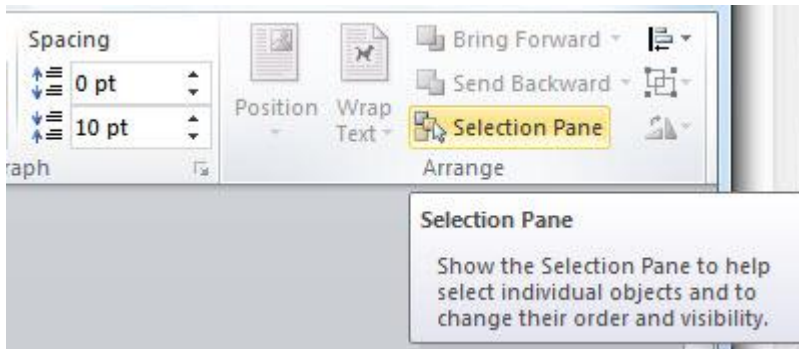# DIY BOOK COVERS

THE CHEAT SHEET

Here are simple descriptions for the things you'll want to do - if you get stuck on anything, check here first.

Contents

Crash Course version

1. Open the fonts file, download and install the fonts for the template you want to use.
2. Open the **.docx** template. Click the "Page Layout" tab, then Selection Pane on the far right.

3. Find the layer you want to edit. You may have to move it higher on the list with the arrows, or else click the "eye" icon to hide the layers on top of it. (Some things can't be moved; text layers and shape layers are always on top of picture layers, so you'll have to hide them.)
4. **To replace the images,** you can right-click on the image and choose "change picture."
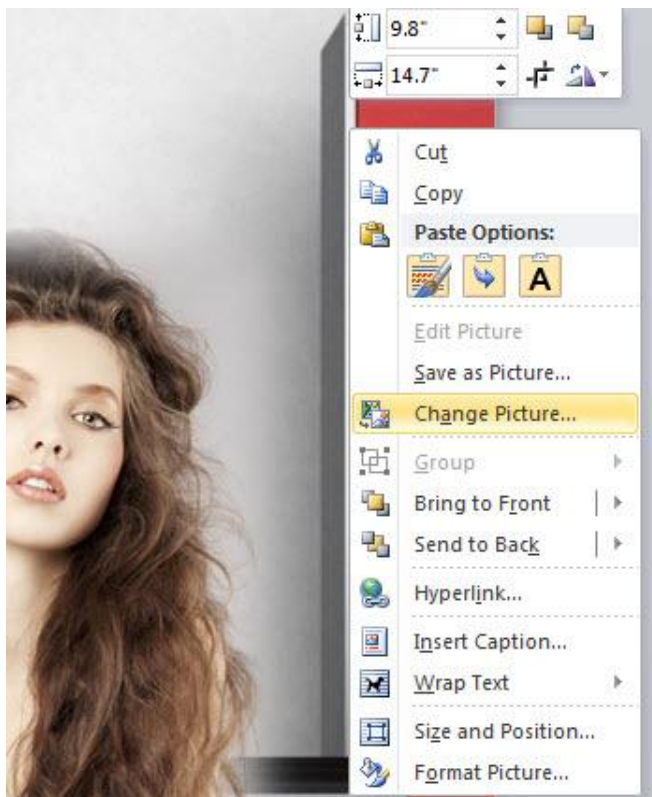

That will bring in a new picture with all the same settings as the old one.

If that doesn't quite work for you, you may need to add your own picture.

You can go to "Insert>>picture" or simply drag and drop a picture from your desktop into the Word file.

However if you do this, you'll need to immediately select the picture, go to Page Layout, Wrap Text and choose "Behind Text."

Otherwise you won't be able to move the picture around or resize it.
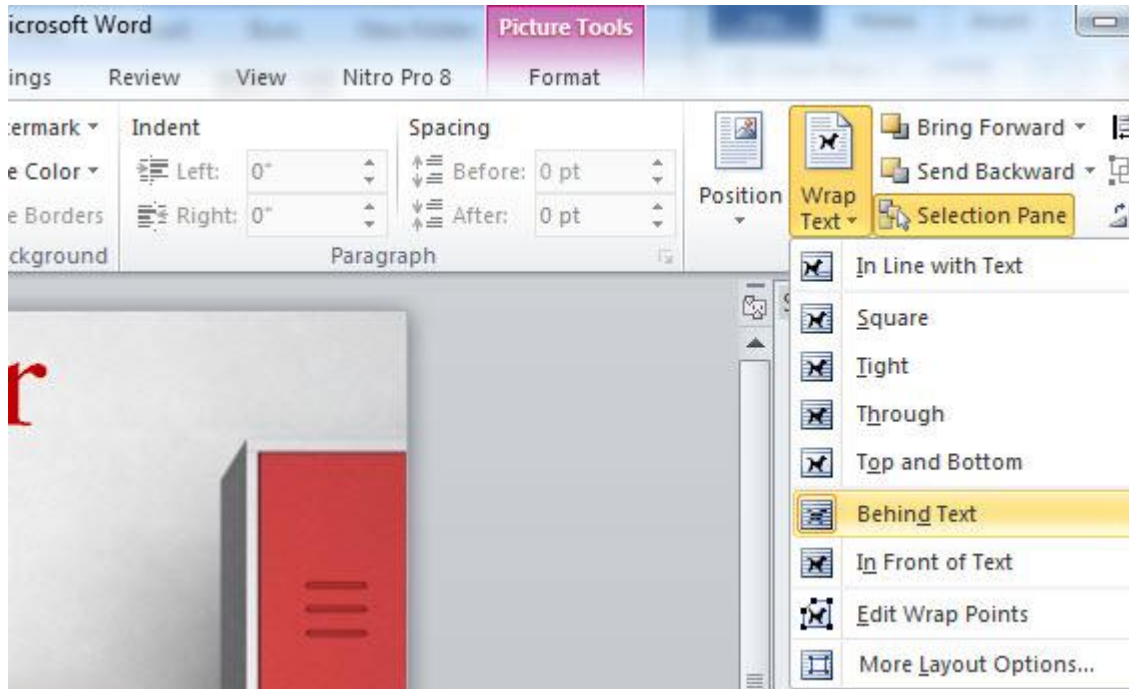
5. **It should be simple to edit the text,** but your new text may not fit right. You'll need to go to the 'Home' tab, and click the little arrow icon next to "Font" to bring up the Font menu.
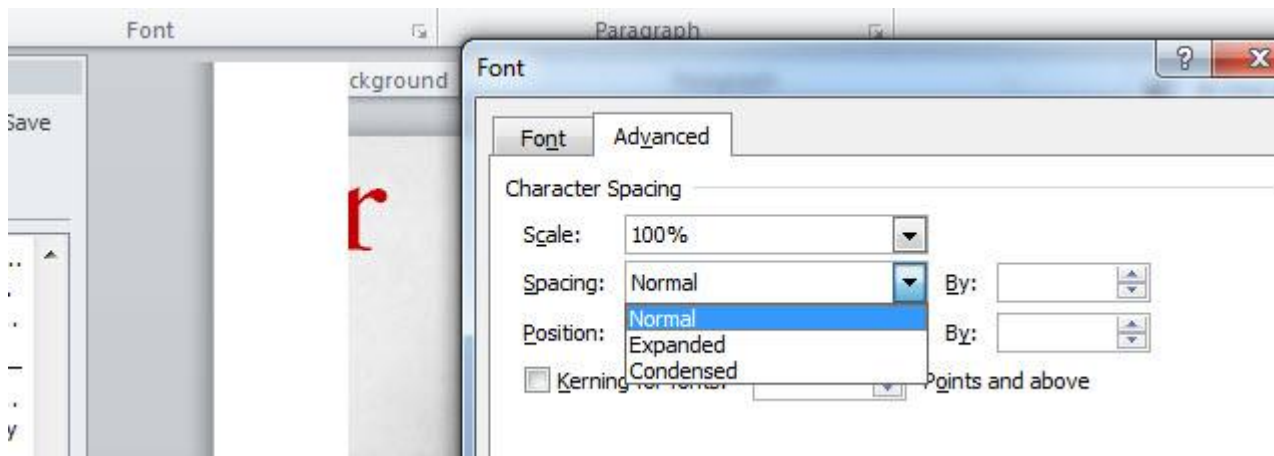
From there, under the "Advanced tab," you can adjust the spacing. Almost all of the text in these templates is "Expanded" so you can play with the "By:" and adjust the spacing up and down until things fit how you want it.

MORE DETAILED STEPS

How to drag layers from one template to another

These are steps to help you do things, but it's much faster to find what you're looking for on another template and just drag and drop it in to the one you want to use. You can open both templates, select the layer you want from one, and drag it into the other. Editing one of the layers I've made will be easier than starting from scratch.

How to swap pictures

Right click on the image to 'Change Picture.'

The template 'breaks' and I can't put the picture where I want

Double click on the image, go up to "Wrap Text" and choose "Behind Text."

How to blend images using soft edges

Right click on the picture (you have to "select" is first, usually by double clicking right on the border of the image

Layer images with transparency

How to strip background (if you get stuck, Word isn't great for this, hire someone on fiverr.com to do it for $5. I used ONLY Word for the templates, so you can see how more difficult pictures have rough edges, but for a real cover the edges should be perfect.)

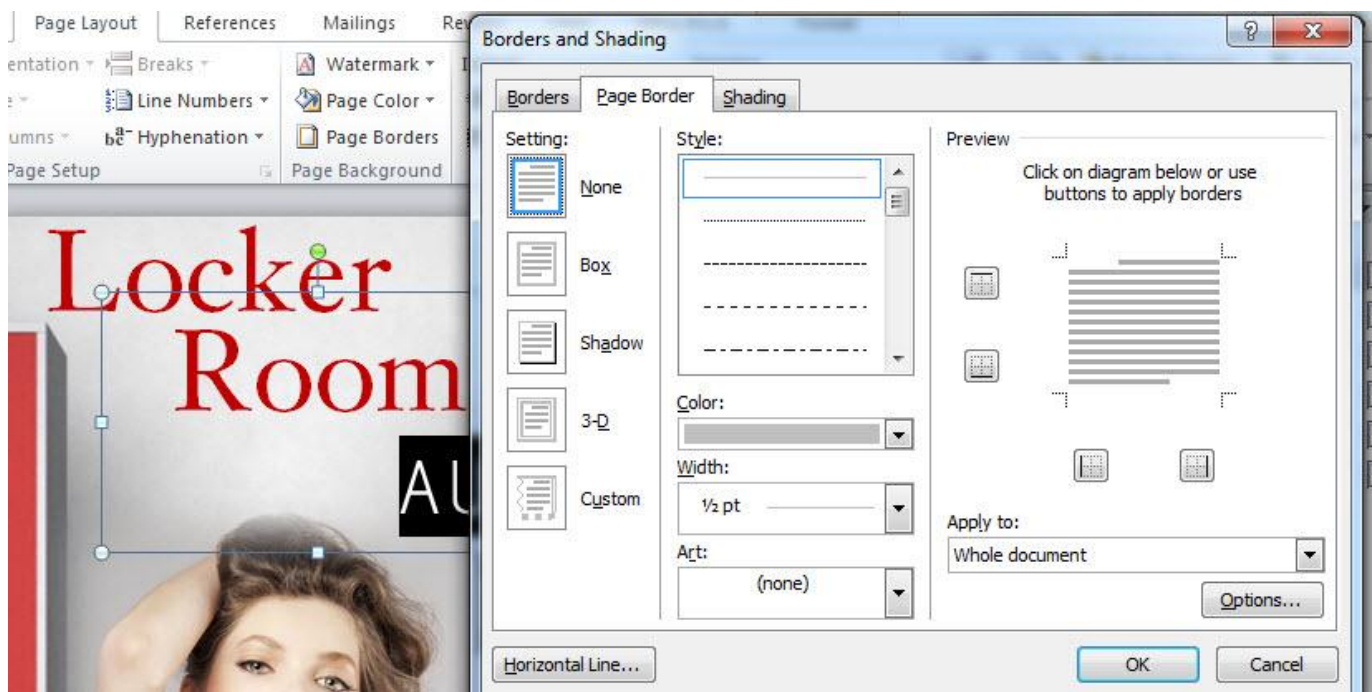## *How to change the page color*

Go up to "Page Layout" and choose a color. You can also go to "Fill Effects" to add a gradient.

How to add border

Go up to Page Layout and hit "Page Borders" (if it's grayed out and you can't choose it, you need to select a text layer, rather than an image layer). To move the border closer to the edge of the cover, click the "options" tag and adjust the margin.

How to add lines, boxes and decorations

To add a line, go up to "Insert>>shape" and select line. If you want to draw a straight, horizontal line, hold down the "Shift" key as you drag out the line. It's very frustrating to select your line (you have to click right on it) but once you do you can right click, go to "format" and then change the width or line color.

You can use the same process to make a box or "panel" – sometimes there's no good place to add the text in a way that makes it stand out, so you may need to add a color-block to hold the text. It's not my favorite thing to do, but it can work really well for some types of colors.

If you want to add decorations – I recommend you search for PNG images with transparent background. You can also import your decoration and use the "remove background" feature, but it may not be very clean. I've also added a whole list of brilliant fonts for adding decorations.

How to change text spacing

To change the space between the letters, you'll need to go to the 'Home' tab, and click the little arrow icon next to "Font" to bring up the Font menu. You can also use: CTRL+SHIFT+F
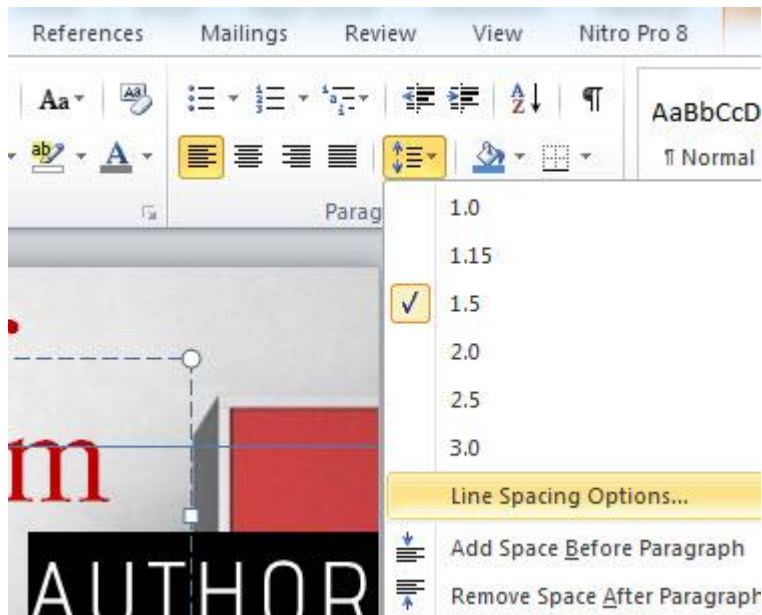
From there, select "Advanced" and change the "Expanded by:" numbers to increase or decrease the spacing. I would also click on "Kerning for fonts."
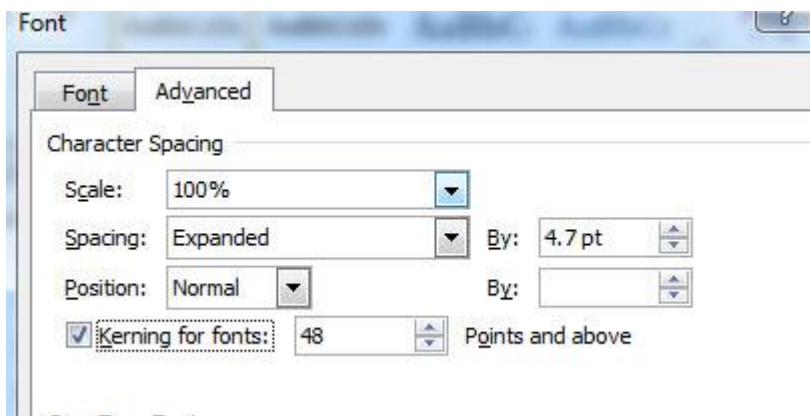
How to change line height

To change the line height, you can go to the "Paragraph" tab, click on the line-height icon, and then "Line Space Options."

However, line height doesn't work so well because you can only decrease it a little before it starts to cut off the text. If you want to put the text closer together, duplicate the layer and just move the new layer where you want it.

How to duplicate a layer

There are a few reasons you may want to duplicate a layer. If your picture doesn't quite fit, you may want to extend the top or bottom of the image to fill the extra space. To do this, duplicate the layer (you can use right click to copy+paste, but I always use the shortcode "Ctrl+C" followed by "Ctrl+V").

Then you can crop the image to show just the fill area you want to use, and stretch it to fill up the space. (If you want to blend it really well, you can use "soft edges", but then you'd have to stretch it bigger and the shadows/colors may not match up.

You can also use copy+paste after selecting text layers. It's best to get the text style you want first, before making a lot of copies.

How to add drop shadow to text

Go up to the Font panel and click on the icon of the "A" with the blue glow. This is where we find the basic text effects, "Outline, Shadow, Reflection and Glow." (Stay away from reflection, it almost never works for a book cover). Some of these quick styles are ugly, so don't use them indiscriminately. Outlines don't work very well either, unless you're adding text to a background with lots of variations of light and dark.
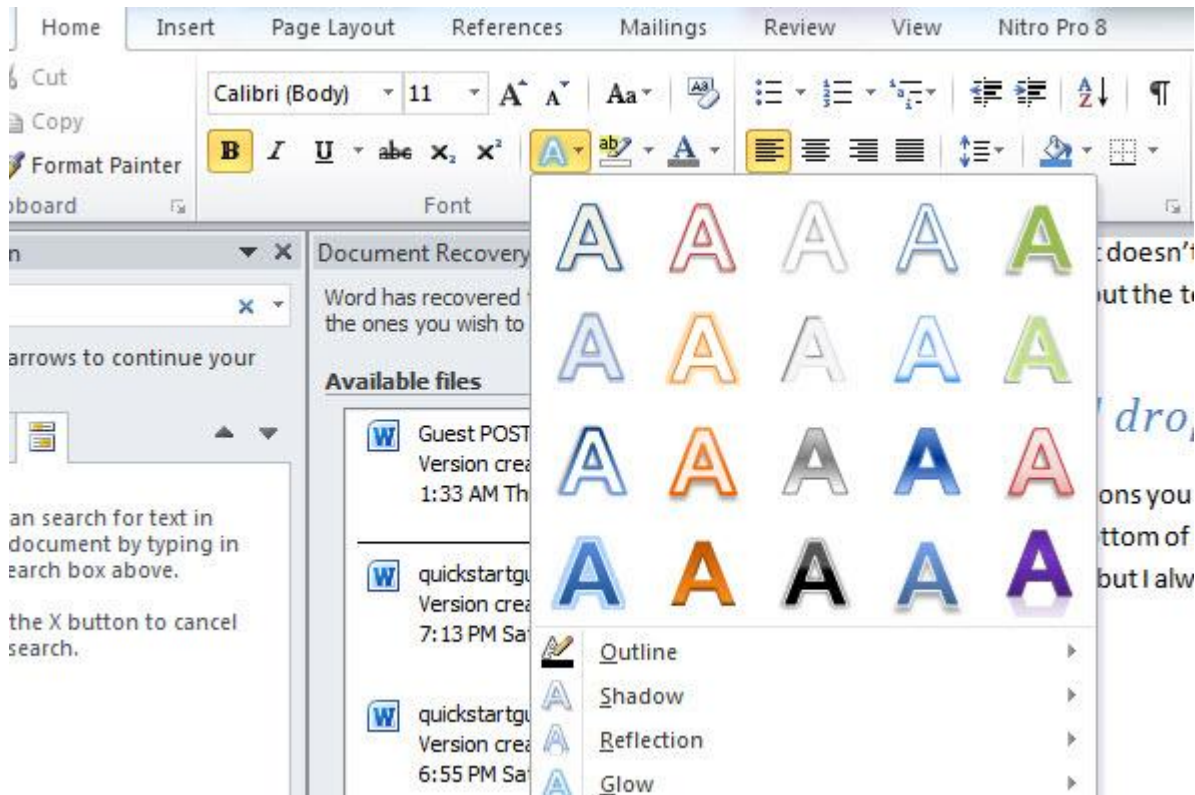
Your best bet is to use a bit of shadow or glow to help the text stand out, but it must be done well. The drop shadow or glow should be light, diffuse and wide – it should make the text stand out but not be immediately obvious. You usually don't want 3D text that really jumps out, you want beautiful, clean fonts that stand out without being flashy. The 3rd "A" on the top is white with a bit of drop shadow, it's usually a good start if you're writing over a dark background. If it's a lighter background, you want the drop shadow to be wider, so you need to click on Shadow, then go to the very bottom of the new panel and click "Shadow Options."
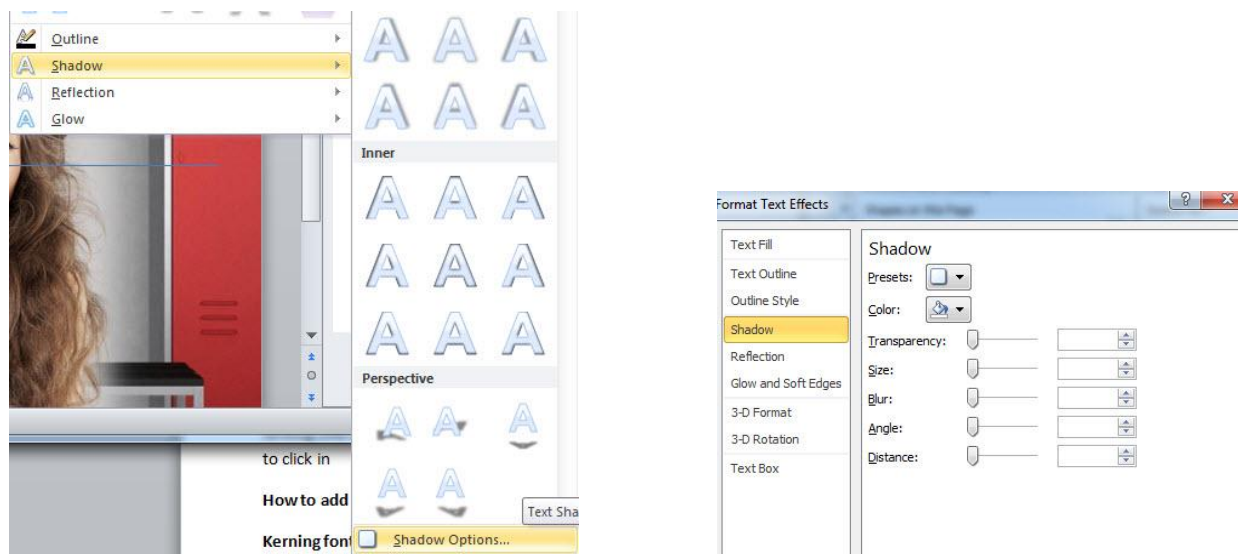

That brings up the "Format Text Effects" menu. Getting the settings right can be a challenge – it'll be much faster to grab an example out of another template, drag it into your file and change the font/text.

How to add a gradient overlay

Sometimes you need to lighten out or darken a portion of your image, or darken the picture around the edges, or add a color 'wash' over everything. To do this, go to "Insert>>"Shape" and draw out a big rectangle. You'll want to make it big enough to cover the whole page, so make the borders bigger than your templates edges. (From now on, you won't be able to select any of the pictures that are underneath this layer, unless you click the eye to "hide" this layer first.)
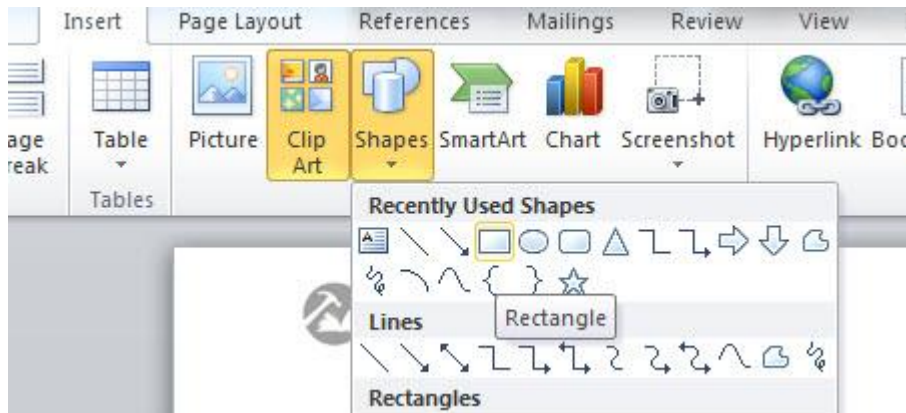
Right click on the shape to bring up the panel, then choose the last option, "Format shape." In the Format Shape menu, click "Gradient Fill" and choose your settings. On that "slider" you'll have to click on one end, set the color and transparency, and then the other end. (I set both sides to black, but set the transparency at 100% on one side, and 0% on the other, to get this nice dark gradient)…
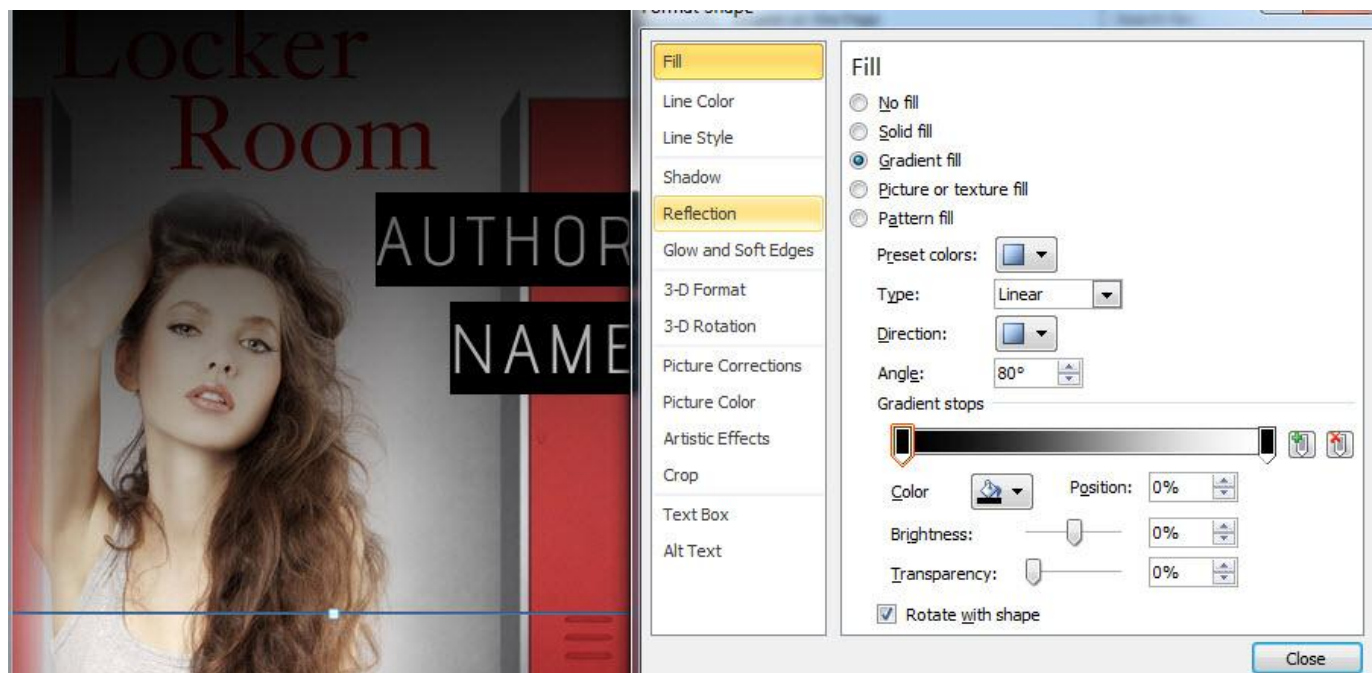
How to create a color wash

Instead of choosing "Fill>>Gradient" you can choose "Fill>>Solid Fill" and choose a color, then set the transparency. So for example, you can add a light layer of white or teal to give your cover a more "winter" look.

Gradients and color washes are awesome, so I'm making a whole bunch of them as different files so that you can just drag and drop them into your template.
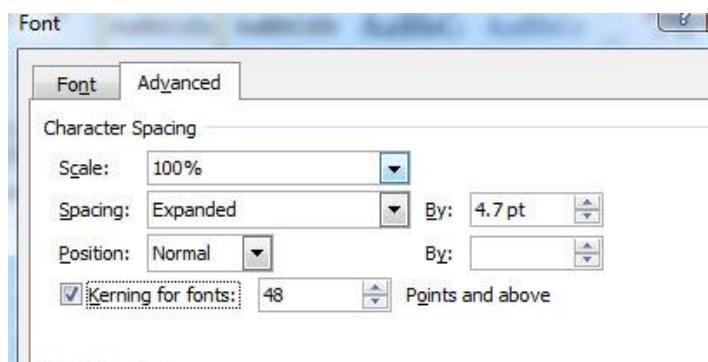
How to add a transparent layer

Sometimes you may want to add a little bit of special effects over your other images. You can make another shape, but instead of solid or gradient fill, choose "Picture or texture fill" and upload your picture. You can change the transparency or add soft edges. You can *only* add transparency on pictures this way (as a shape/picture fill), and shapes *have to be* on top of layers.

Also, you can only use the "Remove Background" tool on pictures, and not on shapes. So if you wanted to add a background scene with a transparent layer of sparkles, and then add a human model on top of that but strip out the background… you can't. That can be limiting, but I've found no way around it.

Kerning fonts

"Kerning" means fixing the spacing between individual letters. You can click the "Kerning for fonts" under the advanced options, but certain letters on certain fonts may still look funny – like the space between "A W". In that case, you'd select the "A" only, and change the "Expanded by" to a lower number. This doesn't have to be done for every letter, but only if something really looks off.

How to add a text bevel

I don't recommend using text bevels, but in some cases it can work. Go to the Font menu and "Text Effects" on the bottom to get the "Format Text Effects." Here you'll find "3-D Format".

2014@DIYbookcovers.com
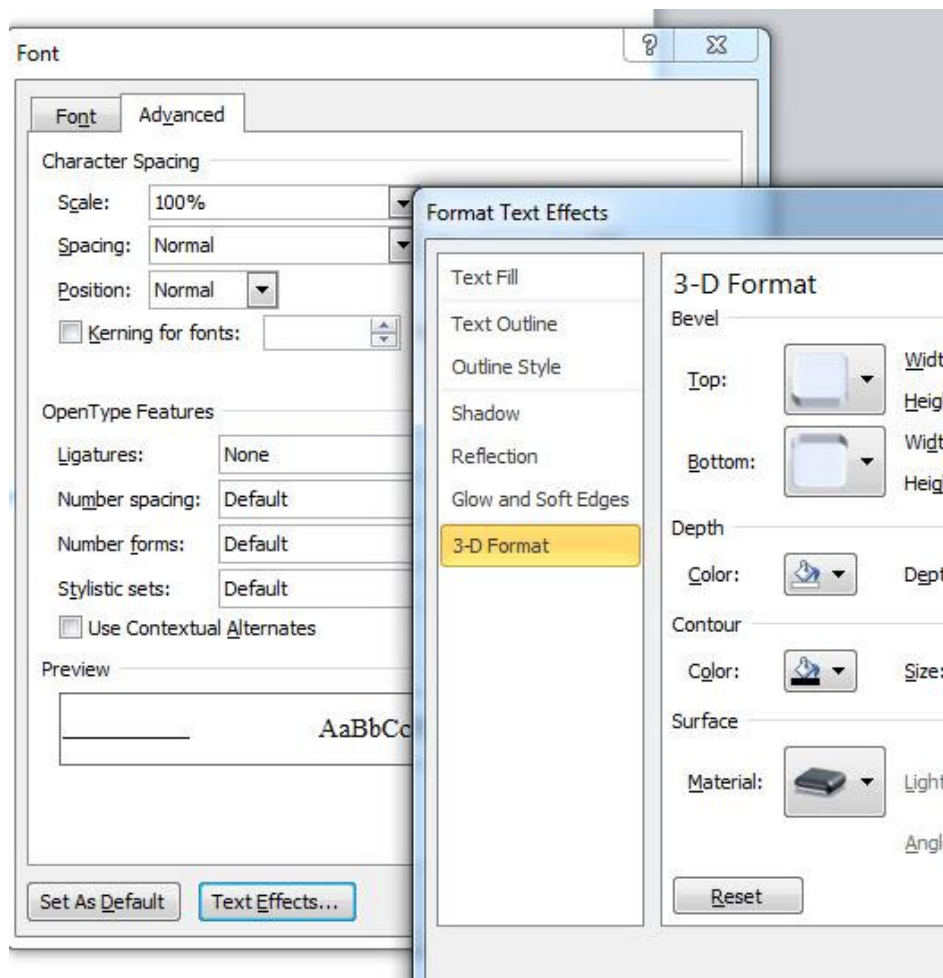
How to add transparent text

On the same menu, you can set the "Text Fill" to transparent – sometimes really big transparent letters can be used without blocking out all of the background. (You can also fill text with a gradient that's transparent on just one side, which can look really nice.

More special text effects (Word Art)

Clicking "Insert>>WordArt" brings up a menu with more text styles. Using one of these styles gives you a new tab on the top called "Drawing Tools" /"Format". From here you have some new options under "text effects", including "transform."
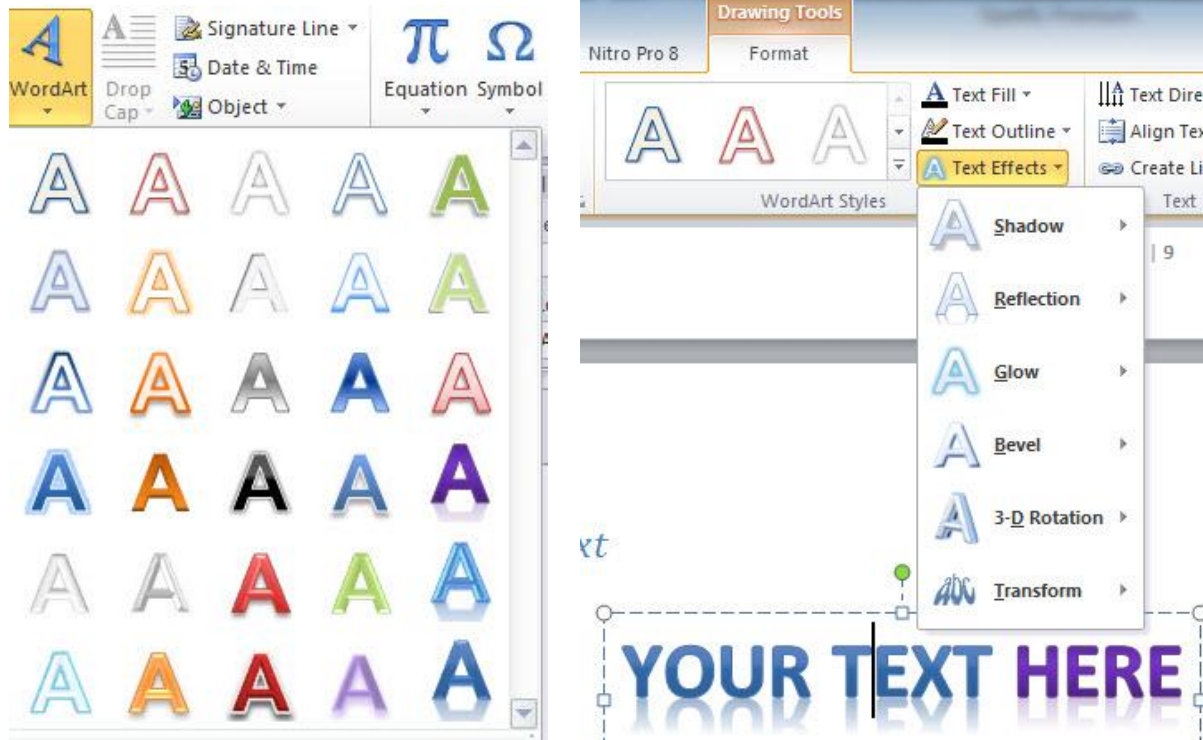
Using text effects like this is ***rarely a good idea.***

You should almost never use bright colors for fonts. You should almost never use anything other than a very subtle gradient. But sometimes it can be OK to use some of these effects to change the shape of your text (I see it now and then on non-fiction covers).


But keep in mind these are dangerous waters, and you want to make sure you don't do anything risky, so sticking with a plain but elegant style/font from one of the templates will probably be more effective for you.

Changing the size of your cover

These covers are all set for 6"x9" which is an appropriate size and ratio (1.5) for ebook covers.

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Amazon recommends a 1.6 ratio – the same ratio as a 5″x8″ book.

Personally, I think Amazon's preferred ratio is too tall and thin, and a ratio of 1.5 looks more like a traditional book to me. My guess is Amazon wants books to look good on smartphones, especially iPhones, and the deviously tricky iPhone5, which has a very tall, narrow screen. Most publishers are still using a 1.5 ratio or less.
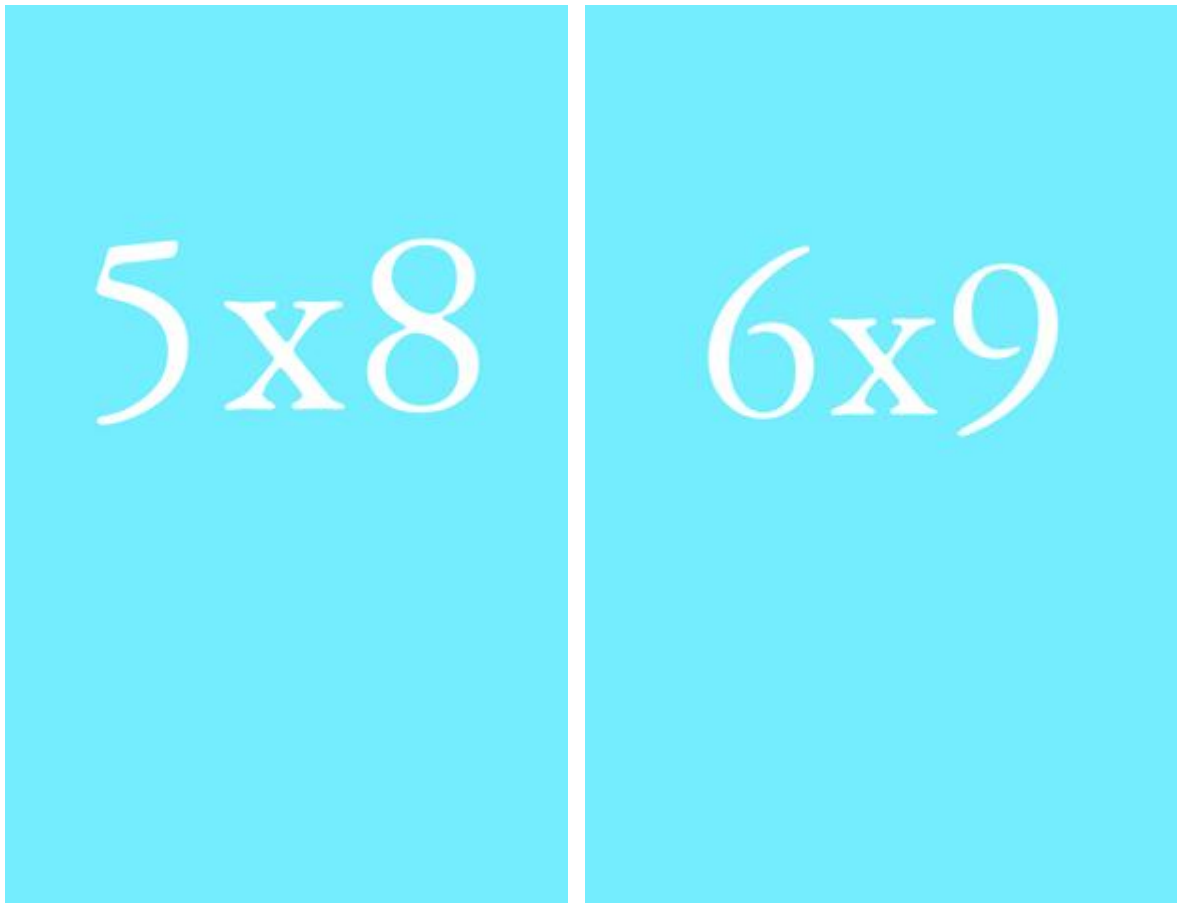
It doesn't really matter. Because all ebook readers display various book sizes. But if you want to change the size, just go up to "Page Layout>>Sizes>>more paper sizes." You will have to move everything around a little after the change.

How to make a full print cover (adding the spine and back)

Making a full print cover for POD in MS Word is a little trickier, but I've made a few samples using templates from Createspace and added a tutorial guide (for members). Once you've gotten used to the MS Word tools, it should be well within your abilities.

How to make a business card for your book

Look for the samples and tutorials in the member's area.

SAVING YOUR COVER

These covers are set at 6x9. At full resolution, 300dpi =

Amazon's recommended height and width dimensions include ratio of 1.6 with 2500pixels on the long side. 1.6 is the same ratio as a 5"x8" book, so if you set your cover for 5"x8", you'd be done.

Personally, I think Amazon's preferred ratio is too tall and thin, and a ratio of 1.5 looks more like a traditional book to me (a typical 6"x9" book). You can read more about that here.
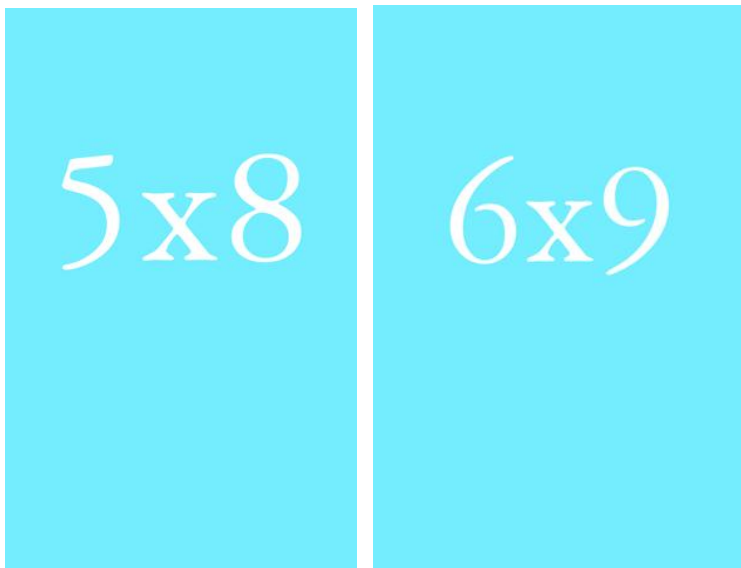
My templates are set at 6"x9" – but it's easy to change the book size.

At any rate, once you're done, save the file as a PDF.

You may need to download this "Save as PDF" addon for Word 2007.

Otherwise you can look for an online conversion tool, or use http://www.zamzar.com, to save your Word file as a PDF.

Once you have a PDF, use Zamzar to convert your PDF to a JPG file – they'll send you the file by email.

The resulting file will be a high-resolution, 1800x2700pixel file, perfect for Kindle and most ebook distributors (though a little big for normal web display.)

PS) I'm working on developing an easier process than this, let me know if you have any suggestions.