Creating a New Document with Bleeds/Adding Bleeds Using InDesign

The following instructions will describe creating a new document with bleed, and editing an existing document to add bleeds in InDesign.

Bleed refers to printing that goes beyond the trim area of the printed sheet. Meaning, elements will be printed to the edge of the sheet once completed. Due to minor variations in sheet positioning through presses, it is imperative that bleeds be defined, and used, when creating a document with printing that goes to the edge.

Anything that you want to print to the edge of the sheet needs to be setup using bleeds.
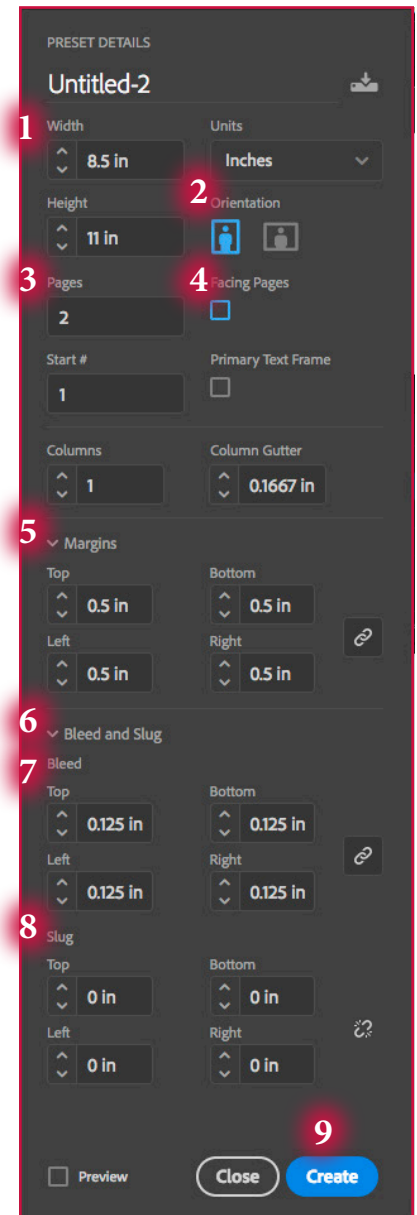
New Document with Bleeds

After opening InDesign, go to File > New Document.

1. Enter in the final size of your piece.

2. You can change the orientation of the document by selecting the portrait or landscape options.

3. Choose the number of pages your document will contain.

4. Only use facing pages for saddle stitch and perfect bound books, as this is intended for documents that have pages touching, or facing, each other (coil bound books, packets, etc., do not fall into this category as they aren't physically touching). It does not give proper bleeds in the center of the two pages, referred to as a spread, for other documents. Instead of using the four sides of the page for bleed, it uses three sides of the page, and the fourth side, which is the inside, will use everything from the neighboring page for its bleed. This will cause issues with any other documents when it comes to printing as there won't be any bleed information for that page on the inside. So, set the document up without facing pages for all documents except saddle stitch and perfect bound books to ensure that all four sides of the page have bleed.

   Adobe products will automatically convert values entered to the default unit of measurement as long as the unit is specified according to that unit's syntax. For example, entering ".125 in" will convert to "0p9" if the default unit of measurement is picas.
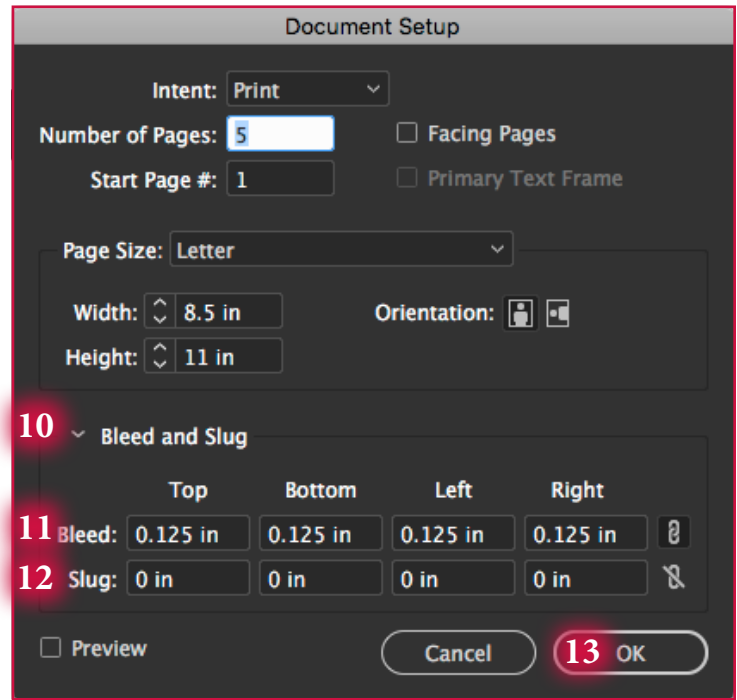
5. The default margin is set to a half inch (.5 in or 3p0) this is preferred and should be used on coil books, perfect binds, and 3 hole drilled documents. However, do not go closer than (.375 in or 2p3) for perfect binds, a quarter inch (.25 in or 1p6) on booklets, or an eighth inch (.125 in or 0p9) on everything else. This accommodates for minor variations in alignment, referred to as registration, that occurs during printing and finishing processes.

6. There is an option for bleed and slug, click the arrow next to "Bleed and Slug" to expand these options if you do not see an area to enter these values.

7. Standard bleed value is an eighth inch (.125 in or 0p9) set this value if you are using bleed, it can also be set for any job as it does not affect the layout.

8. Slug is an option that allows you to have elements print outside the defined area of your document. This is often used to place marks that indicate where to fold, perforate, score, etc.

9. Once all of these options have been set, click the "Create" button to create the new document.

Adding Bleeds to an Existing Document

With the file open, go to File > Document Setup.

10. There is an option for "Bleed and Slug", click the arrow next to it to expand these options if you do not see an area to enter these values.

11. Standard bleed value is an eighth inch (.125 in or 0p9) set this value if you are using bleed, it can also be set for any job as it does not affect the layout.

12. Slug is an option that allows you to have elements print outside the defined area of your document. This is often used to place marks that indicate where to fold, perforate, score, etc.

13. Once all of these options have been set, click the "OK" button to create the new document.

What You Will See in Your Document Once You've Selected Create/OK

Depending on the values you entered, you will see one box, indicating no margins, bleeds, or slug are being used, to four boxes, indicating that margins, bleeds, and slug are being used. Typically, you will see three boxes, as slug is not used in most cases. They are identifiable based on color, and are as follows, starting with the innermost box;

Purple indicates the margin.

Black indicates the final size of the document (if the margin is set to zero Purple will take its place).

Red indicates the bleed.

Blue indicates the slug.

Any elements that you would like printing to the edges of the sheet, need to be drawn beyond the black box to the red box.

Remember to save often when designing any document.

When you are finished designing your document, you need to package it. This ensures that all fonts and links remain with the document. Not only is this beneficial to those who may be working on this later, but, it is the perfect solution for making sure all of the elements used with the job never get lost.