



Getting Started with Comic Life 3.

Read through this short guide and find out how easy it is to create great looking comics.

Welcome!

Thank you for purchasing Comic Life 3! You now have the tools to easily design amazing looking comic pages using your own images. This guide will walk you through all features and tools of Comic Life 3 you need to make incredible comics. Enjoy!

- The plasq Team

Getting To Know Comic Life

Template Chooser (p3)

Comic Life provides you with blank and pre-designed template options to help you get started on your project. If you see a style you like simply click on it and then click "Select". If you're still in the writing phase of your project you can open the Script template.

User Interface (p4-6)

Once you've selected a template the comic editor opens. The default view will present you with a Tool Bar at the top; Pages and Styles on the left; Script, Comic and Elements in the center; and Layouts and Images on the right. From here you have all the tools you need to build your comic.

The Script Editor (p7)

The Script Editor recognizes script commands and provides you with the elements in a sidebar. Once your script is complete you can drag and drop elements from the sidebar into your comic page. All of the text will automatically appear in your elements.

Adding Elements (p8)

Simply drag and drop lettering, captions, balloons and panels from the Element Well at the bottom of the screen. Get the perfect look by using the Inspector to customize elements.

Exploring the Inspector (p9-15)

The Inspector Tool holds everything you need to customize your comic. Here you'll find page layout information, graphics tools, image filters, Keywords and much more.

Creating A Comic From A Script (p16-17)

Import your script or start writing in the built in Script Editor. Use Keywords to activate the SmartScript technology to make laying out and lettering your comic super easy.

Creating A Comic From A Template (p18)

Templates are a fast and easy way to get started on your comic. Use our pre-designed styles and layouts, add your images and words and you're good to go!

Editing Photos (p19)

Transform your images from ordinary pictures into incredible comic panels using image filters and graphics tools. Quickly and easily knock out backgrounds, add filters and drop in some speed lines for some extra POW!

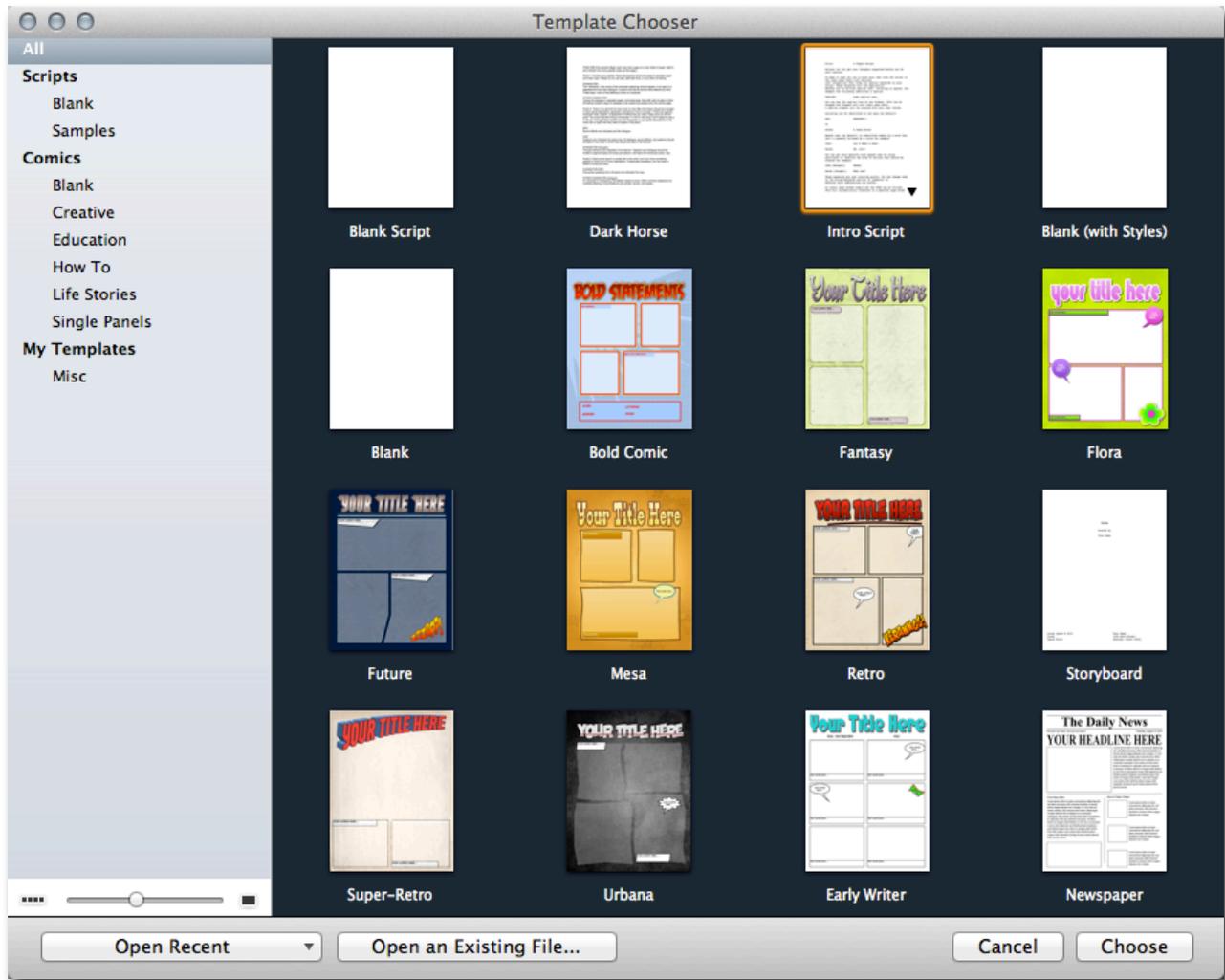
Saving and Exporting Your Comic (p20)

Save your comic in the Comic Archive format so you can come back and keep working. And once you're finished export in a variety of high resolution formats for sharing and printing.

Guided Tour

Take a walk through Comic Life 3 to become familiar with the different areas of the app and where to locate features. Tutorials with more specific information about how to use features will follow this section.

Template Chooser



Templates provide a starting point for your comic including panel layouts, speech balloons, captions and lettering. Elements in templates have specific styles, but everything can be altered later in the comic editor to personalize templates.

Choose “Blank Script” if you’re ready to sit down and write out your script. If you need some guidance on how to format a script choose the sample script tutorial called “Intro Script”.

If you’re ready to go straight to putting your comic together select one of the other templates and get started.

The User Interface

Comic Life 3 is built around an easy to navigate interface. You'll find all of the pieces you need to get started building your comic. Toolbar across the top; page thumbnails and styles on the left; the comic script and pages in the center; and layout options and images on the right.



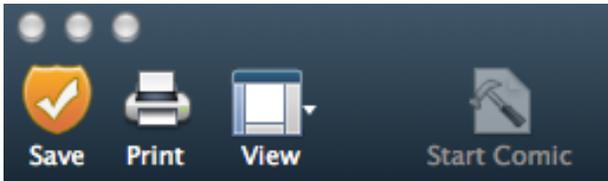
Interface Map

Toolbar		
Page Thumbnails with scroll view.	Script Editor with SmartScript.	Template Pages and Panel Layouts
Styles Menu, for editing elements quickly.	Comic Editor, drag and drop elements here to build your pages.	Image Viewer, view and pull images from your photo libraries.
	Element Well, add blank panels, balloons, captions, lettering and SFX.	

The Toolbar



The Toolbar is located at the top of the app. From here you have quick access to commonly used view and editing tools. Below is a breakdown of all that is accessible in the Toolbar.



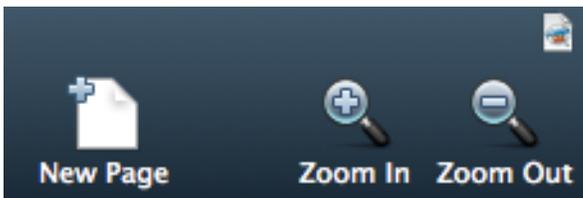
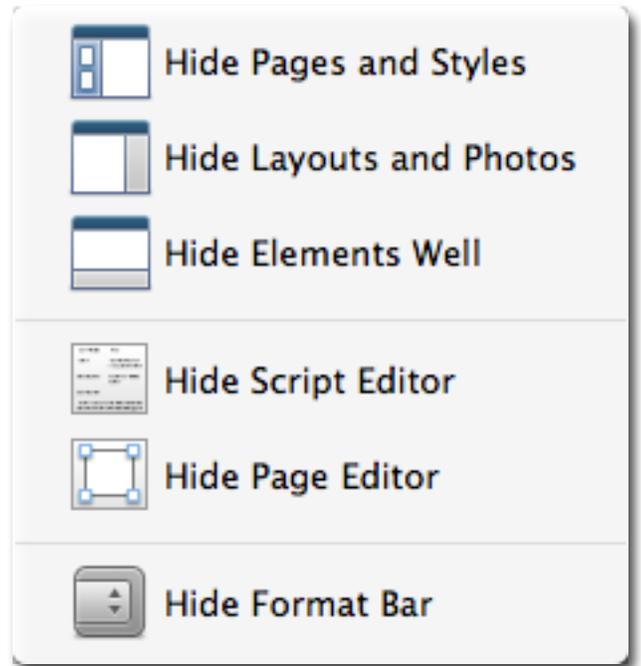
Save, Print & View

On the far left you'll find the buttons for quick save and print. You can also change your view easily from the toolbar. Click on the View icon to select which menus and wells you would like to have visible (shown here on the right).

Start Comic

If you are in a Script Only template and are ready to move on to creating your comic pages click the "Start Comic" icon and you will be presented with the template chooser. Select which template you would like to use and it will open with your script intact and ready to go at the top of the screen.

View Options



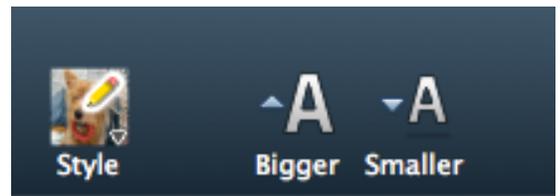
New Page & Zoom

To quickly add a new page to a comic click "New Page". If you are in a designed template you'll be presented with template page options, or you can start from a blank page.

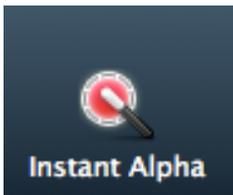
Quickly zoom in and out of your comic page using the magnifying glasses at the center of the toolbar.

Style & Quick Font Size

The “Style” icon will provide you with predesigned style options for elements. The styles presented will vary depending upon the template you are working with. If you are in the “Blank” template there will be no styles available unless you add them. (You can learn more about adding styles in the Tutorial section of this guide.)



The “Bigger” and “Smaller” icon can be used to adjust font size with just a click. You can apply changes using these by selecting the text element and then choosing Bigger or Smaller.



Instant Alpha

Use Instant Alpha to knockout backgrounds of photos. Transparent backgrounds allow you to apply graphics effects to images including speed lines and halftones.

Inspector, Colors & Fonts

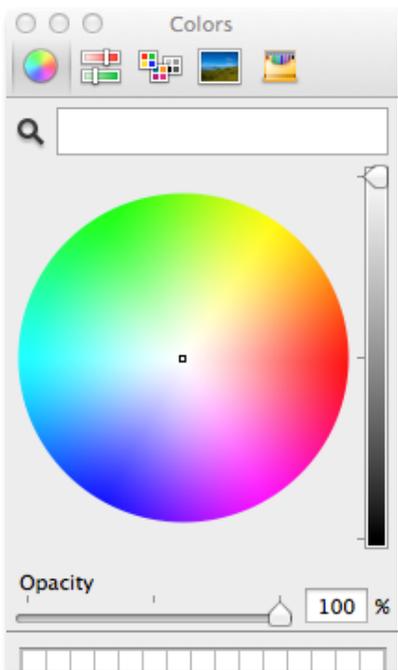
The Inspector window holds tools for formatting all of the elements of your comic. From here you can change graphics, image filters, lettering options, balloon design, page information, text details and much more. There will be more information about the Inspector window later in this section.



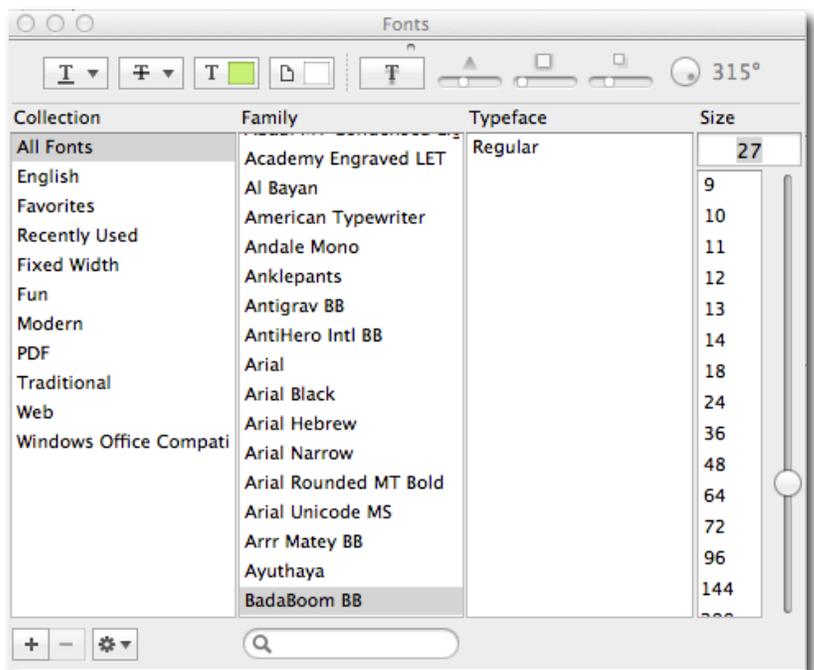
The Colors icon allows you to access the color wheel to change fill and stroke colors for elements.

The Fonts icon opens the Font menu where you will find text options and hundreds of fonts.

Color Wheel



Font Window



The Script Editor

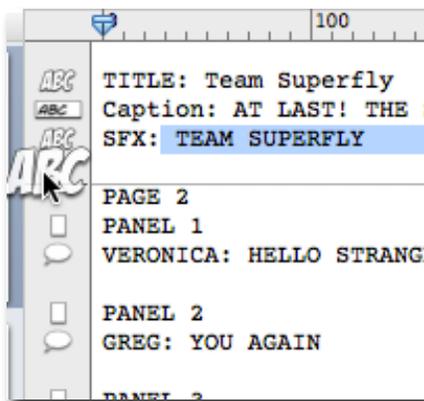
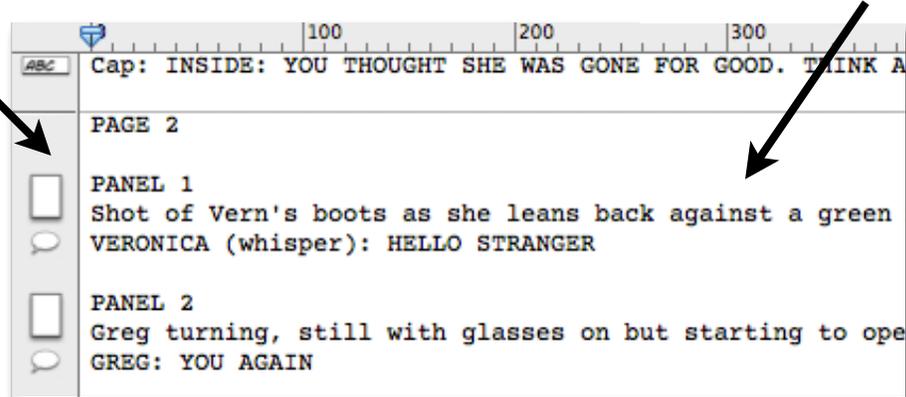
The Script Editor is a capable word processor built right into the app. Here you can write or import your script to make use of our SmartScript(TM) technology. SmartScript(TM) will recognize what elements should appear based on the text you provide. Panels, lettering, captions and balloons are all recognized.

You can indicate an element style in your script, and when you add the element it will appear with your pre-defined style.

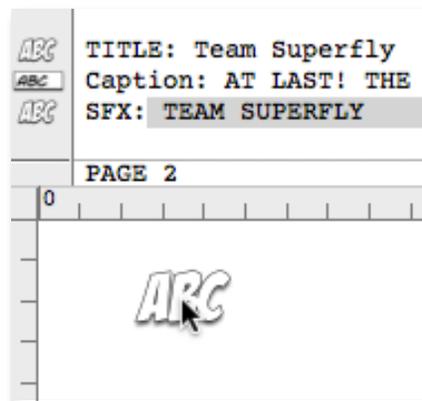
When you drag an element from the script editor onto your comic page all of the text after the colon will automatically appear inside the element. This will allow you to quickly place and set your text on the page. Once you've dropped an element onto the page you can resize and reshape it as you need.

*Comic elements appear here. The elements that appear will correspond with the Keyword settings defined in the Script Inspector.**

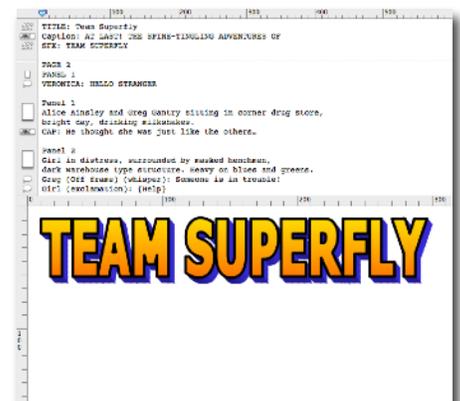
Type your script here. As you type you'll see element icons appear beside your text.



Click and drag the element icon next to the portion of the script you are ready to add to the page.



Drag the icon down to the comic page, and release in the desired location.

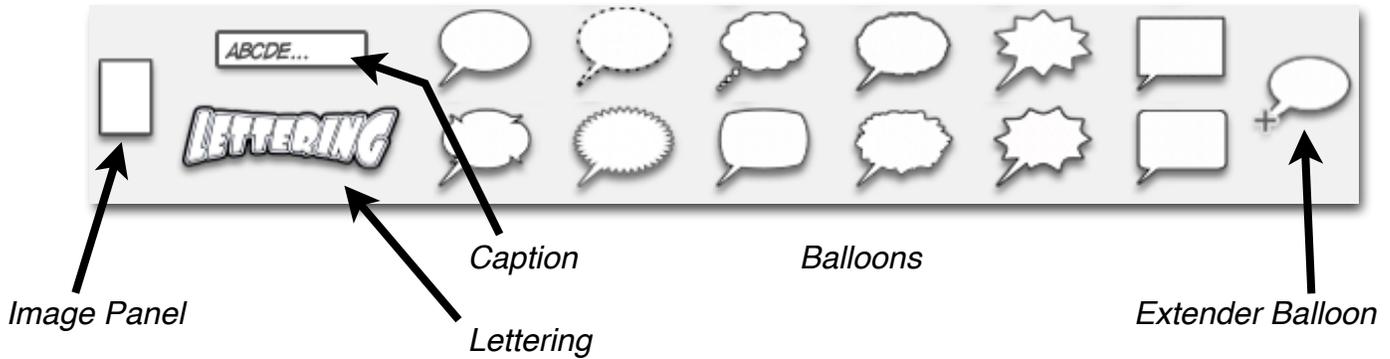


The element will appear containing the text indicated in the script. If needed, you can still edit your text on the comic page after you have added it from the script editor.

* More on the Keywords in the Script Tutorial (p 17)

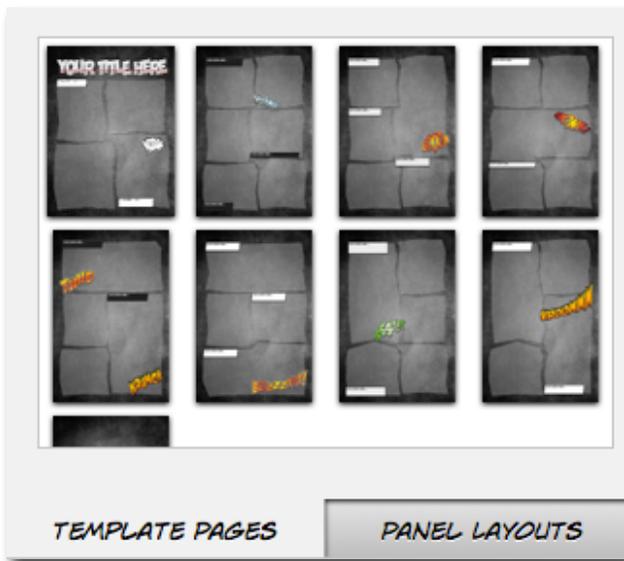
The Element Well

The element well is located at the bottom of the screen. From here you can easily drag and drop comic elements onto the page. You have the panel, caption, lettering and several different kinds of balloons available.

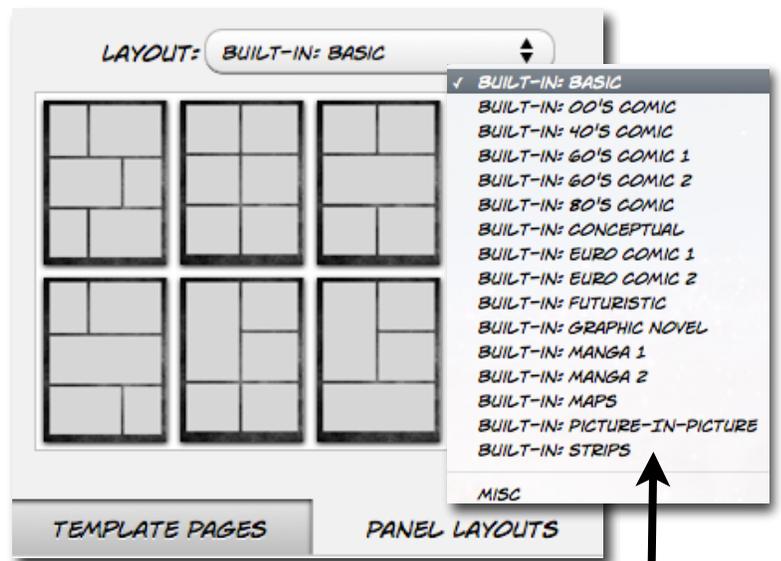


Templates and Panel Layouts

These features are located in the top section of the right hand column. Templates other than “Blank” and “Blank (With Styles)” will have template page layouts that include stylized image panels, captions, balloons and lettering already built into the page. All comics will have the Panel Layouts available. These layouts consist only of panels. There are hundreds of panel layouts included, and they are categorized in the menu of Built-In layouts.



Templates



Panel Layouts

Layout Categories



The Inspector

Launch

To launch the Inspector click on the Inspector icon, located on the right side of the Toolbar. You can open multiple Inspector windows by clicking on “View” in the app menu and selecting “New Inspector”. This will allow you to have details for different types of elements easily accessible.

Tabs

The Inspector has nine tabs, each providing information and options about your comic and the elements on the page. From left to right the tabs are:



Script - Script information and establishing Keywords for SmartScript(TM) to recognize.



Document - Page set up, document margins and image filter resolution.



Page - Page numbering, panel layout and master page designation.



Graphic - Designing fill, stroke, shadow and opacity.



Form - Editing balloon kind and variety, tail type and width, and setting caption and panel type.



Image - Image adjustment and selecting filter type and level.



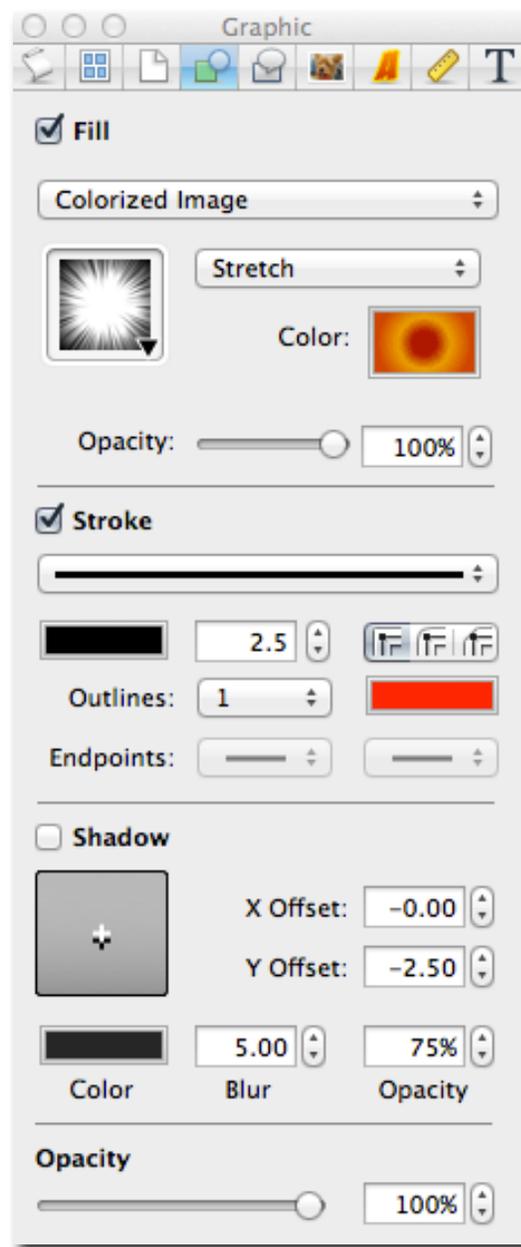
Lettering - Glyph settings and 3D options.



Metrics - File information, size, position, and rotation angle of elements.



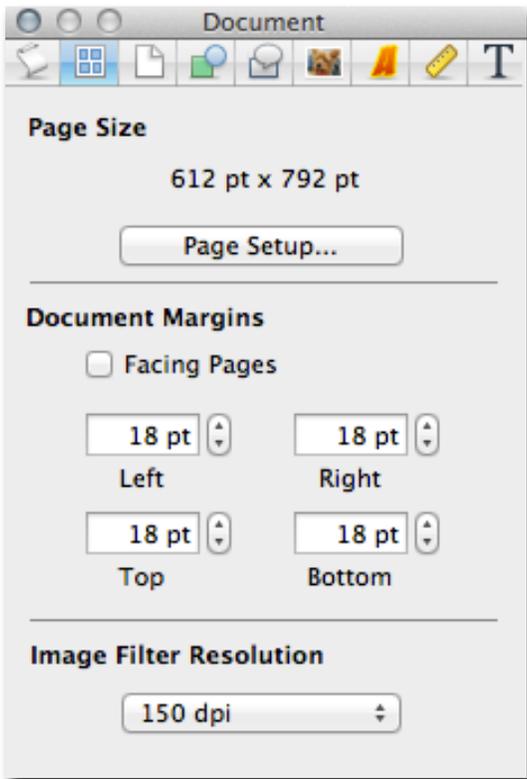
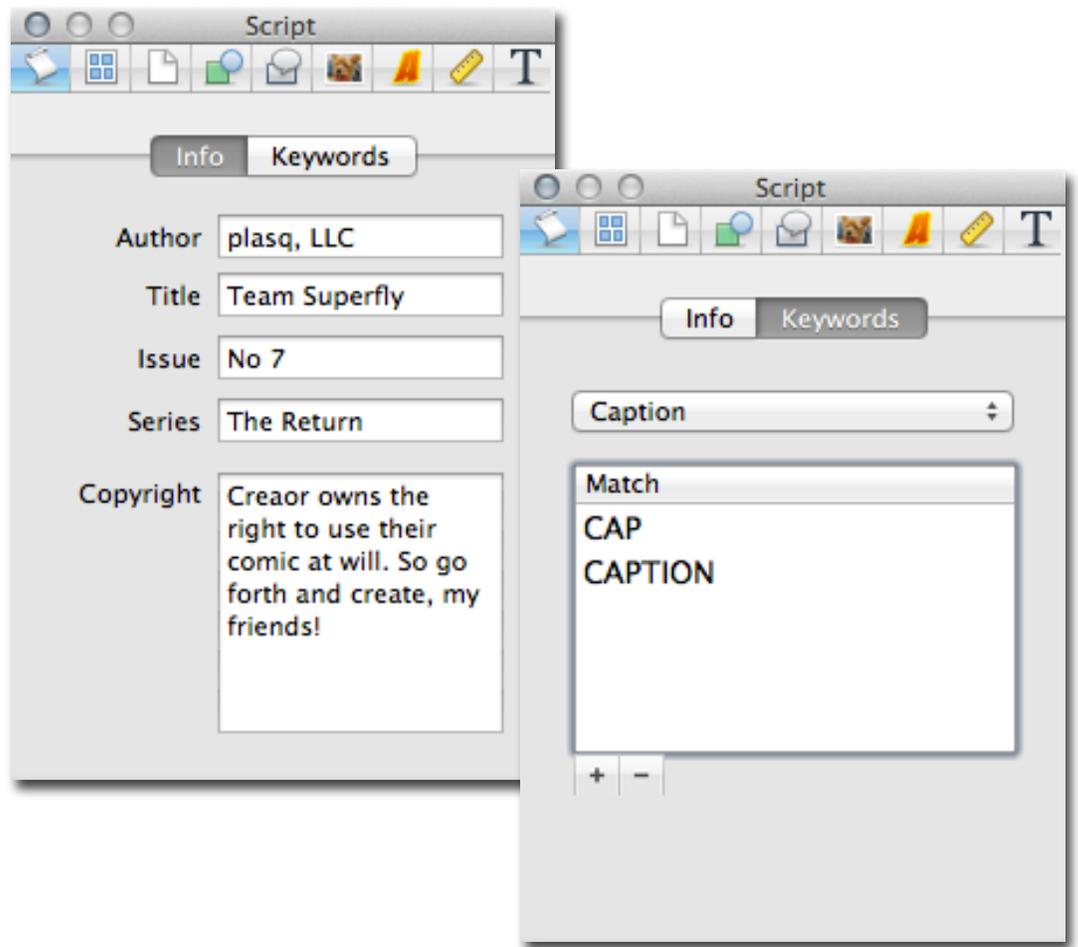
Text - Color and alignment, spacing and inset margin.





Script Inspector

Under the *Info* tab in the Script Inspector you can enter the details of the document to help keep scripts and comics organized. The *Keywords* tab allows you to customize which words in your script will be recognized as element indicators by SmartScript(TM). You can designate key words for the following elements: Page, Panel, Caption, Letting and Balloon.



Document Inspector

Here you can find Page Setup, where you can determine page size and orientation. You can choose from our preloaded page sizes and create your own page sizes.

Set your document margins quickly and indicate if the document layout is intended to have facing pages.

Set image filter resolution allows you to adjust the resolution depending upon what you plan to do with your comic. Higher resolutions are offered for projects that are destined for printing.

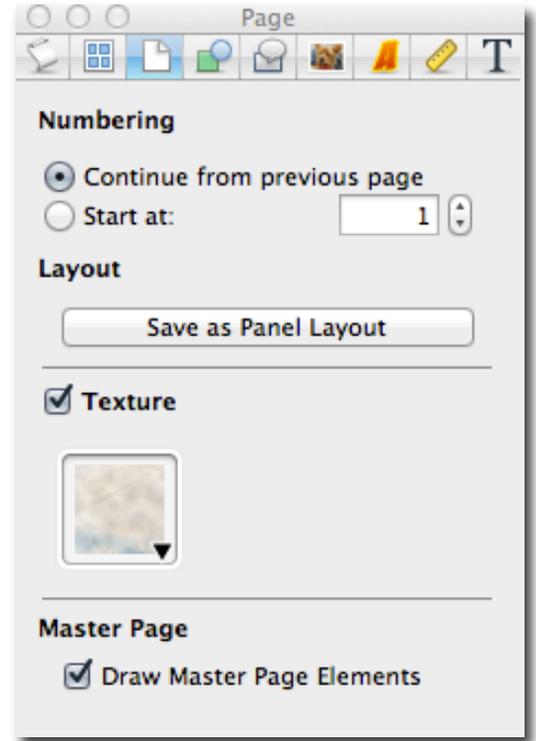


Page Inspector

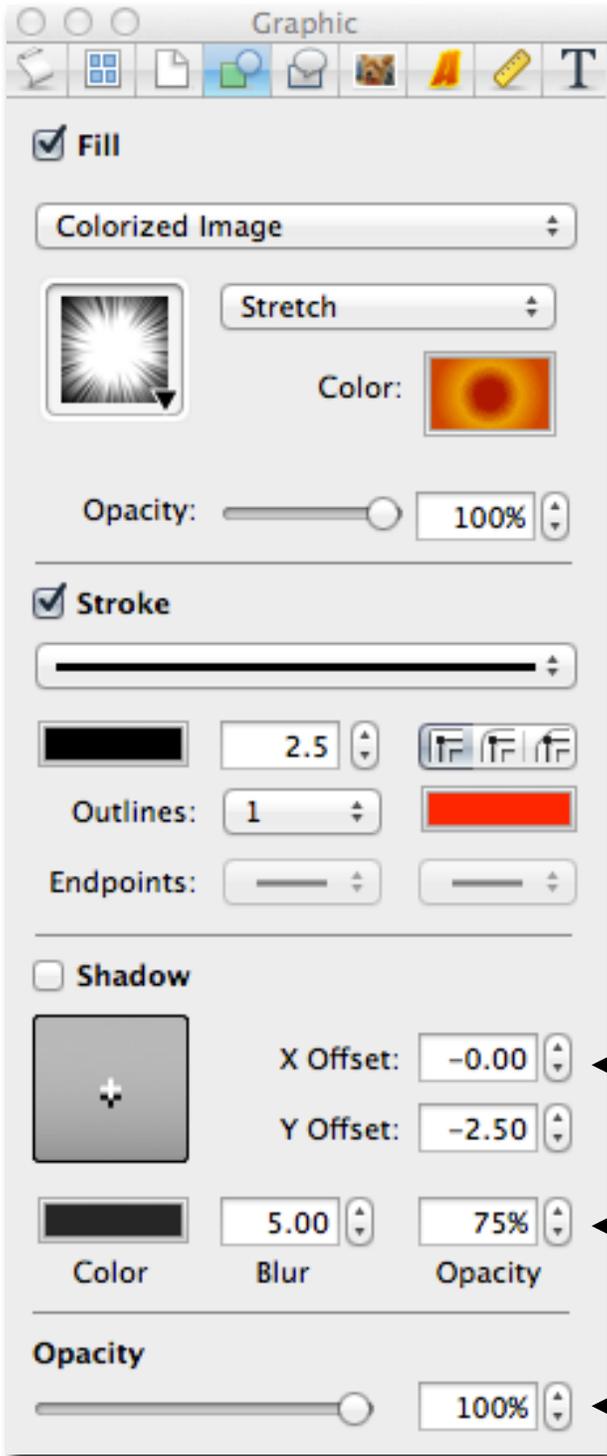
Designate page numbering preferences.

If you have a page layout that you wish to use again in the future you can save the current page's panel layout. Your layout will appear under the MISC label.

You can also add texture to the background of a page. Click on the down arrow to display the full menu of built in texture options. You can also add your own texture.



Turn on master page elements to apply a consistent look to the entire document.



Graphic Inspector

From here you can design elements' Fill, Stroke, Shadow and Opacity. These options can be applied to these elements in Comic Life 3: lettering, panels, images, balloons, captions and shapes.

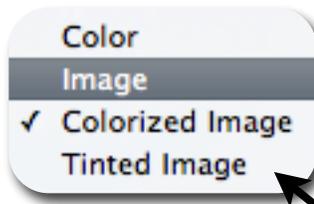
Fill and Stroke options are explained further on the next page.

Position the shadow using the pad and set precise placement with the numeric indicators.

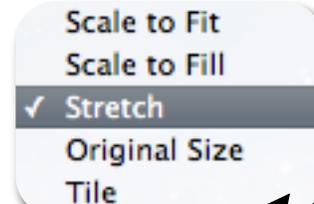
To create a hard or soft shadow adjust the color, blur and opacity.

Adjust an element's opacity. Great for layering elements and indicating whispers or distant noises.

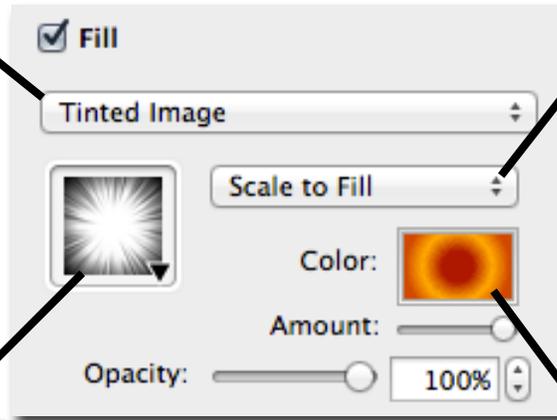
Fill Options



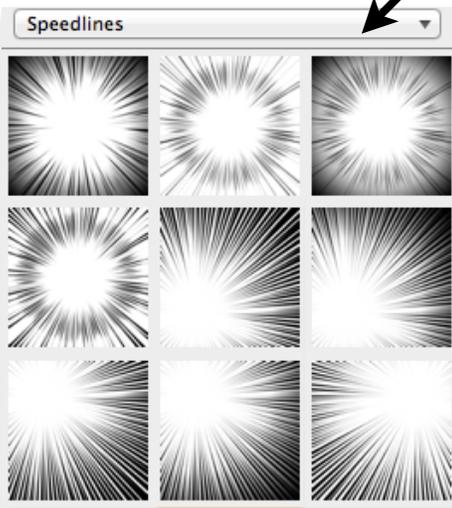
Use this menu to select the type of fill.



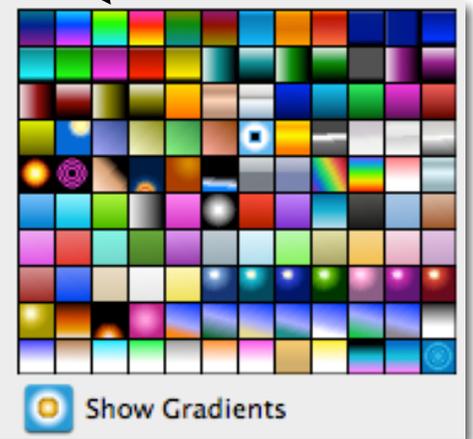
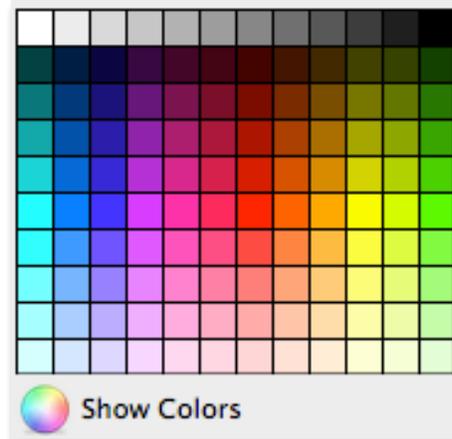
Use this menu to set the fill image size and proportions.



Access speed lines, halftones, textures and tiles.



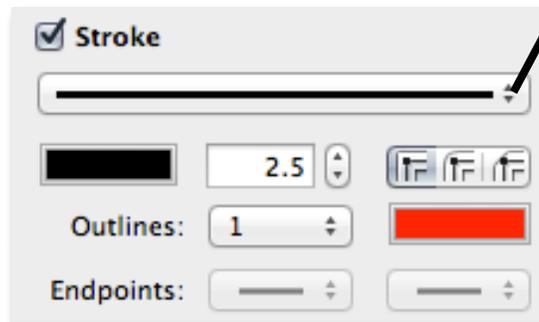
Select fill color and access gradients here.



Stroke Options

Customize stroke style by changing the line drawing and the outlines. You can add multiple outlines of alternating colors of your choice.

Endpoints for lines and arrows can be customized as well.





Form Inspector

Here you can adjust details about balloons, captions and panels. Balloon options include the kind, variety and tail. The menus contain options for these element features.

Change the kind of balloon without losing its text using this menu.

Each kind of balloon has multiple options, slide along the Variety bar to see options.

Select the type of effect for Caption and Panel design.

Access balloon tail options here.

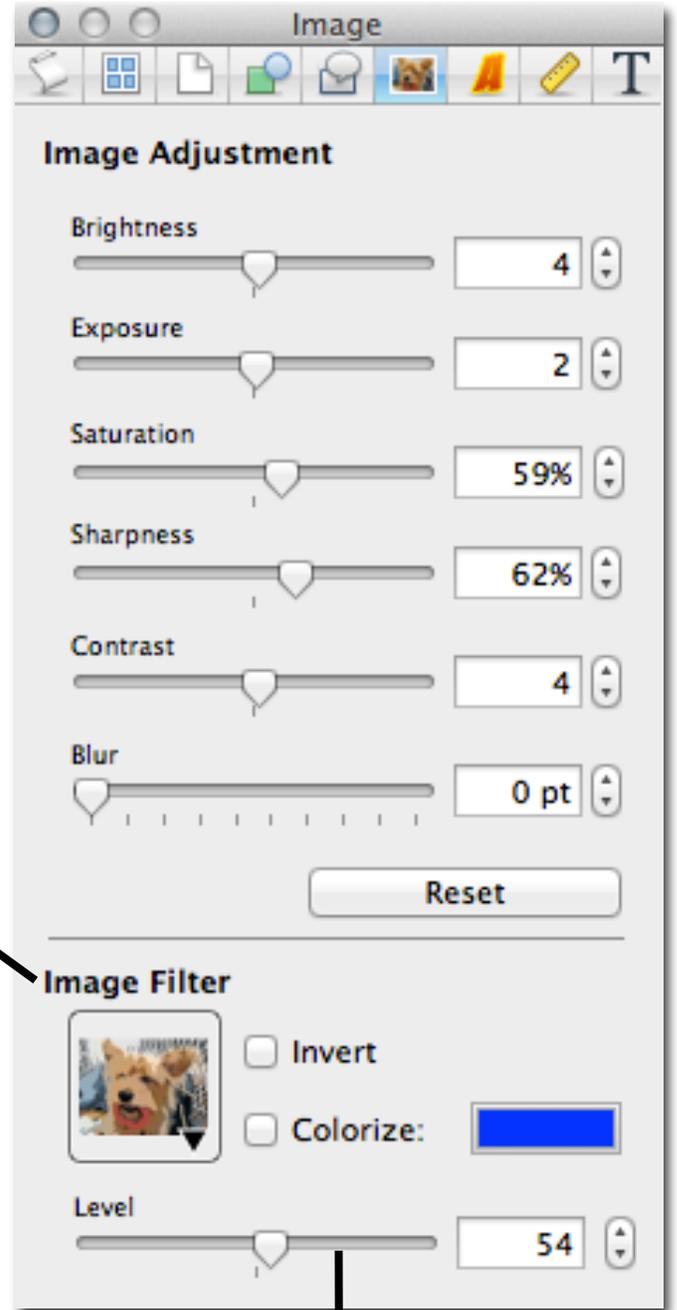
Here you can adjust the strength of the effect selected for the Caption or Panel.



Image Inspector

Here you can adjust image levels and apply filters. Click on the image filter icon to see the menu of available options. The strength of the filter's effect can be changed by adjusting the level at the bottom.

To add a tint to an image select Colorize and adjust the color by accessing the color wheel.

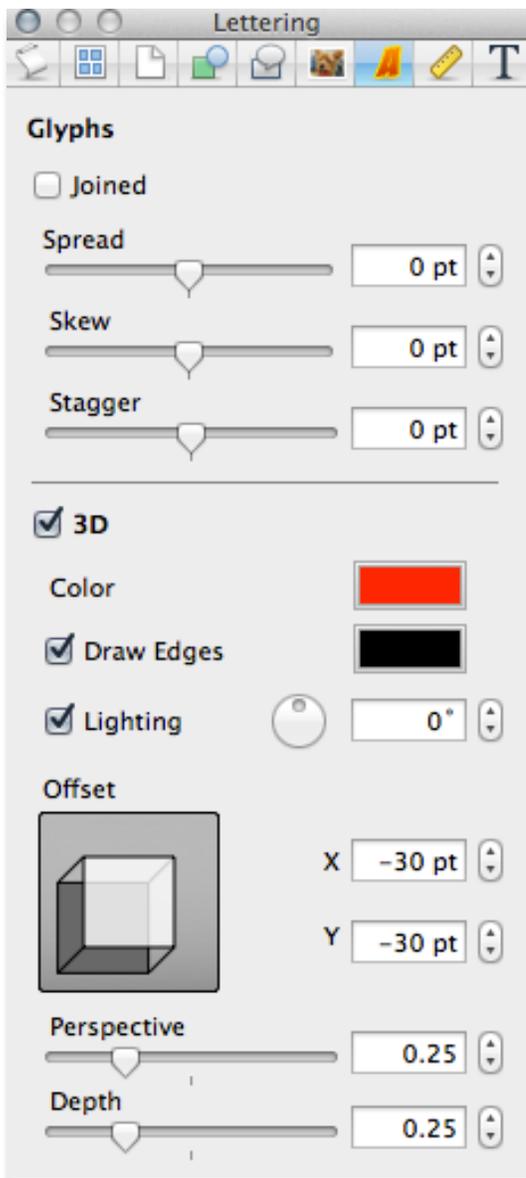


Here you can adjust the strength of the Filter selected for the image.

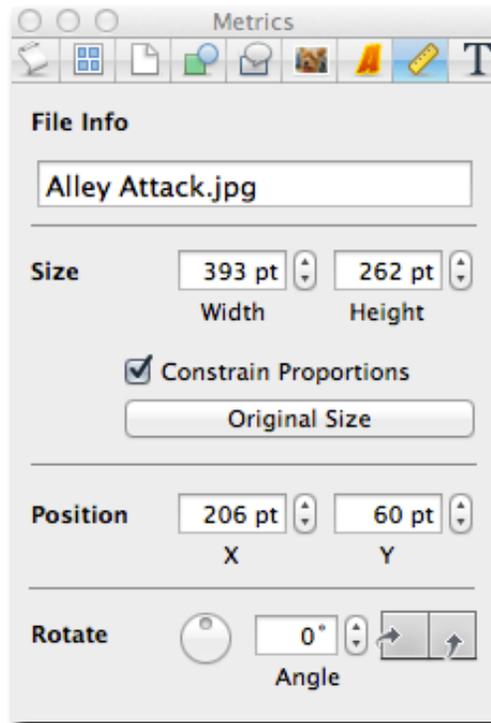
Lettering Inspector

The Glyphs section allows you to adjust the placement of characters in relation to each other, creating dynamic and unique lettering.

Add 3D effects to lettering and adjust the lighting to make the element stand out more. Select fill colors for the 3D fill and the edges. You have control over how prominent the 3D effect is by adjusting the perspective and depth.



Metrics Inspector



Quickly access file information for images you've added to your comic.

For precise page layout you can see the exact size and position of the selected element. This is helpful when adjusting elements to uniform width, height and placement.

Quickly rotate images with the toggle and flip them horizontally or vertically.

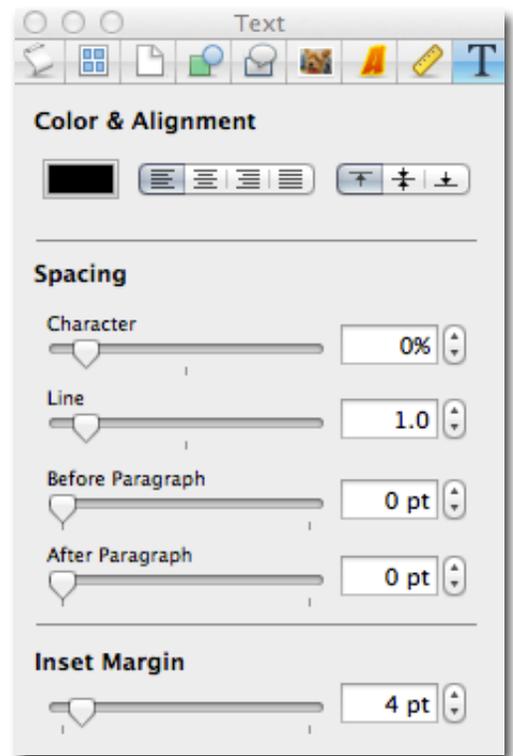
Text Inspector*

Change text color and alignment.

Adjust spacing of characters and lines to fit text precisely into elements.

Change the inset margins to have text hug the edges of elements or be cushioned with a deep inset.

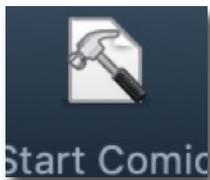
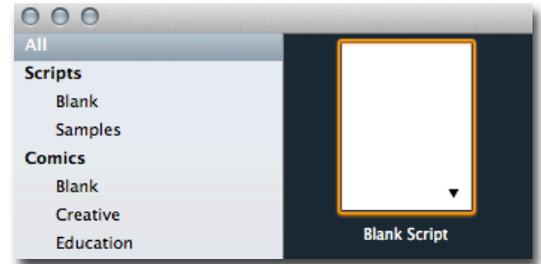
** This section may appear differently on Windows.*



Creating A Comic: Starting From a Script

Begin your comic by writing your script in the Script Editor. You can select from the sample scripts to learn more about script writing conventions, or you can start from a blank script.

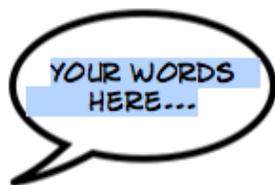
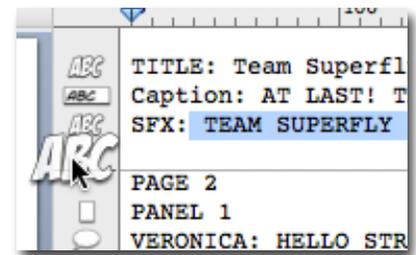
When you start Comic Life you will see the Template Chooser. Select the template labeled “Blank Script” and you will be presented with the Script Editor. Type, import or paste your script into the space provided. You will see elements appear in the column to the left of your text. These elements appear based on the Keywords in your script. If you don’t see elements that you might need to adjust the keywords. [A tutorial about using Keywords is on the next page.]



Laying Out Your Comic

When you are ready to move to laying out your comic pages click on the “Start Comic” icon in the toolbar. You will be presented with the Comic Template Chooser again. You can select a pre-designed template or start from a blank page. There is more information on using templates on page 18.

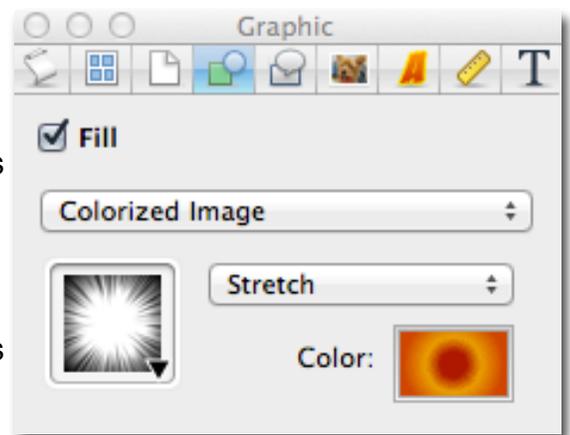
Once you make your template selection you will see the Script Editor on the top of your window and the Comic Editor just below your script. You can add elements from your script by simply dragging the icon elements off of the Script Editor Element Bar and dropping them onto the page.



The text from your script will appear inside the element dropped onto the comic page. The element will appear in the template’s default style. To edit text in an element once it’s been added to the page simply double click on the element. When the text is highlighted blue you are in the text edit mode.

When you add an image panel from your script an empty panel will be dropped onto the page. You can add images to panels by dragging and dropping them from the photo finder built into Comic Life 3 or you can add them directly from your file browser. In the Editing Images tutorial (page 19) you will see how to do even more with your images to make a great looking comic page.

You can use the pre-designed styles for elements or you can create your own using the Graphics Inspector. In the Graphics Inspector you’ll find tools to change the fill and stroke colors, shadow and boarder options and even add textures. There is more information on pages 11 and 12.

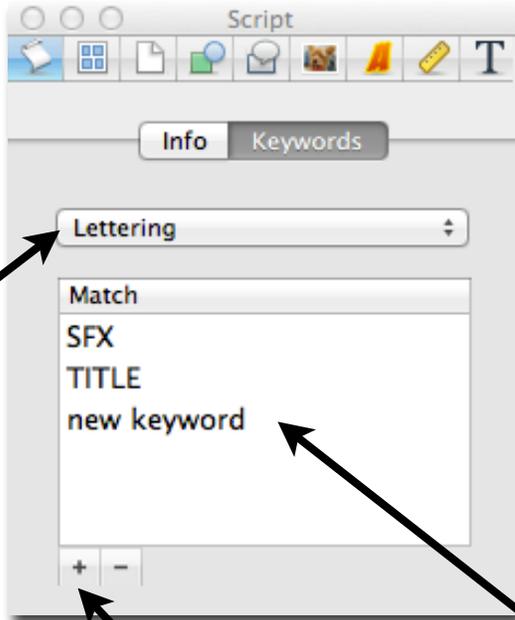


Using the Script Editor : Keywords

The Script Editor works by recognizing Keywords and providing you the correct elements to drag and drop onto the comic page. There are some preset Keywords shown in the chart to the right. To use a Keyword simply type it into the script editor and you will see the corresponding element icon appear next to the text.

To add or change Keywords start by opening the Script tab in the Inspector and click "Keywords". This will take you here:

Preset Keywords	
Element	Keywords
Page Break	PAGE Page
Image Panel	Panel PANEL
Lettering	Title TITLE SFX sfx
Caption Box	Cap CAP Caption CAPTION
Balloon	Greg: You?
Whisper balloon	Greg (whisper): You?
Thought balloon	Greg (thought): You?



Select the element you want to create Keywords for.

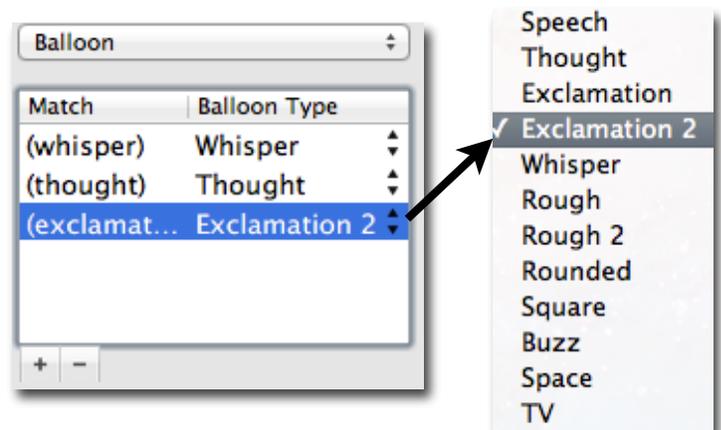
Click the + button to add a new Keyword. To delete a Keyword select it and click the - button.

To change the Keyword double click on "new keyword" and type your desired Keyword.

Keyword Behaviors

Balloons will be in a default style but can be defined to appear in different types (whisper, exclamation, etc..). When editing Balloon Keywords you'll see both Match and Balloon Type options. Define balloon type using the pop-over menu.

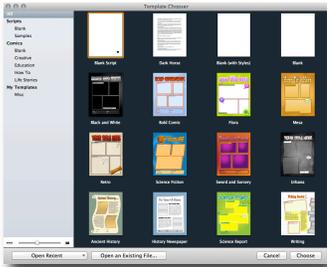
When dragging a Text Element out of the Script Editor the text following the Keyword will appear on the comic page.



Elements dropped onto the comic page will appear in a default style.

Creating With Templates

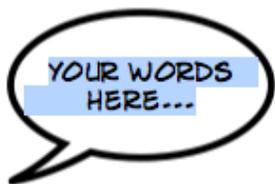
If you do not need to use the Script Editor you can begin working from a Template. Templates have predesigned styles for elements, panel layouts and image filters. Everything in the template can be edited, so you can make any template feel like your own.



Select a template from the thumbnail and click “Choose”. You will see Styles on the left, Template pages on the right. Click on different elements on the page and you will see the styles designed for those elements appear in the left hand column. To add new template page click and drag the template page from the chooser and drop it into the Comic Editor space in the center.



You’ll also see your pictures in the lower right hand corner. To add a picture to an image panel drag and drop it right over the panel you want it in. The picture will automatically resize to fill the the panel. Once an image is inside the panel you can resize and place it where you want it.



Add your own text by double clicking on the elements. This will highlight the text so it’s ready for you to edit. There are font options in the drop down menu at the center of the toolbar, or you can access the full font library by clicking on the “A” in the upper right hand corner.

With all of the elements you can use the pre-designed styles or you can create your own. You’ll find tools for changing the fill and stroke colors, shadow and boarder options and even add textures in the Graphics Inspector. More information about the Graphics Inspector can be found on pages 11 and 12.

Some templates include image panels that have filters already built in. In the following tutorial you will see how to do even more with your images to make a great looking comic page.

Editing Images

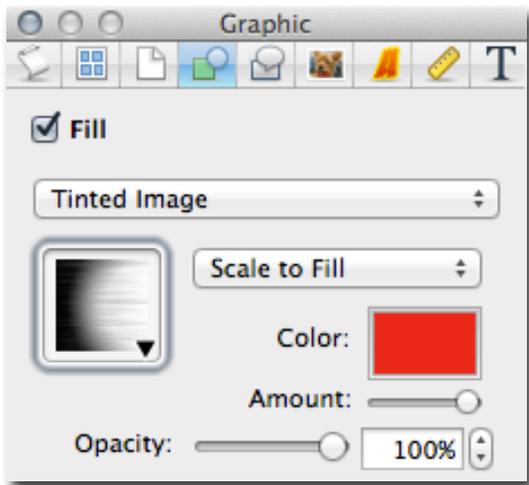


Instant Alpha

Knock out background with the Instant Alpha tool in the toolbar at the top of the screen. Just select the image, select Instant Alpha and click the color you want to remove. Drag to expand the selection. Hit enter or click outside of the photo to apply the transparency.

There are multiple filters available in the Inspector and the toolbar. To apply a filter to an image select the image and click on the filter icon (indicated by the little dog). You can adjust the level of a filter using the slider that automatically appears when a filter is applied to an image.

Image Filters



Graphics

Filters aren't the only way to change photos into comics, you can add graphic stylizations too! You will find the graphics tab in the Inspector with Fill options that include textures, speed lines, halftones and more.

Speed Lines & Halftones

Add some action to your elements and photos by using Speed Lines or Halftones as your fill. In the graphics tab of the Inspector select "Colorized Image" or "Tinted Image" as your Fill. From here click on the down arrow in the space for selecting the image and use the drop down menu to find the perfect match for your image.



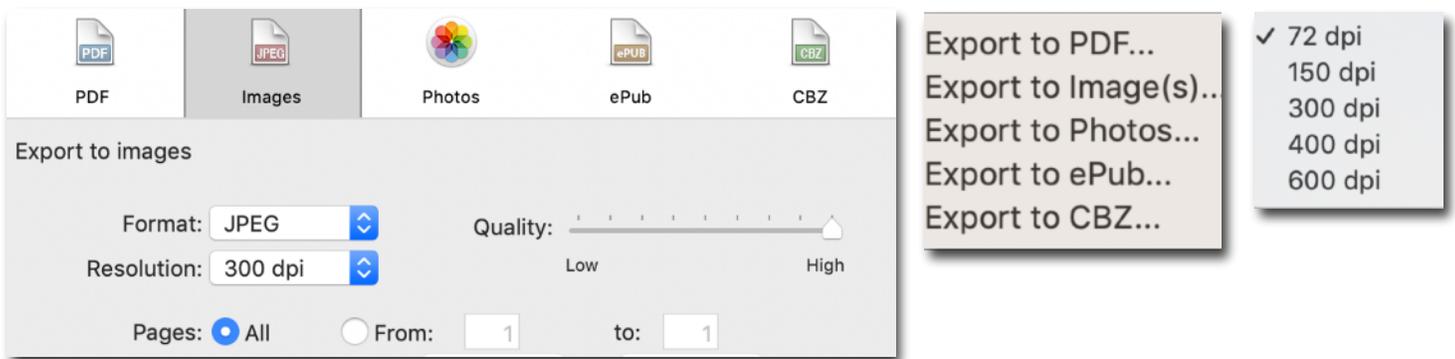
Save and Export Your Comic

Comic Archive Format

The default save option for Comic Life 3 is the Comic Archive document. The file extension is .comiclfe. This format will allow you to save, reopen and continue working on your comic project at a later time.

Export Options

You can export your comic in a variety of ways. Comic Life 3 can export directly as ePub as well as CBZ format for those who want to publish your comics. Export directly to Image(s) to share comics with your friends. For print quality options you can export your comic as a high resolution PDF or image file.



(Please note: "Photos" is a bundled app on Mac, so this is a Mac only export option)

Congratulations!

Now you know how to make and share a comic in Comic Life 3. We hope you enjoy creating your stories. If you have questions about the app you can find more information in the Help Guide in the app, or you can contact us at plasq@plasq.com

Best Wishes,

