

BOOK COVER



GENIUS

Book Cover Design 101: How Create Professional-Quality Book Covers Using Templates

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Introduction



In this lesson professional ebook designer Tony Laidig offers his expertise on the best techniques to use when you design your book covers. Tony is a graphic designer, a master photographer, and a kindle publisher himself. Some of the topics that will be discussed in this lesson include:

- Why good design matters
- What are the attributes of a BAD cover?
- What makes a GOOD cover?
- Design basics
- Color scheme secrets
- Why using templates makes sense
- And much more!

Why Good Design Matters

We all know the saying “A book is judged by its cover”; this is absolutely true. Some marketing experts have stated that design really doesn’t matter and that it really comes down to the quality of information. This is wrong. If this were true, companies all over the world wouldn’t invest so much time, money, and effort into the appearance of anything including the labels on their product, the commercials they make, etc.

Why Good Design Matters...

A Book Is Judged...

- We are visual people
- You communicate on multiple levels
 - Color
 - Graphics
 - Font Choices
 - Title Info



Designing Covers w/Templates



The reason why design matters so much is that humans are highly visual by nature. When you use a particular book cover, you’re not just conveying the title of your book. You are actually communicating with an audience on multiple levels, whether you realize it or not. You are communicating through:

- the colors that you choose
- the graphics you present
- the fonts choices that you make
- the title info

For example, when you use certain colors you may be setting a certain tone for your book, or you may be reiterating the title of your book with the graphic that you choose. To get a better idea of what a book cover needs, start by looking at what doesn’t work well.

Bad Cover Designs

There are certain elements that you will want to stay away from when designing your book's cover. Look at the book cover below, for example. It has a number of problems which we can learn from. One of the problems with this book cover is that it has been framed with a black background. Most of the time when a design has a frame, it shows that you are not confident in what you are doing. Sometimes frames can be useful in design, but in most cases you don't need them.



The biggest mistake made in this design is that your eye doesn't know where to land. By looking at this you would be led to believe that the most important part of this cover is "How to Report". One reason for this confusion is that there are so many different fonts and font sizes being used here. You really don't want to use more than a couple of different fonts. In fact, you should never use more than three fonts.

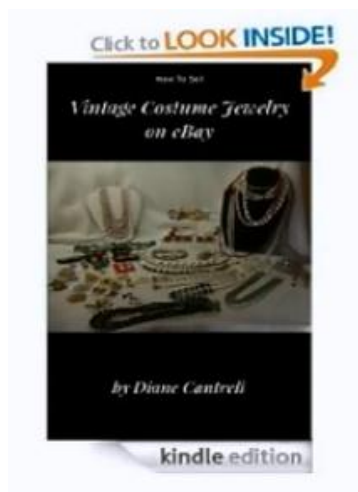
Using too many special effects, such as the 3-D effects and the drop shadows, really doesn't make it look better either. Instead, it really gives the impression that the author didn't put any money or effort into the book's design, which will turn people off. Furthermore, it doesn't do any good to put efforts into the promotion of your book if people are not attracted to it when they find it.



In the book cover above, the color purple was not a good choice, as it is completely disconnected with the subject matter of the book. You want all of the elements in your book cover to have a purpose and to convey a message. Another design problem with this book cover is that the words in the subtitle come all the way to the edge of the cover. Normally, you want there to be some space left between the words and the cover's edge. This is better than the last book cover, however. Here, at least your eye is drawn to the title first.

The real problem with this cover is the continuity of its design. The pictures, for example, clash with each other. If you look closely, one picture has a black background where the rest have a white background for the most part. Even the white plates have a different color tone to them, which breaks up the continuity between the pictures. Finally, the pictures are not laid out in a way that is inviting, which is what you would want in a book of this subject matter.

A template is good to use, but it doesn't solve all of your problems. The book cover that you see below was actually created using a template, which is one of the reasons why it looks more visually appealing than some of the previous covers, but it still has some problems. Take a moment to see if you can identify some of the problems...



One of the major problems with this book's cover is its black background. There are certain times when black would be the best color to use, but not in this case. First of all, people generally associate the color black with things like nighttime, darkness, failure, and death. This book is about selling vintage costume jewelry on eBay. Therefore, you would want to use a lighter color, since it would better communicate ideas like happiness and success.

Another problem with this book cover is that the fonts are the same size, so again your eye is not drawn into what is most important, which in most cases is the book's title. It is good that the "How to Sell" portion of the title is smaller than the rest, however. The photograph is also very dingy looking, as though it is under exposed, which would not be attractive to many consumers.



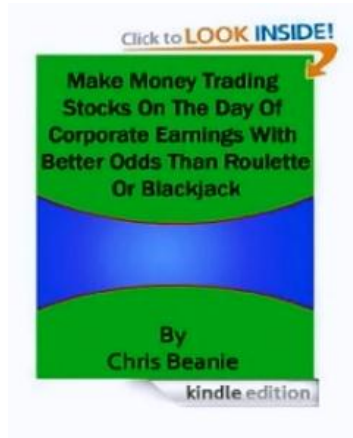
The book cover above is a good example to learn from because there are a number of different mistakes within it which are commonly made by people who are not professional designers.

This includes mistakes like:

1. The author's name does not appear on the cover. This would make many people think that this book was merely a 'hack book' put together only for profit.
2. The title and the subtitle are in the same sized font. So, your eye is actually drawn more toward the subtitle.
3. The pictures are being used incorrectly. This is a common problem, according to Tony Laidig:

Many people try to communicate their whole book through the pictures on the front cover. Here the author is trying to demonstrate how many different ways that you can use photography to make a profit. Instead, you should use one quality photo to communicate, as best you can, the message of the book.

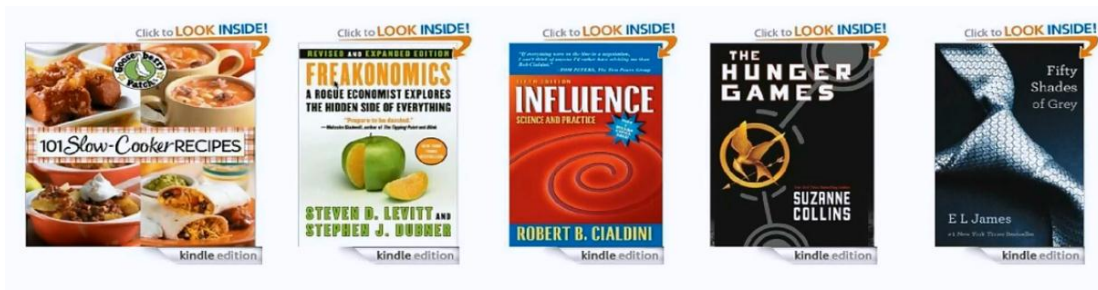
4. The book cover claims to help you to sell photography, and yet it itself isn't well designed. So, who would believe that they would be able to learn from this book?



Look at the book cover directly above. Even someone who knows little about design can easily recognize that this is not a well designed cover. One mistake which is easily noticed is the neon colors that were used. When you use neon colors it is kind of like typing in all caps, it makes you feel as though you're being screamed at. Also, the title is far too long or unfocused.

The biggest problem with the book's cover is really that the cover looks foolishly made and in no way professional, and yet the title suggests that it contains smart secrets. This makes you say to yourself "This guy is supposed to teach me how to get rich selling stocks, but he can't even design a descent book cover? Yea, right." So, yet again, the book's cover contradicts with the subject matter of the book.

Good Cover Designs



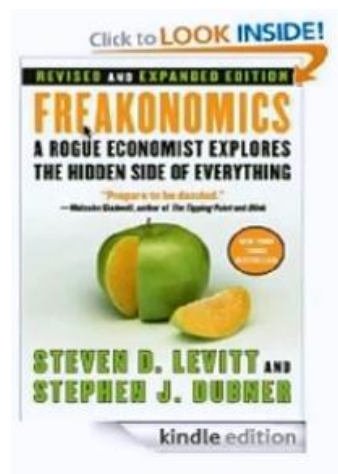
The book covers placed above are examples of what you should be going for when designing a cover. There are a number of basic elements which make these book covers far better designed than the previous books. These book covers are:

- Consistent in their design
- Designed to draw the eye to the title
- Contain simple graphic elements
- Very simple, balanced, and clean in appearance

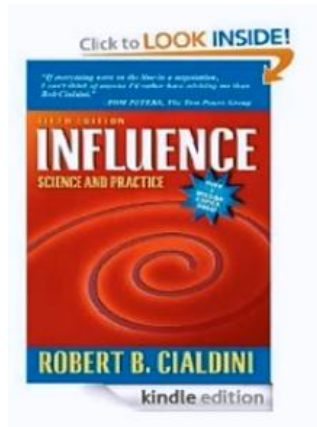
So, for contrast, take a second to look at these book covers a little closer...



This book cover has some problems, but for the most part it works. This book doesn't have an author name listed, but it doesn't really matter since the book shows a company logo. There is a consistency between the photographs. The photos all have the same tone and fit together in the same color scheme. Even the color pallet behind the title fits well into the rest of the color scheme.



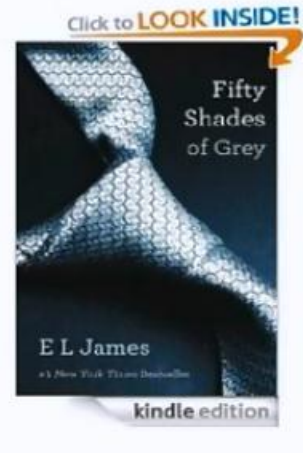
The *Freakonomics* book cover contains a lot of copy, but the designer(s) handled this very well. They use the different sizes and colors of the fonts effectively, in order to draw your eye into the right places. The picture in the center also draws you in. It is simple and well placed; therefore, it does not feed into all of the copy, adding to the clutter.



The book cover for *Influence* is very clean and well balance. The graphic is simple, but communicates the message of the book very well.



The Hunger Games has a black background, but it fits with the subject matter of the book, which addresses kids killing kids. The design is very simple and very clean looking. Your eye knows exactly where to land first and can follow to other points of interest in the cover.

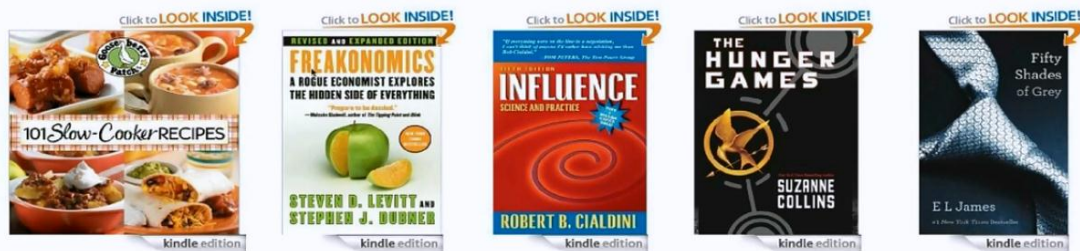


The cover designers of this book broke a few rules, but they did so effectively. The graphic that is used communicates the subject matter of the book well. The book is titled *Fifty Shades of Grey*, but Grey is a person, so the grey tie symbolizes the color and also is subtly indicative of a person.

Forcing the Reader to Open the Book with Design

Why Good Design Matters...

GOOD Cover Design...



Designing Covers w/Templates



To recap, there are certain techniques that a designer should always use in order to insure that their book cover is attractive to potential customers. Some basic rules that you should understand before attempting to design your own covers, they include:

Simple and clean design – This really matters. It is smart to keep things as simple as you can.

Professional images – In the overall look of your design, professional images can make a big difference. Essentially, quality images make the design. Even if you are a good photographer, it is well worth it to pay for the right photo. You will probably find a much better fit for communicating the subject of your book and this will save you tons of time. You can visit websites such as Photos.com and DreamsTime.com for this.

Consistency in lettering – Never use more than 3 fonts. If you look at the 'Good Cover Designs' in the image above, none of these have more than 3 fonts. Even in *101 Slow-Cooker-Recipes*, there are only three fonts even if you count the logo.

Color schemes – Color schemes are important because a well balanced color scheme is attractive to the eye. On the other hand, a bad color scheme tends to repel the eye. Consider the clothes people wear for instance. If a person is dressed in clothes that go well together, people have a tendency to be more attracted to them than they would be to someone whose outfit clashes. ColorSchemeDesigner.com is a website that can help you to choose color schemes for your book cover.

Drawing the eye – As humans, our minds strive for balance and tend to look for patterns; this is simply part of the way that we are naturally programmed to decipher the world around us. We also tend to try to find pathways to distinguish between the things that we perceive. Therefore, a design needs structure. This is so important, in fact, that this concept is explained in more detail below.

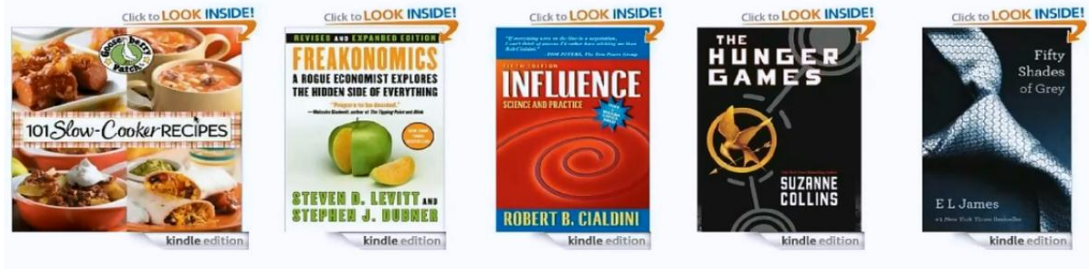
Creating a Logical Path in Your Design Structure

As stated above, the reader's eye needs a logical path to follow. In other words, a reader's eye needs to know where to start and where to go from there. You may not even consciously understand why, but when you see something (like a design cover) where things are not well-placed, your tendency is not to like it and the reason is that it does not automatically make sense to you. Basically, when a cover does not lead the eye in a logical way, subconsciously this creates a bit of confusion, and naturally you are turned away to avoid this confusion. On the other hand, a well-balanced design will draw you in. This is a secret which designers, advertisers, and other types of artists have understood for centuries.

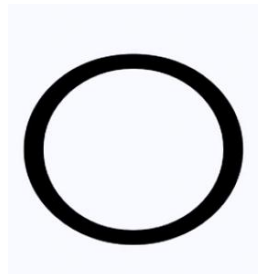


The picture above looks like an advertisement, but it is actually an apparatus designed to help you understand how to layout a design. Each letter is a design path which can help you to direct a person's eye. For instance, when you use the "Z" pattern, you are directing the reader's attention to the top left first and across, then the eye will be drawn down the cover to the bottom left and then across again. The "O" represents designs where the point of interest is naturally encapsulated in the center. The "V" represents designs where the eye is drawn to the top first, and then pulled downward like in a funnel. The "A" is basically a reverse of the "V", where the elements are smaller on the top and things get wider as you go downward.

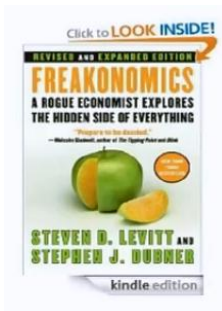
The final symbol, which looks almost like a "9", is actually a mathematical symbol, but it has been used for thousands of years in laying out designs. In fact, some of the most famous artists in history have used this pattern to draw the eye through their paintings. It is called "The Golden Spiral".



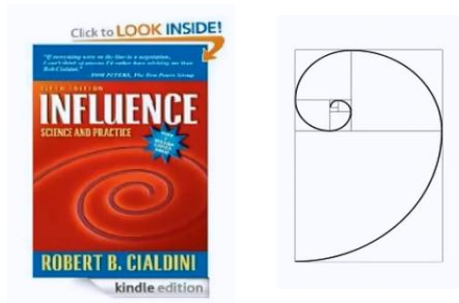
Take a moment to look at the book covers above. Try to see if you can identify any of the patterns that you just learned about.



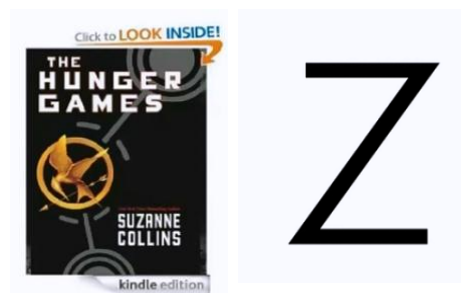
The first book, *101 Slow-Cooker Recipes*, uses the “O” pattern, where attention is drawn into the center.



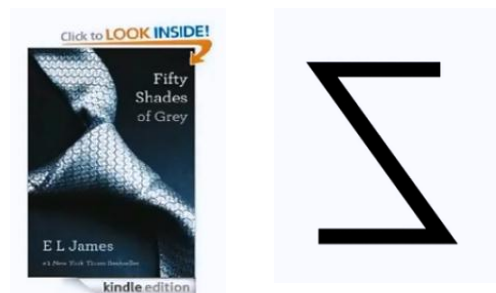
On the other hand, *Freakonomics* uses the “Z” pattern. Your eye is drawn first to the title and sub-title, and then it is drawn towards the apple. If you notice, the apple slice is actually pointing downward, toward the bottom left-hand corner. If the slice had been pointing the other way, this effect wouldn't have worked. Then, of course, your eyes are further down towards the author's names, which we read straight across.



Cialdini's book cover for *Influence* is put together in a clever way using "The Golden Spiral". If you'll notice, everything is clustered at the top left-hand corner. So, your eye is first led to the title, up towards the top left, around towards the blue starburst, then your eye is drawn downward and to the lower left-hand corner, right to the beginning of his name.



The Hunger Games uses the "Z" pattern as well. It should be noted that this book is one of the bestselling books on Amazon. Your eye is drawn straight through the top left hand corner, then the graphic leads you down the cover, and then you see the author's name.



The last book, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, is put together in an interesting way. It actually breaks the rules a little by using a reverse "Z" pattern, but this works well. Why? Our eyes are originally drawn to the title first, then down diagonally along the tie towards the bottom right hand corner of the book, which creates the desire to open it. People can't help it; they are naturally programmed to do so. So, a designer that knows what they are doing can actually guide the reader into to the next logical decision, which in this case is to open up the book.

Create a Winning Design with a Template: Photoshop

Why Templates Make Sense...

Quick, Professional Design...

- Plug and Play
- Don't have to be a design professional
- Huge time and money savings
- Don't need expensive software or training



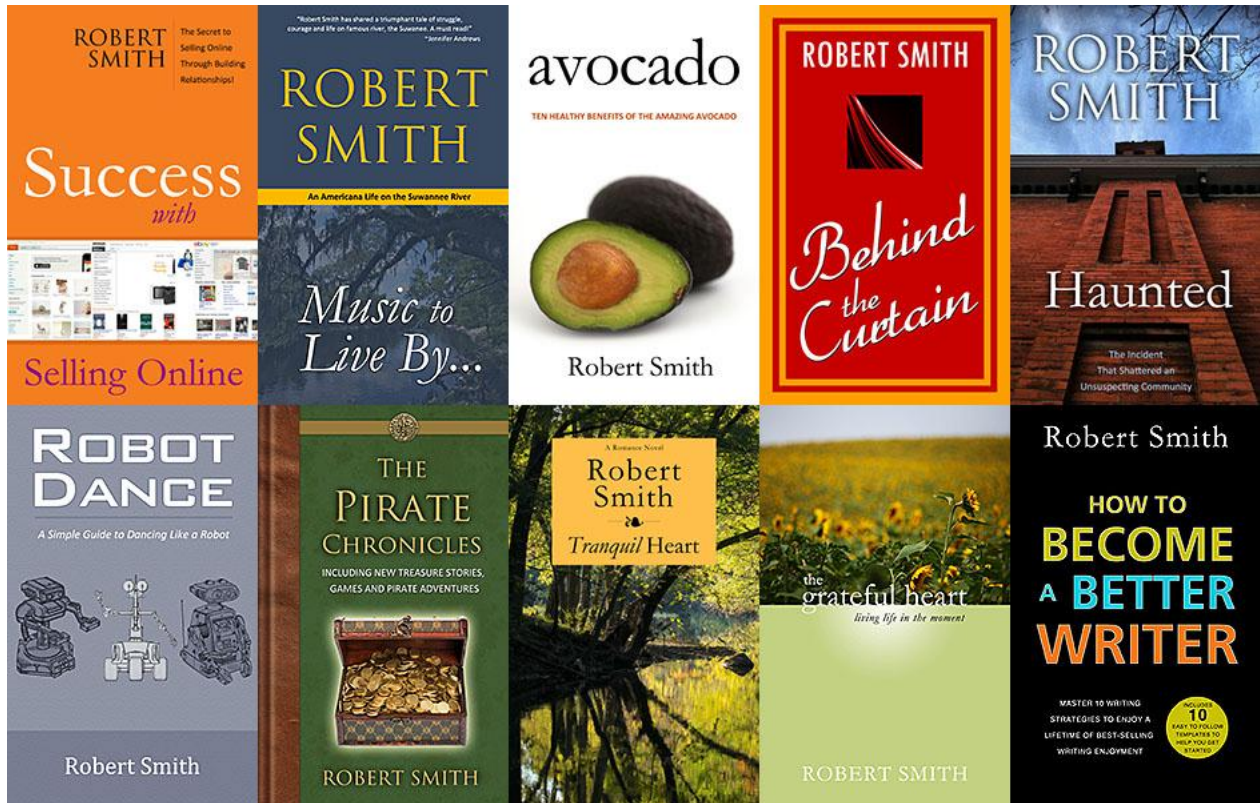
Designing Covers w/Templates

Tony Faidig

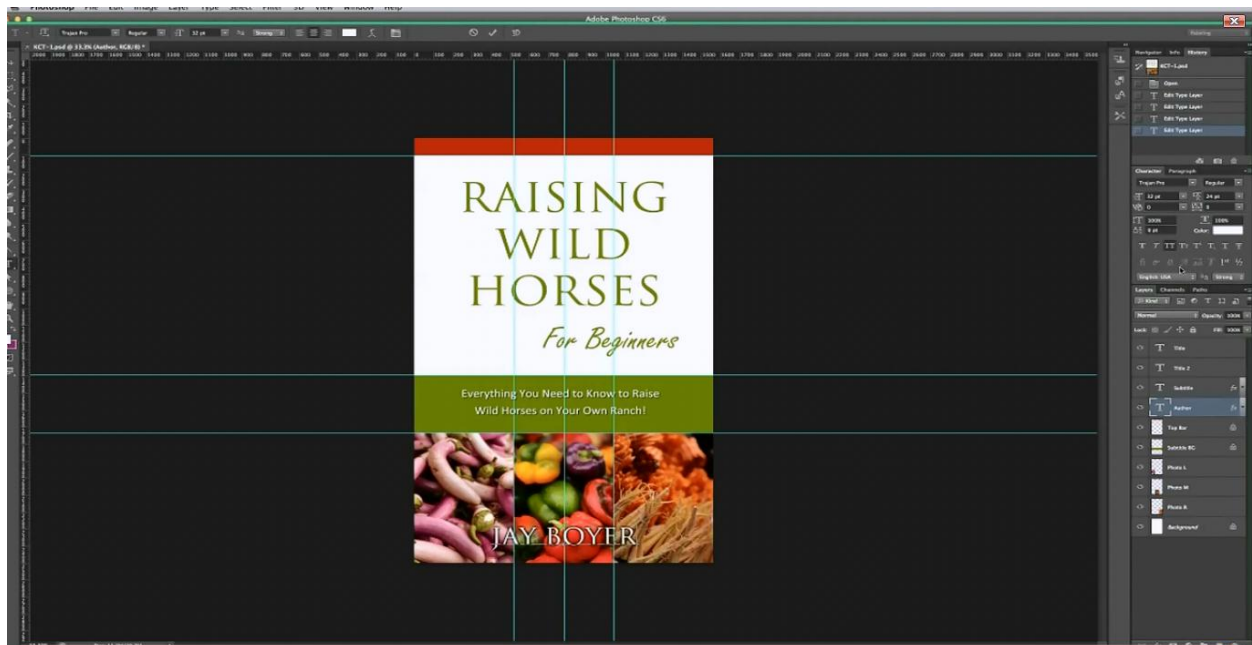


Templates make sense for a number of reasons. This is especially true for people who don't have a lot of experience in design. Templates put professional techniques to use, and you really don't have to know a lot about how these techniques work. Most templates are set up for the designed patterns mentioned in the previous lessons. In other words a lot of the groundwork is already done for you when you use a template.

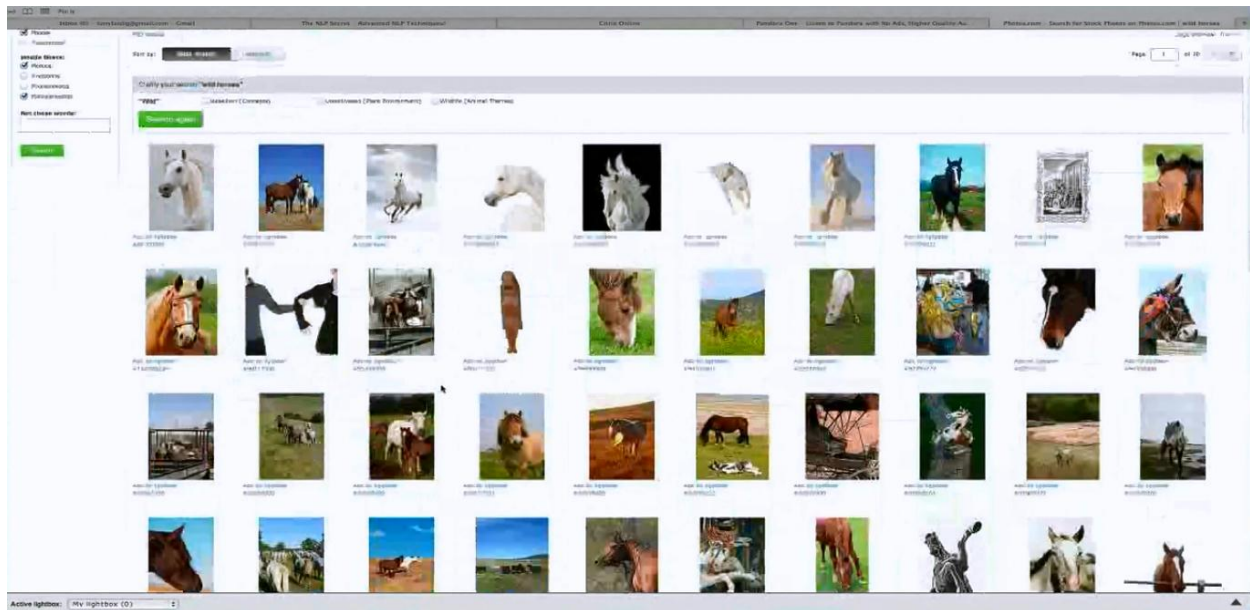
Another benefit of templates is that they will save you a lot of time. For this reason, many design professionals still use them. You also don't need expensive programs or training to use them, as you will learn in this lesson. Additionally, you save money in that you don't have to pay a professional to make your cover, which can cost you \$1,500 or more (that's Tony's fee).



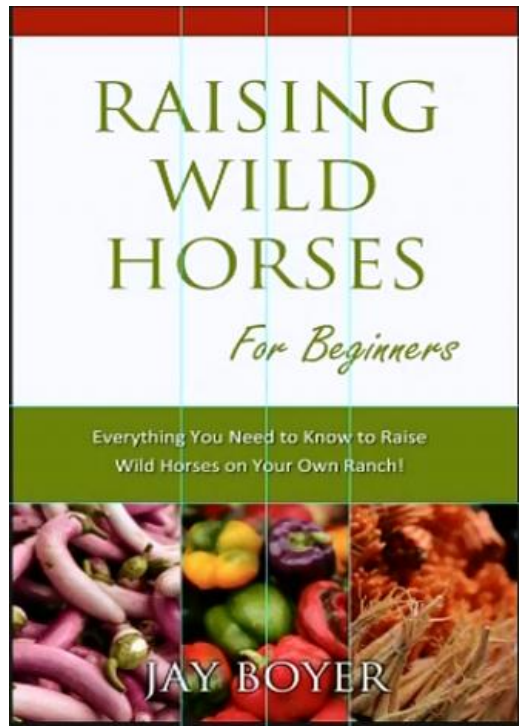
The above image illustrates some of Tony's book templates. In the video lesson, Tony Laidig begins with another template of his for a book titled *Organic Cooking Secrets*. Upon opening it up in Photoshop, Tony demonstrates how to change the title to *Raising Wild Horses* and the author's name to Jay Boyer. He does so by opening the layered PSD file up in Photoshop.



In Photoshop, the text and images are layered. You work with each layer separately. You can see fields for each layer on the right side of the screen. By selecting these fields you are able to edit the text and change the images individually and as needed. You can also keep the same text and color scheme if you choose to. Here he notes that editing text is much simpler in Photoshop in comparison to GimpShop. GimpShop is a free program (you have to pay for Photoshop) but it does have its limitations.

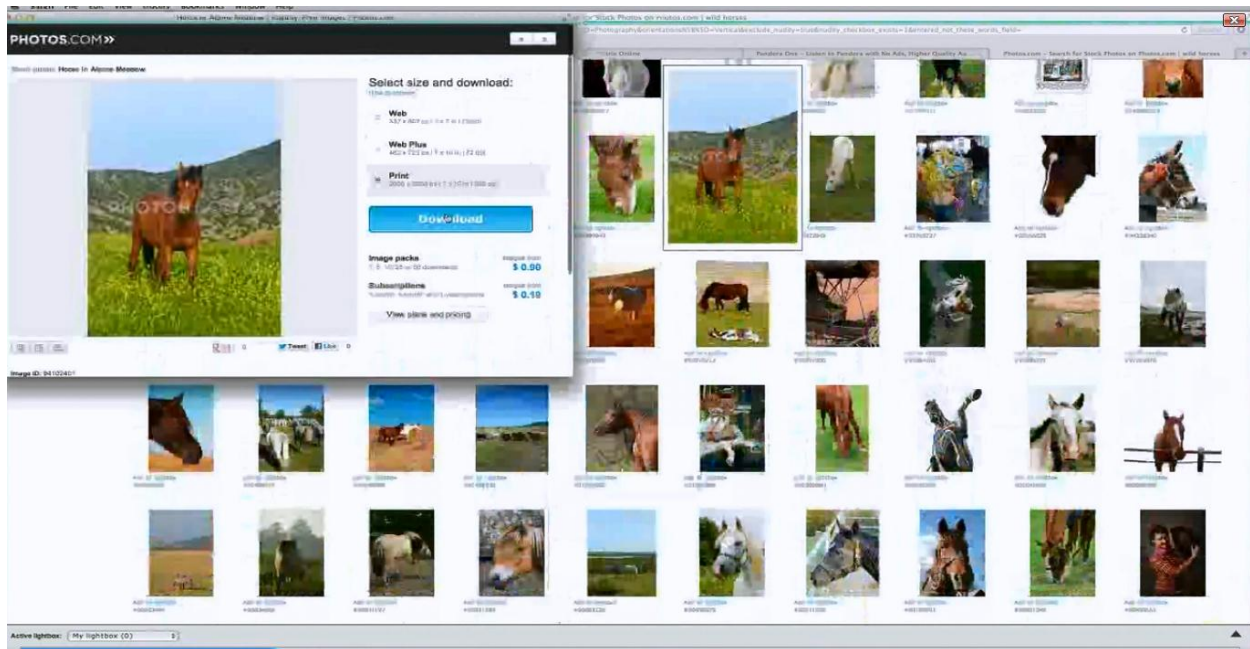


For this example, Tony keeps all of the fonts and some of the wording the same. One of the changes that must be made is in the pictures, because obviously, this is now a book about wild horses. So, the next thing Tony does is search for pictures of horses at Photos.com. There are other websites available for this as well.



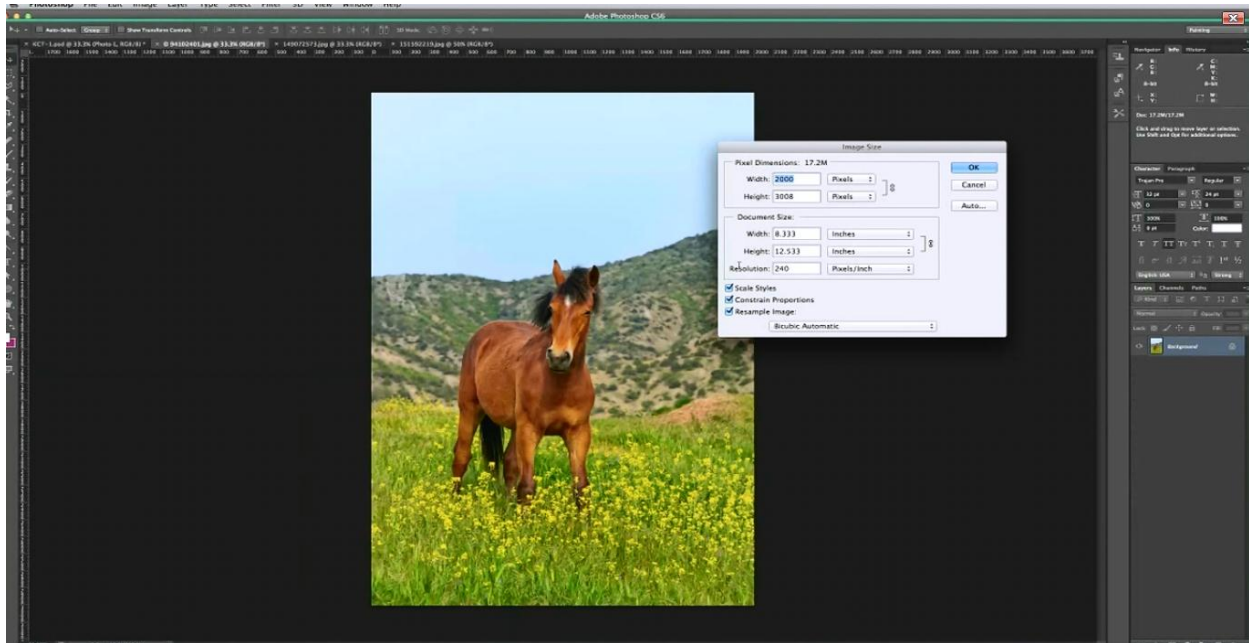
By looking at the book cover above, you will see that there are three photos aligned together at the bottom, and they are all vertical images. One of the advantages of using Photos.com is that you can reset the perimeters of the search, so you can search for only vertical photos of certain perimeters to match up with the images of the template.

You will want to choose photos that are visually related. Meaning that you will want to find photos which fit your color scheme and that would look nicely together. It looks a little better if you choose photos taken from different distances, as this makes it seem like you are “telling a story” with these pictures.



To purchase an image from Photos.com, simply click on it. A menu will then pop up which will allow you to download the image. This is not for free; however, it does not cost a lot to buy the images you want. According to the website, you can download pictures for as low as .90 cents apiece. You can also purchase a 3-month, 6-month, or 1 year subscription for as low as \$19.21 a week.

Once you have downloaded the images that you want to use, open up Photoshop, go to 'File', and then click on 'Open'. Choose the image file(s) which you would like to use, and then click the 'Open' button at the bottom of the menu. Once you have selected the images that you want to use, you will want to begin resizing the photos.



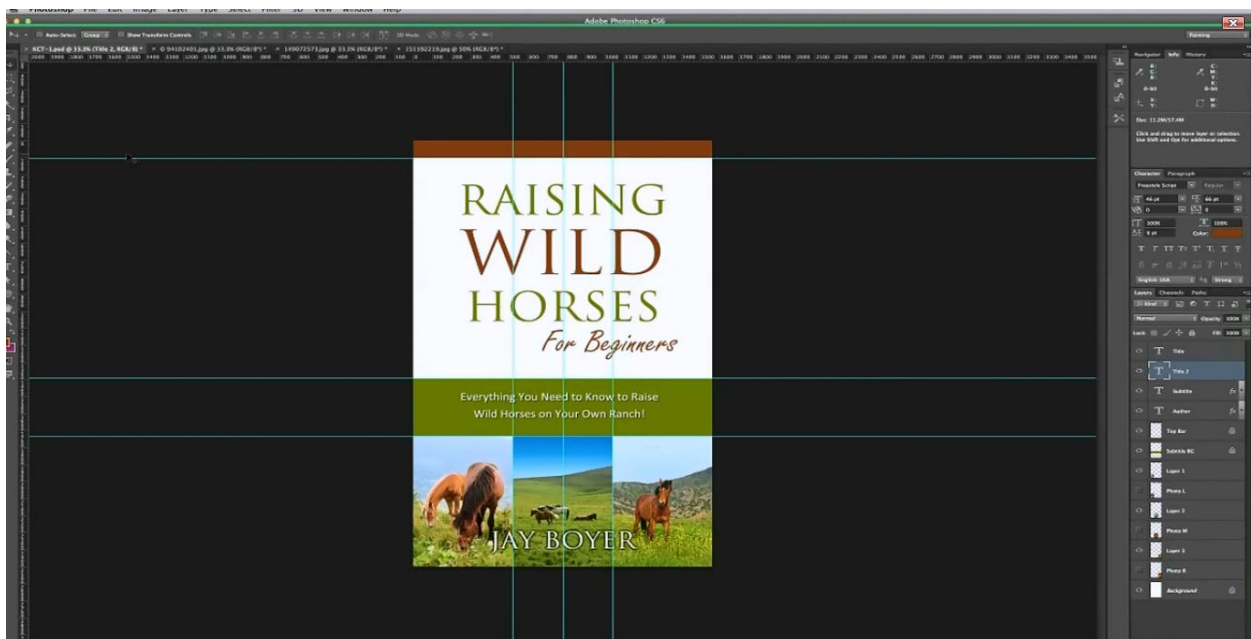
If you are not sure what size the original photos were, you can find out fairly easily by clicking on the layer in the menu on the right-hand side and the original dimensions will be shown. You will want to make them slightly larger than the original pictures of the template were. So, he used a height of '770' instead of the original height of '768'.

Once you have your picture resized, there are several different ways that you can transfer the new images into the template. You can click and drag them into the template or you can highlight them and hit CTRL+C to copy and then CTRL+V to paste. Another shortcut to be aware of is that you can easily center your image by left clicking on the image and then when you paste, the picture will center automatically within your selection.

If the images are not exactly right, you can use your mouse to resize the image without really affecting the proportions, as long as you are only resizing them slightly. One of the benefits of using Photoshop is that there are guides in place; this helps you to match the image sizes correctly. Once you get the images to where they look good, save the template so that you do not lose your work.



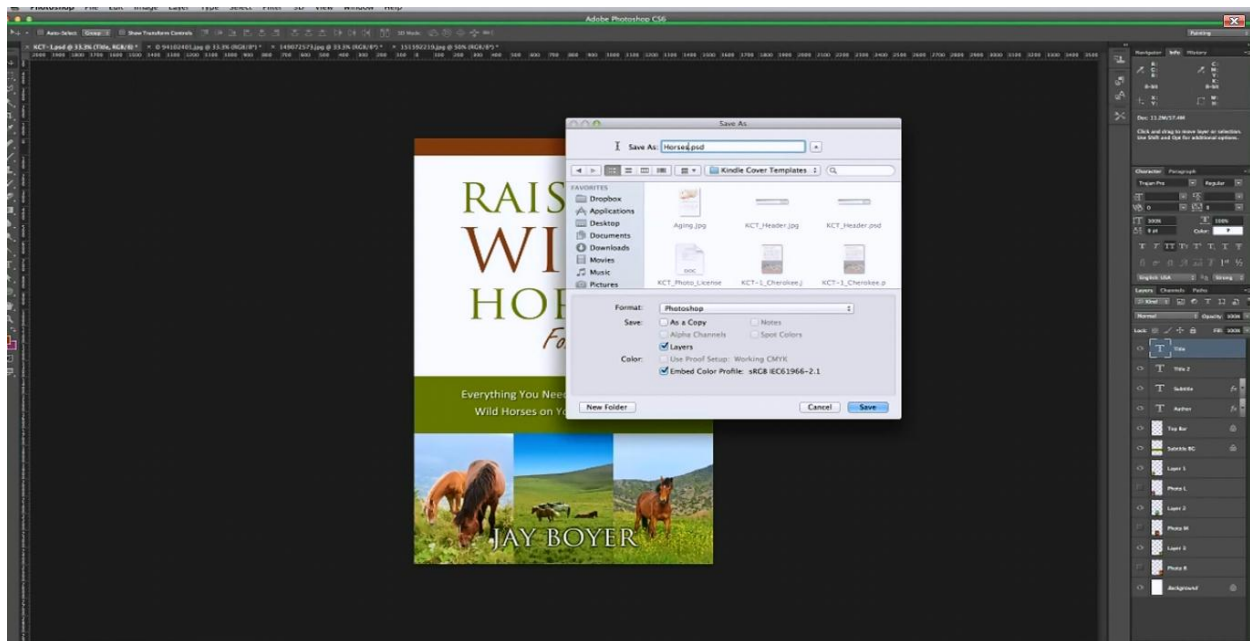
Now that you have chosen and implanted your images, you can draw a color scheme from this. Obviously, with pictures of horses matching tones of green and brown are a good choice. By using the eye dropper tool, you can pull a specific color from the picture to use in other parts of your template. In fact, you can choose several different related colors to choose from by doing this. In creating the template, Tony used one of the shades of brown drawn from one of the horse images and applied the color to the text, which really pulled the cover text and images together well.



Changing the color of the word “WILD” really brought more emphasis to it, and it helped to create a “V” pattern to follow. In the template, the author’s name was left to remain white. This helped it to stand out against the background images. The fact that the picture of the horses in the center was taken at a distance helped Jay’s name to stand out as well.

Editing your template is largely a trial-and-error process. You should take some time to try out a number of combinations of colors, font sizes, and styles to see what works best. Just remember that you want to create a book cover that carries a consistency throughout and a clear path for the eye to follow. Saving your new template periodically will give you something to go back to in case you make a mistake in the editing process.

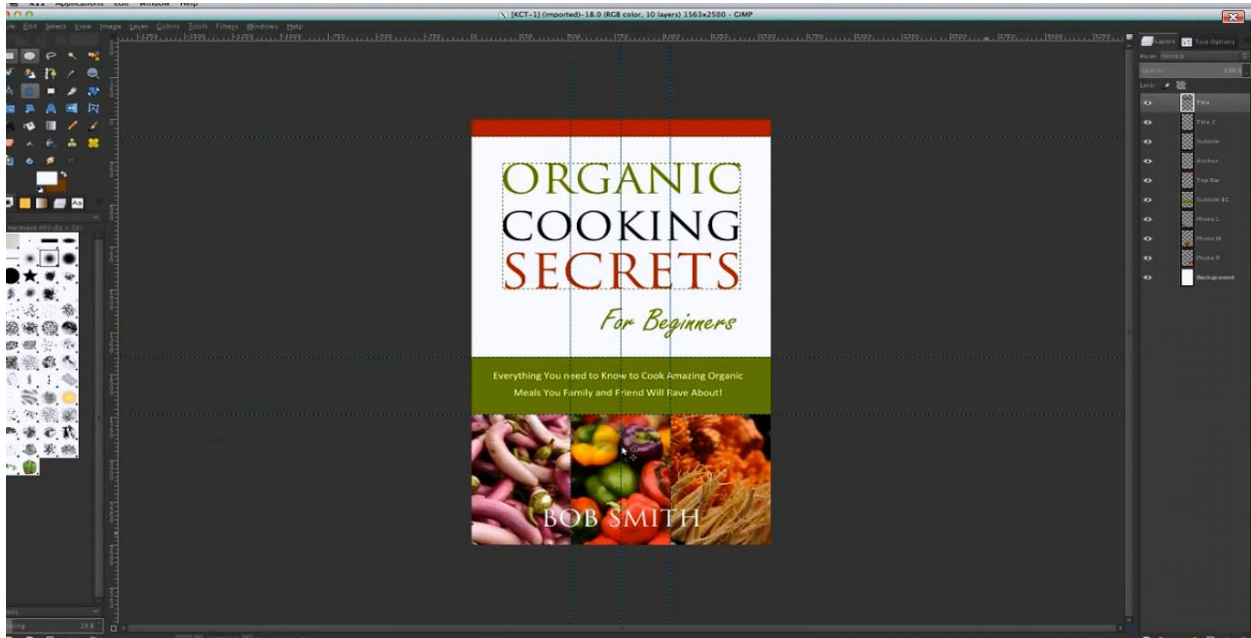
One of the major advantages to using templates to design your book cover is that they typically use the most popular layouts, fonts, and colors. So, in a way it is wise not to change too many of the elements that are pre-set for you. It is wise to simply want to tweak them slightly to make them more fitting to your subject matter, which is what Tony did in his presentation. On the other hand, this is your book cover and you should feel free to do as you wish. You don’t have to be afraid of getting creative, just try and remember to adhere to the design elements that were outlined in the previous lessons.



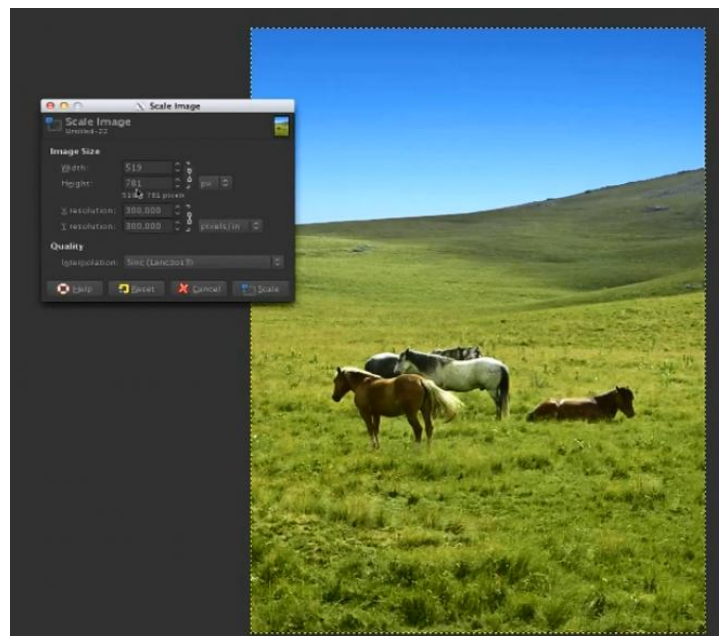
Once you have a book cover with no more than three fonts, looks clean, and communicates your point proficiently through your text and images, you can hit CTRL+H in Photoshop to turn off the grid and take a good look at your cover’s design. If it has met all of the basic design elements and looks good visually to you. Simply, click ‘Save As’ and then give it an original name, and then click ‘OK’. Next you’ll want to choose ‘Flatten’ from the layers pallet, click ‘OK’,

and then click 'Save As' again, to save it as a JPEG file for Amazon. When doing so, be sure that the 'maximum quality' setting is selected.

Create a Winning Design with Templates: GimpShop

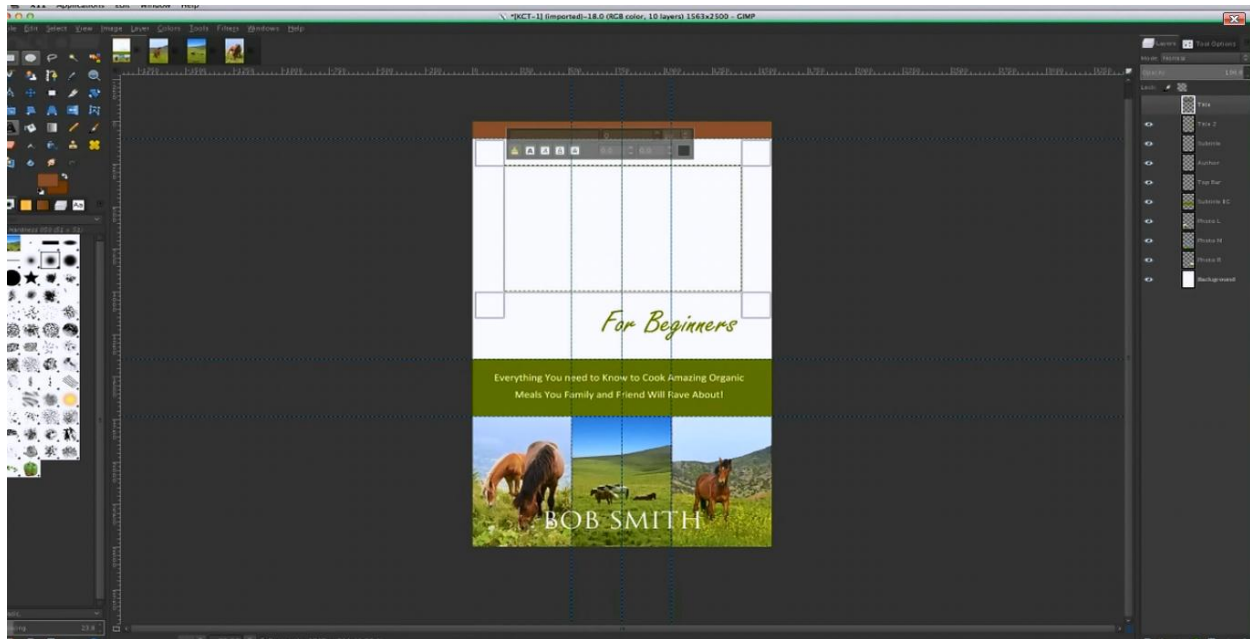


GimpShop is a free graphics program which is very similar to Photoshop. In this program, the workflow process is a little different, but the end result is basically the same. To begin, go to 'File' and then click 'Open' in order to open up your desired template. The layers are the same in this program, but in this program the text layers are presented as graphics, which makes a big difference when editing the text.



In GimpShop you can right mouse click on your images and scale the images. In the video presentation, Tony changes the images to the same scale as he did before, except this time he right clicks on the image and selects 'Scale Image' to do so. Afterwards, he selects the place on the template where he wants the image to go and then selects (CTRL+A) copies (CTRL+C) and pastes (CTRL+V) the image into the desired position on the template.

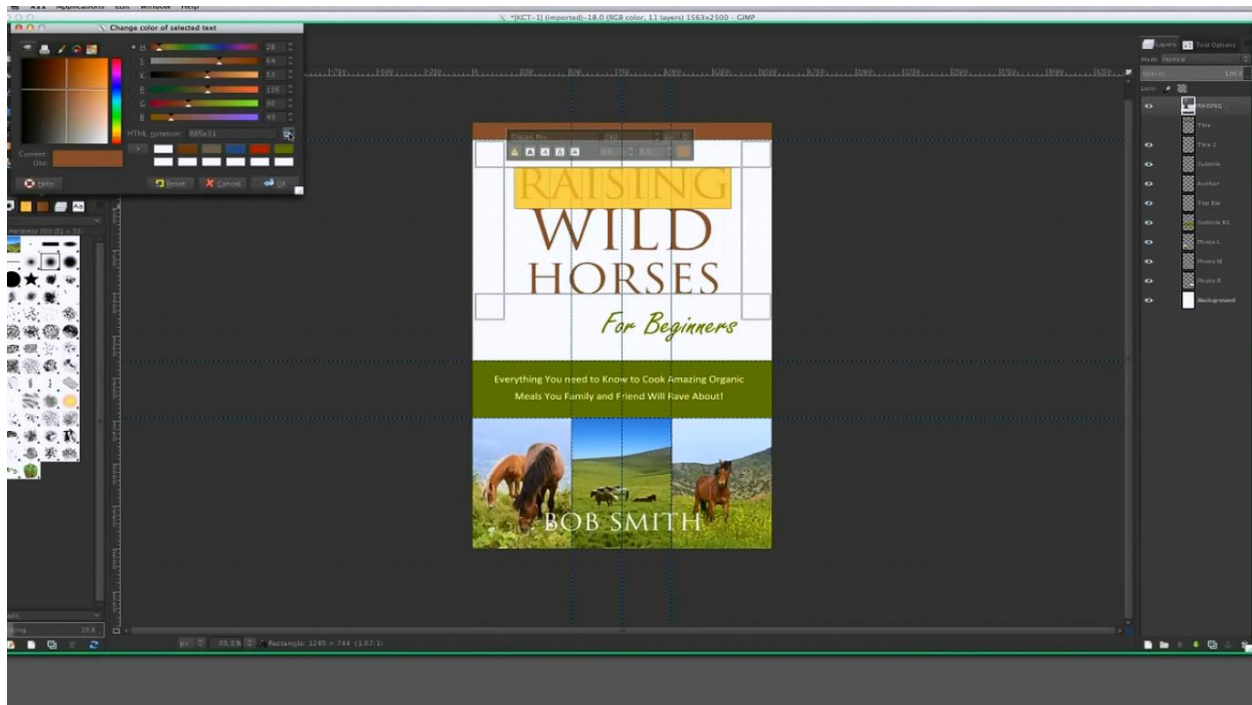
He uses the eye dropper tool in this program to grab the color in this case as well. However, now he selects the bar that he wants to fill with brown and right clicks on it. Next, he selects 'Edit' and then selects 'Fill with FG [Foreground] Color'.



As mentioned before, in this program the title is recognized as an image, and therefore cannot be edited in the same way. In this case you have to insert a text box and recreate it, like you would in a Paint program. Although this process is a little more difficult than in Photoshop, the text is not hard to recreate.

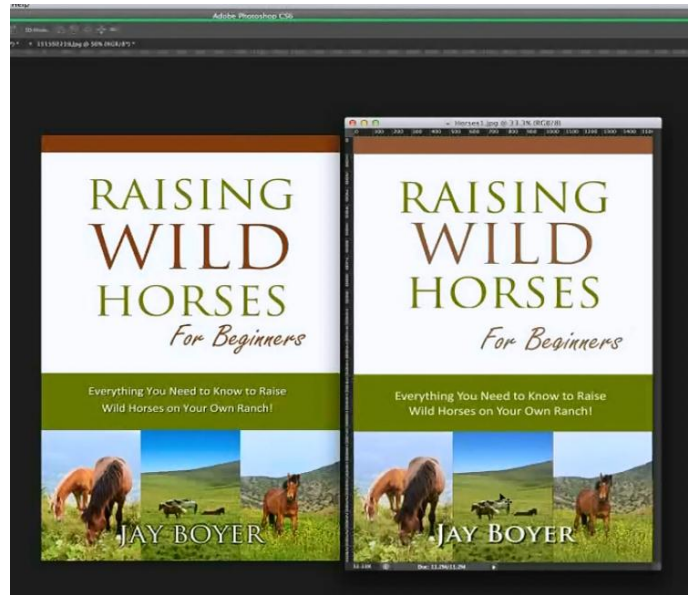
To change the text, simply insert a text box that is the same size and in the same place as the previous one, click the cursor inside the text box, and type in the text of your title. This text is now editable. Tony types in 'Raising Wild Horses' highlights the text, and resizes it to make it bigger, again making 'WILD' the largest. Here you may notice that the font sizes are scaled a little differently. In this program 240 is about the right size for a title font size.

The font color came up as brown when typed, so to fix this Tony had to select the word 'Raising' go to the program's color pallet, chose 'Change Color of Selected Text', and chose the green color and clicked 'OK' to change it. Next, he inserted a text box to change the font for "For Beginners".



The only thing left to do is change the subtitle and the author's name. In this case, Tony took a short cut and inserted the text by copying and pasting from the Photoshop template into a similarly-sized text box in the new template. Finally, he inserted a text box for the author's name, using the same font he did before in the Photoshop template, bolded it, and changed the color to white.

It should be noted here that the shadowing works differently in GimpShop. In this program, you simply right click and selected 'Filters' then 'Light and Shadow' then 'Drop Shadow', after doing this and making a few more adjustments, Tony finished the template, and it now looks essentially the same the one previously created in Photoshop. So, you can really use either program and end up with basically the same result.

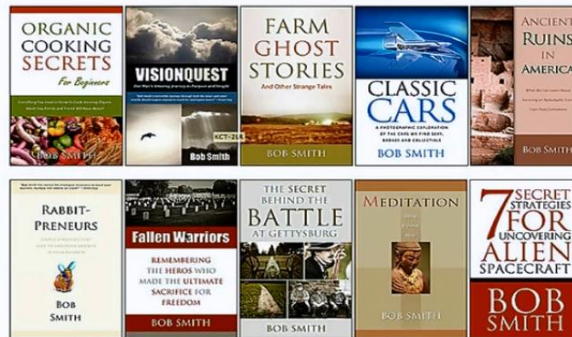


After reviewing the look of the template, you will want to click on 'File' and 'Save As', using the file format for GimpShop, which is .XCF. Next, you will want to flatten the image. You will do so by going to the layers menu and clicking the right mouse button. This will bring up a drop menu; select 'Flatten Image'. Instead of saving this image, you will want to export the image. So, go to 'File', 'Export', and then choose JPG from the drop down menu. Hit 'Export', it will ask you about the quality settings, and you just select 100% for quality and hit 'Export' again.

Conclusion

Why Templates Make Sense...

Quick, Professional Design...



The COVER EXPERT
"Capturing the Inspiration of Destiny"

Designing Covers w/Templates



There are variations between the templates that Tony made in Photoshop and the one made in GimpShop, but for the most part they are the same. The variations really just come from different choices that were made during the design process. So, essentially the same template can be created with both programs. Photoshop is a little more convenient to use, but really GimpShop is fairly simple to use as well, especially once you get used to doing these small tasks over and over again.

Either program will allow you to go back and edit your template later. You have to keep a layered version of the file in order to do that, however. This may come in handy, especially if your book becomes a bestseller and you want to add a little starburst that lets people know that the book is a success.

Consumers have certain expectations for book covers that most people aren't even aware of. We tend to buy books that use fonts and design styles that we are used to seeing. The book templates featured here are by Tony Laidig. They are designed to attend to these types of expectations. They are also designed at the maximum Kindle resolution, so they will look great in Print and as a Kindle cover.