

- » 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.

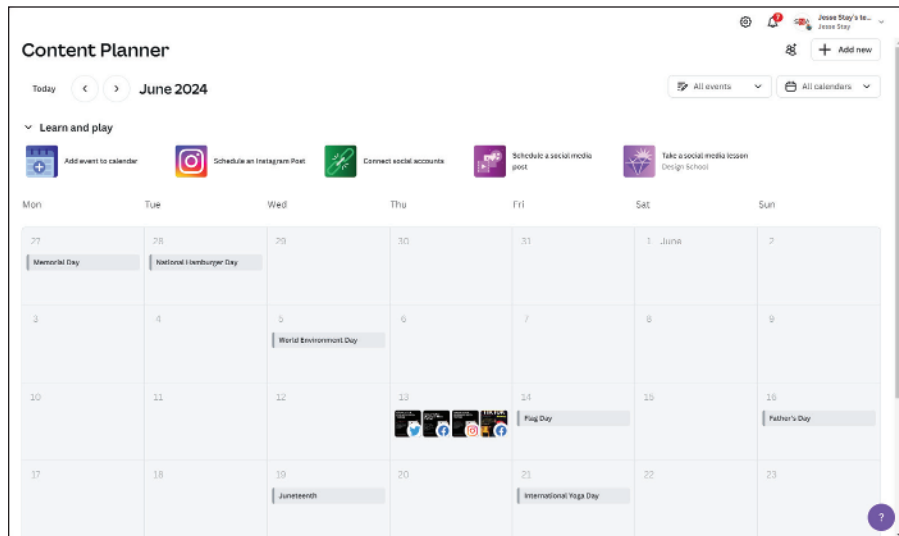
Here's what my daughter, Emily, says about how she uses Canva in her school:

“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.

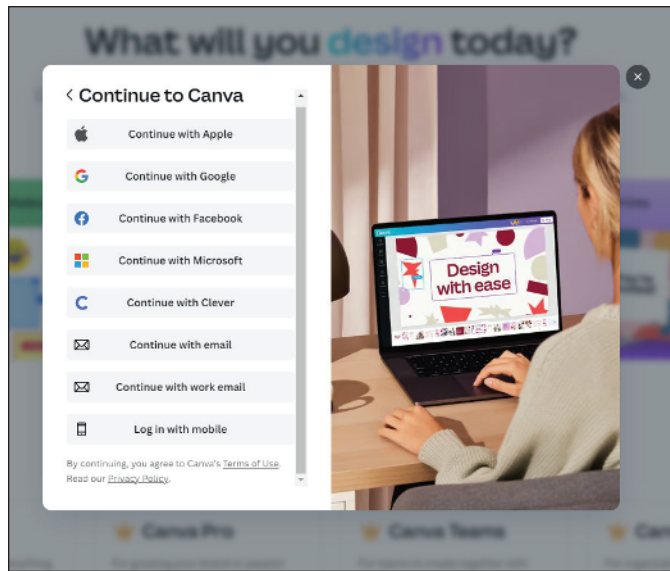
Going through the sign-up process

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.

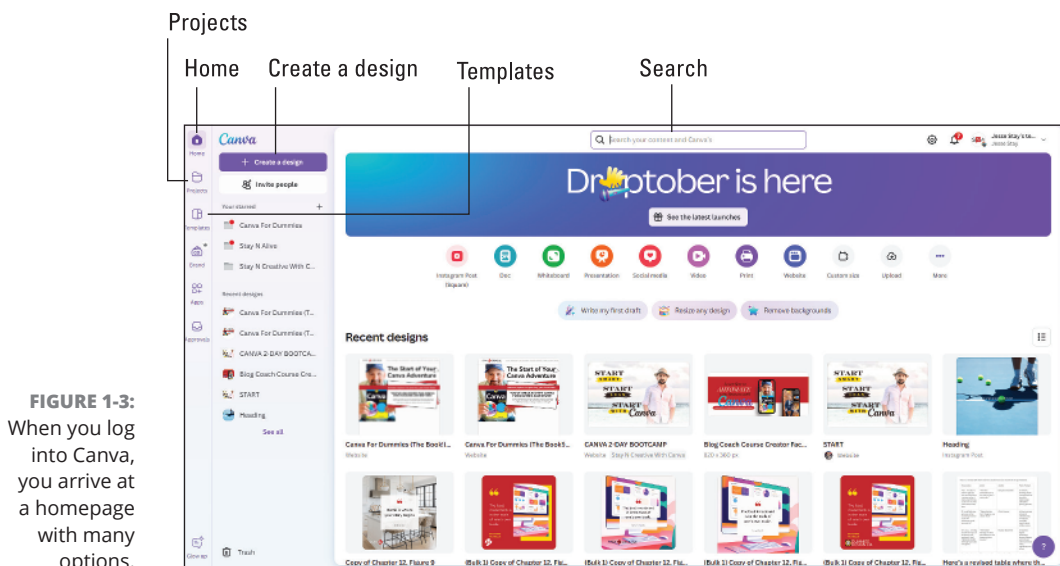


FIGURE 1-3: When you log into Canva, you arrive at a homepage with many options.



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.

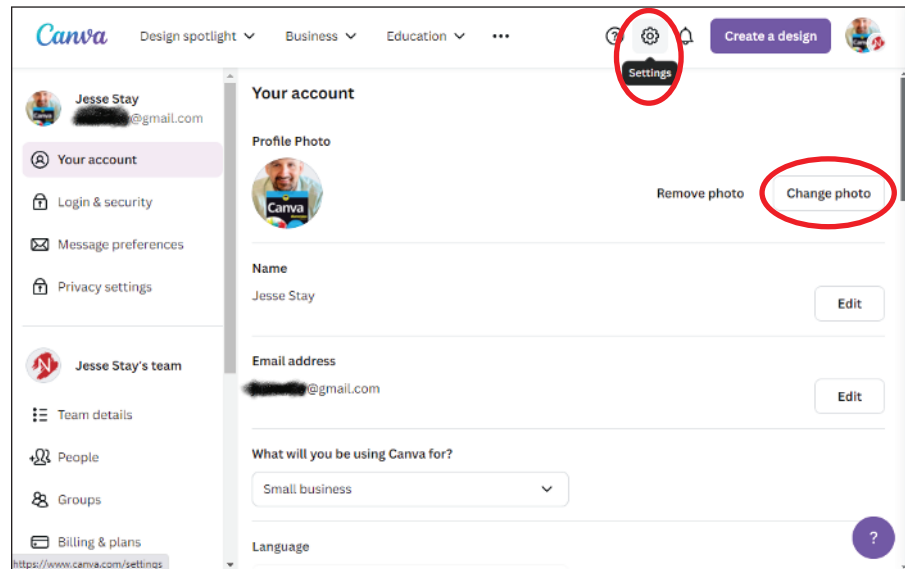


FIGURE 1-4:
Your account
settings look
something like
this page.

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.**

You should see a new profile photo displayed at the top of your profile. Now you can adjust the rest of your profile settings. Here are some other things you can do on the Your Account tab:

» **Select a journey.** Select the most applicable journey for you by clicking the down arrow on the Select a Journey drop-down menu, which you find under the question, “What will you be using Canva for?” The drop-down menu offers you a list to select from, as shown in Figure 1-5.

» **Themes, accessibility options, and more.** Below the Canva Select a Journey drop-down menu, you find options to select a language, a look and feel for your Canva experience, and other accessibility features and preferences. Select these as you see fit for your needs — they are optional.

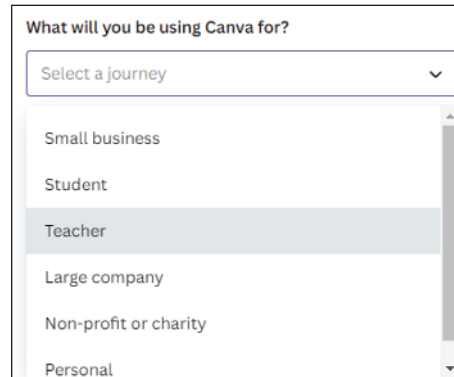


FIGURE 1-5: You can choose from multiple journeys to customize your Canva experience.

Unveiling the Canva Editor

It's getting closer to time to dig in and create your first design! But before you do, you need to understand the main design interface on Canva, the Canva editor. I introduce the editor in the next section, and then in Chapter 2, I show you, step by step, how to create your first design.

The Canva editor is the workspace where your creativity comes to life inside the Canva app or website. The editor interface is designed to be intuitive and easy to navigate, which allows you to focus on bringing your ideas to a visual reality.

Getting to know the Canva editor interface

Canva organized the editor interface to facilitate easy access to all the tools you might need to create beautiful designs. This helpful approach encourages exploration and makes your design work feel like play! I showcase the editor in this section by beginning the creation of a simple resume.

To get to the Canva editor, follow these steps:

1. Click the big, colored Create a Design button near the upper left of the Canva homepage. (See the left side of Figure 1-6.)

A popup appears, similar to the one shown on the right in Figure 1-6, which shows recent designs or suggestions for templates or categories you can use.

2. In the popup's Search box, type what you want to create — in this example, *resume* — and select the top resulting option that matches your search.

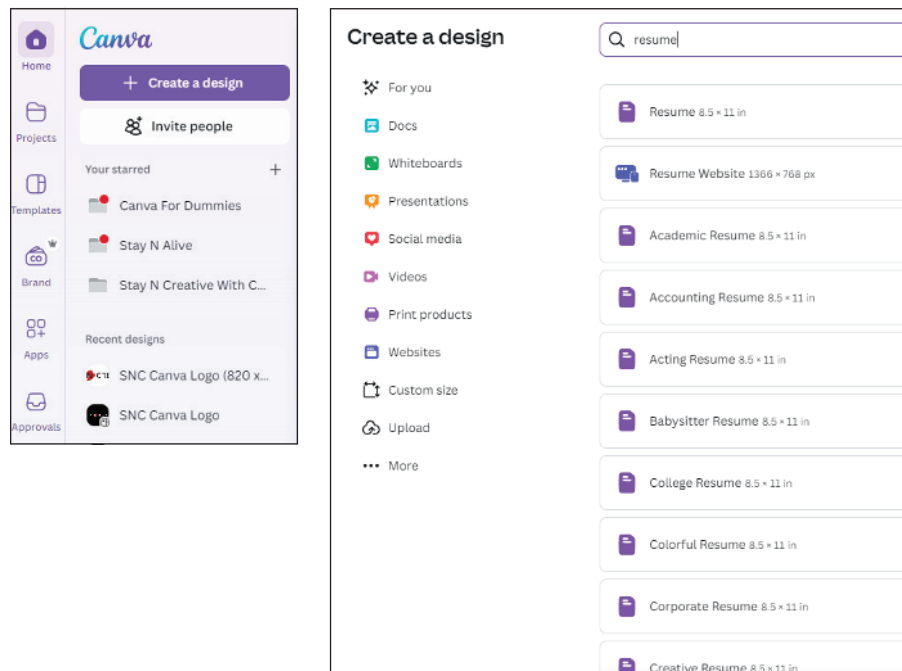


FIGURE 1-6:
Access the
editor by
clicking the
Create a
Design button.



TIP

After you have a few projects under way, you can also access the editor from the homepage by clicking on any of your previous designs under the Recent Designs option in the sidebar to the right of the Home, Projects, and Templates tabs or by selecting any of the templates under the Projects or Templates tabs. Any time you click on a project or template, the interface takes you to a preview of the Canva editor. Then, to enter the editor, click anywhere inside the editor.

If all goes well (and it's your first access), a tab or window should appear with a blank editor interface that looks a lot like Figure 1-7. After you arrive at the editor, you can explore the various components of the its interface.

Design ingredients

Hamburger menu

Left sidebar

Central canvas

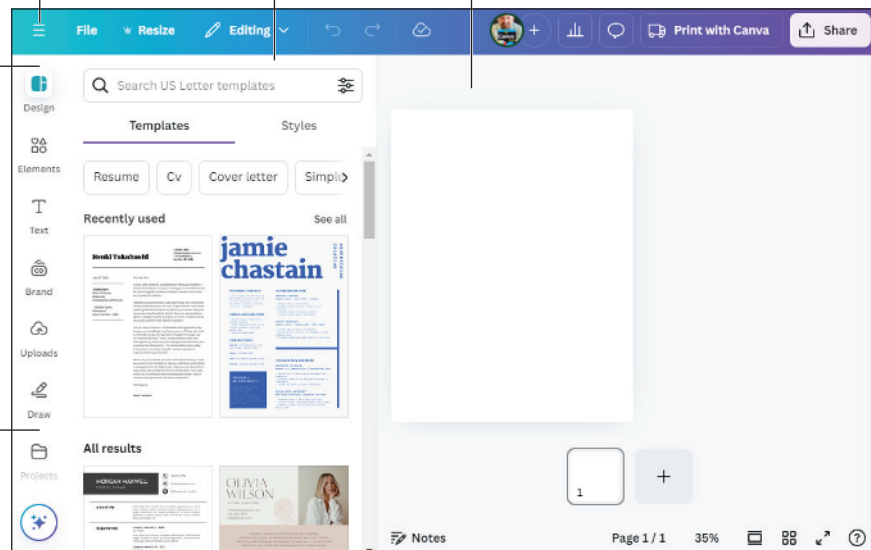


FIGURE 1-7:
The Canva
Editor, the
first time you
start a new
template.



REMEMBER

You can also download this, and all examples in the book, by chapter, at <https://jessestay.com/canvabook>, if you want to play with any of these yourself!

I use these terms to reference each area of the editor throughout this book:

- » **Hamburger menu.** In the upper left corner, you see three parallel lines. This is the *hamburger menu*. Click on this to open the list of homepage tabs again and put the Canva editor back into preview mode. To re-enter the editor, just click inside the editor. Or click any of the homepage tabs to switch to a different design or move to other areas of Canva.
- » **Left sidebar.** This area contains icons, or tabs, for various tools and features — text, background, uploads (for uploading graphics and video), and more — that you use to customize your templates. Canva calls these tools their *design ingredients*.
- » **Central canvas:** This is the main area you use to drag and drop items to assemble your design. Consider it your blank canvas, where you — embracing your newly discovered design skills — can create anything you can possibly think of!

Discovering Canva's design ingredients

Canva provides a variety of tools, which you find in the left sidebar as icons you can click. These design ingredients make designing easy! As you get acquainted with the Canva editor, you would be wise to explore the various tools available by clicking on each one. In Table 1-2, I compile a list of design ingredients ready to help you as you create your design. And I cover these in-depth in Chapter 2.

TABLE 1-2 **The Editor Interface Design Ingredients**

Icon	Ingredient Name	Function
 Design	Design	Select templates and styles for your design.
 Elements	Elements	Select from a database of hundreds of thousands of icons, pictures, clipart, GIFs, and more that you can drag and drop into your creation. You can even create your own using Canva's AI Image generator!
 Text	Text	Search from existing text templates or add your own text in the style you want by dragging text into your creation.
 Brand	Brand	Select from branding elements you or your organization have created to ensure that your design meets existing color, font, and graphical styles for your organization. I show you how to set up and add these elements for your own brand in Chapter 4.
 Uploads	Uploads	Upload image, video, and audio files from your computer that you can either access later or drag into your design right now. After uploading, you can search for and drag any of your media into your Editor. You can even record yourself right in the interface from here.
 Draw	Draw	Feeling really creative? Use this ingredient to draw with your mouse on a computer or use your finger on a tablet or mobile device.
 Projects	Projects	As you create designs, you store them here for further editing and access later. Need to come back to a design? Just click on the Projects tab and look for it. You can also create folders to store similar projects for easier retrieval.
 Apps	Apps	Just like your iOS or Android devices have app stores, Canva has its own Apps database of custom apps created by third-party developers to enhance the Canva experience. I share some of my favorite apps in Chapter 9.

Finding Resources and Inspiration

Canva has a wealth of resources to help stimulate creativity, stay in-the-know about all Canva interface and feature updates, and guide your overall design journey. These begin in Canva's own how-to for learning Canva, Canva's Design School. You can find these resources under the *Business*, *Education*, and *Learn* drop-down menus located at the top of www.canva.com/designschool (see Figure 1-8). Spend some time exploring the Business drop-down to keep up with the latest trends for your industry. Or dive into the Education and Learn drop-downs for in-depth tutorials and tips on how to use Canva.

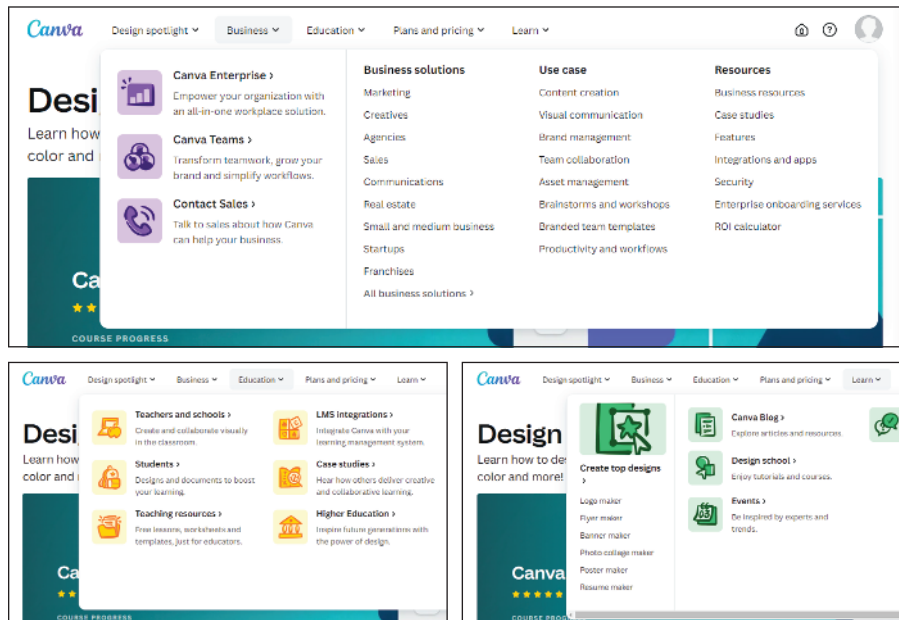


FIGURE 1-8: Drop-down menus on the homepage help you find out more about Canva.

Exploring Canva's Community Features

One of the biggest strengths of Canva is its capability to enhance your design experience by allowing you to collaborate, receive feedback, and connect with fellow users and teammates through community features. Here are just a few of the ways you can collaborate with others:

- » **Invite and collaborate.** On the homepage, click the Invite Others tab to share your design with others for real-time collaboration.



TIP

» **Join and participate.** For Pro users, engage with the community by creating and joining groups within your team or class, as I explain further in Chapter 9. Or participate in weekly design challenges on Instagram to refine your skills and showcase your work.

Follow @canva on Instagram (www.instagram.com/canva) to receive weekly design challenges to exercise your skills and test the Canva knowledge you glean through this book. To see past challenges or submissions to the current week's challenge, search for *#canvadesignchallenge* on Instagram.

» **Get feedback and learn.** Use community feedback on your shared designs to improve and adapt your projects. I explain more about shared designs and templates in Chapter 10.

Canva's community tools, when used correctly, not only enhance the quality of your designs but also help build your network within the Canva user base. Designing with a community helps to enrich your creative process with diverse insights and collaborations from others in situations similar to yours. I dive deeper into Canva's Community and Team features in Chapter 9.

