignments.

Here's what my daughter, Emily, says about how she uses Canva in her school:

“I use Canva for making videos, presentations, and documents for homework and school projects. If I am the owner of a presentation in Canva, I can make it so that none of my classmates can edit the stuff in the presentations I share with them.

Canva also has a series of fun apps to use, for example, an AI to generate pictures or a mathematical equation inserter. Canva makes all of my school projects fun!”

» **Social media managers:** You may also be a social media manager or digital marketer (like me) looking to simplify your social media content calendars for your employer or clients. See Figure 1-1 for a sample of such a calendar. With Canva, you have a handy tool that includes built-in templates already designed to produce posts that increase engagement and grow your following.

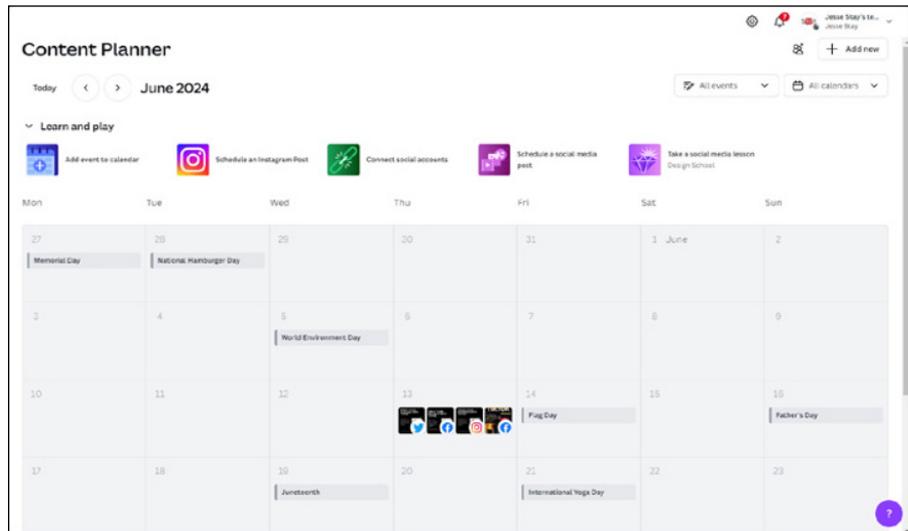


FIGURE 1-1:
A sample
calendar of
social media
content posts.

Using Canva features in your design role

No matter what your role entails at your company, school, organization, or non-profit, I have no doubt that Canva can provide some value for you in that role. With the millions of templates and graphics available to you, something in Canva can make your design tasks easier and more efficient!

Table 1-1 shows the many design roles for which Canva may be of help and tells which features and templates Canva provides to simplify the work of each role.



REMEMBER

Canva is designed to make professional-quality design accessible to everyone, even those without any background in graphic design.

TABLE 1-1**Canva Assistance for Any Design Role**

Role	Common Tasks	Canva Templates
Small Business Owners	Brand Kits, print products, and Magic Resize for platform-specific designs	Business cards, flyers, posters, product labels, gift certificates, menu designs, social media posts, and ads
Marketers	Automatic social media content publishing; eye-catching animations, graphics, and videos; website design and hosting	Marketing presentations, email headers and campaign designs, infographics and reports, social media kits and event invitations
Graphic Designers	Advanced Pro Tools; customizable templates; website design and hosting; real-time team and client collaboration tools	Logo and branding designs, brochures, business cards, pitch decks, client presentations, website banners, layout, and graphics
Teachers	Educational content templates, class presentations, instructional materials, interactive student worksheets	Lesson plan and presentations, classroom posters and infographics, student certificates, subject-matter designs
Students	Report templates, group collaboration tools, study aids and materials, infographics	Project reports and graphics, study and presentation guides, presentation, portfolios, and resumes
Non-profit Organizations	Designs for fundraising and awareness campaigns, social media graphics, volunteer-recruitment flyers	Fundraising posters and invitations, volunteer flyers, email campaigns, annual report layouts, social media campaigns
Social Media Managers	Professional post templates, engagement-boosting GIFs and animations, built-in performance metrics analytics, schedule social media posts	Social media posts (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok), stories and videos, content calendars and planners
Event Planners	Invitations, posters and flyers, custom event menu designs	Event invitations, save-the-dates, event posters and flyers, menus, programs, and schedule layouts
Real Estate Agents	Listing flyer design and printing, business card design and printing, social media ads	Real estate flyers, business cards, open house invitations, feature sheets, and neighborhood profiles
Bloggers and Content Creators	Blog graphic database, custom YouTube thumbnails, cover design for guides, ebooks, and reports	Blog banners and posts, infographics, how-to guides, ebook covers, content previews, thumbnails, and channel art

Setting Up Your Canva Account

As I mention in the section “Discovering the Value of Canva” earlier in the chapter, you have cost-effective choices regarding how you choose to interact with Canva. Canva provides 3 tiers of accounts — Free, Pro, and Teams — that give access to different features, which I break down in Chapters 2 and 10.

Canva also offers an Enterprise tier, which you find out about by contacting Canva directly. Or you can hire a consultant (ahem, like me) to offer advice and plans for implementing the Enterprise tier in a larger organization. Full coverage of this tier is beyond the scope of the book, but I do mention some of the advantages of the Enterprise versions in Chapter 9.

At the time of this writing, the prices range from free to at least \$30 per month for a set number of team members (with an additional \$10 per team member above that number), depending on the features you want to access.



REMEMBER

For the purposes of this book, I assume you are using at least a Pro account, so I suggest signing up with Canva Pro to at least acclimate yourself with the best of Canva (I provide a link to where you can get a 30-day free trial to Canva Pro at <https://jessestay.com/canvapro>).

To begin creating designs, I advise that you set up a Canva account. The process takes only a few minutes.

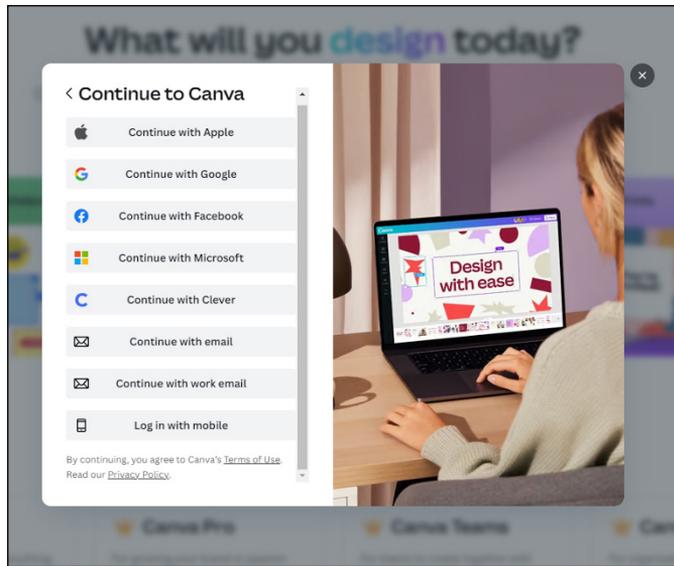
Going through the sign-up process

Follow these steps to create your Canva account from your computer:

- 1. Open the web browser on your computer.**
Launch your preferred web browser, such as Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge.
- 2. Type `www.canva.com` in the browser's address bar and press Enter to go to the Canva website.**
- 3. On the Canva homepage, click the Sign Up button to initiate the sign-up process.**
- 4. Choose a registration option from the pop-up window that appears.**

You can register, for example, by using an email, Google, or Facebook account (see Figure 1-2 for the complete list).

FIGURE 1-2: A list of the different sign-up options that appears (your options may vary).



5. Provide the details required by your registration method.

If using email, enter your email address along with your password. For Google or Facebook, follow the prompts to log in. You may see a couple of more questions to answer — answer those to the best of your ability.

6. Check your email for a verification message from Canva and then click on the verification link (if provided), or enter the code provided in the email to activate your account.

After you finish signing up, Canva directs you to your new Canva homepage, which is the command center for all your design activities.

Navigating the homepage

The Canva homepage is the first thing you see when logging into Canva. This “home base” of the Canva interface is the place you can return to at any point to get access to everything you need to start creating designs in Canva. The homepage includes a listing of tabs on the left and a viewing pane on the right (see Figure 1-3). When you click (or tap) a tab listing on the left, the viewing page changes based on which tab you chose. For example, if you click

» **Home**, you see a search bar for accessing your content (or Canva’s) and — directly under the search bar — suggestions for the types of products you can design (Docs, Whiteboards, Presentations, and so on; see Figure 1-3) near the

top of the viewing pane. You can click on this tab, or the Canva logo in the upper left at any time to return to this page.

» **Projects**, you see your recent projects, manage your saved designs, and start new projects from existing ones.

» **Templates**, you can browse through an extensive list of design templates.

When in doubt, just search for what you want! On the Canva homepage, you find a big search bar. Click on the bar, type in anything you want to find, and press Enter. Canva will likely bring up what you are looking for. You have many parts to explore on the homepage, some of which show up in Figure 1-3.

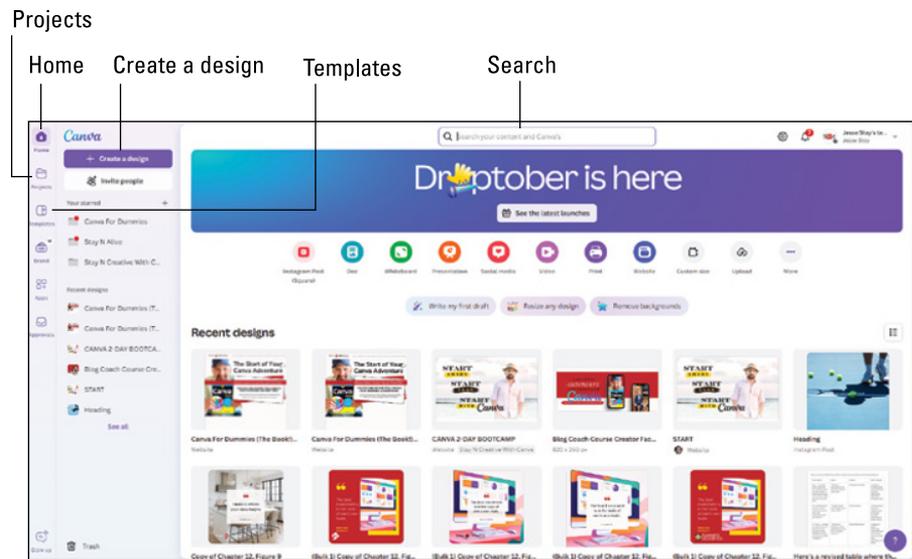


FIGURE 1-3: When you log into Canva, you arrive at a homepage with many options.



TIP

If you see any other tabs such as Brand, Apps, or Magic Studio, don't worry; I tell you more about those in Chapter 9.

Customizing your user profile

With a fresh, new Canva account, you can immediately start using it. But to make the most out of Canva, take a moment to customize your profile to add things like your name and a profile picture and make the entire experience a little more personal (this extra effort is particularly useful when accessing Canva's Team features, which I describe in Chapter 9).

To adjust your profile from the homepage, follow these steps:

1. **Click your account button at the right end of the top bar.**
2. **Click the Settings option in the drop-down menu that appears.**

You arrive at your account settings page, or the Your Account tab that looks something like Figure 1-4.

Alternatively, you can reach this same page by clicking the Settings icon (it looks like a gear) in the top bar of the homepage.

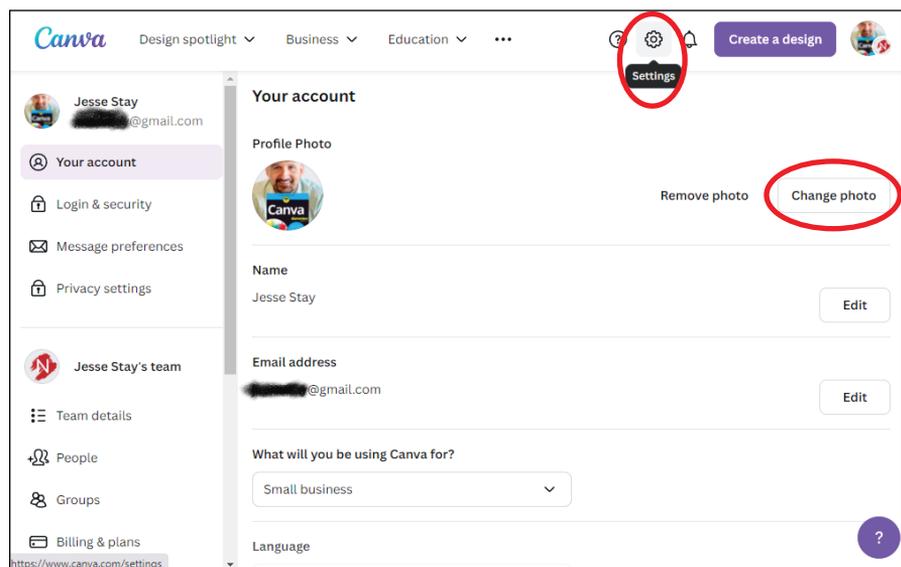


FIGURE 1-4: Your account settings look something like this page.

3. **Tap the Upload Photo or Change Photo button that you find near the upper right of the page.**

If you haven't yet uploaded a photo to your Canva account, you see the Upload Photo button; if you have, you see the Change Photo button.

4. **Browse your computer to select a photo from your hard drive and press Enter on your keyboard to upload or change the photo.**