



digital collage zine guide

digital collage zine guide by zine.cafe



README.txt :

we can't take credit for all of this; the tools, art, and other resources were almost exclusively made by others- each having their own license, copyright, and rules for their use. consider supporting, attributing, and citing the things you use! we hope u have fun making collages! ヽ(✿ ！ ∪ ！)/~

last updated: Nov 19, 2025 //

feedback, suggestions, criticism, love?

email hello@zine.cafe or say hey on [instagram](https://www.instagram.com/zine.cafe) / [bluesky](https://www.bluesky.com/zine.cafe)

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tutorial

▶ Digital Collage Techniques with zine.cafe

this is the starter guide, we hope to update this later with some more detailed walkthroughs. basically the process goes like this:

1. pick a topic or theme (optional!)
 - a. need some help brainstorming? [ZCMAG](#) and [Nice Zines](#) have idea generators!
 - b. it can also be fun to just go into the archives and just collect sources for later :)
2. gather visual material
 - a. browse [magazines and image sites](#) for relevant visuals. you can download them directly or sometimes it's easier to take screen shots.
 - b. you might cut out some words, illustrations, or anything that interests you!
3. trim materials
 - a. using one of the [tools](#) below, '[tear](#)' out your image.
 - i. this can be done with the magic wand, lasso, or rectangular select tool
 - ii. if you want to simulate the torn paper appearance, install the torn paper brushes and use it as an eraser.
 - iii. to make the image look more like something that was printed you might also apply a paper texture
 - iv. as you do this you may begin organizing your materials to help with the next step
4. arrange on a page
 - a. once you feel satisfied with the materials you cut out, now you can begin actually pasting them in!

- b. you may find it easier to work page by page or spread by spread and then paste that into the zine template. when working with so many layers and objects things can get hectic fast!
 - c. start with the background, maybe there's a larger image you cut out that works well or maybe just a paper texture will do!
 - d. when pasting them in, give each a little rotation to keep things fresh. be mindful of what layer you're pasting in to, it can be helpful to have each torn piece its own layer.
 - e. add slight drop shadows under each layer for a more realistic look
 - f. you can also paste in images of tape to make it look even more handmade.
 - g. you may want to add text to your zine. you can just type it on to the page, but a tip is to use a small piece of torn paper as the backdrop for the text so it's lifted above the background. Bonus points if you use a typewriter typeface.
5. create more pages!
6. final processing
- a. totally optional, but you can run the zine pages through [Spectrolite](#) (mac only), a tool for preparing images and zines to print on a Risograph. you can experiment with using different ink color combinations. It can help give things a more uniformed look.
 - b. another option is : <https://photocopyeffect.com/>
7. you have a zine!
- a. host it online or print it out! Tag us, we'd love to see ur creation :D

software

programs and apps

procreate and photoshop are probably the most commonly used programs, but you should check out these free alternatives!

- ★ [Photopea](#) – free web-based Photoshop/Illustrator alternative
- ★ [Krita](#) – free and open source, great for digital drawing
- ★ [GIMP](#) – basically an open source photoshop!
- ★ [Scribus](#) – free and open source InDesign alternative
- ★ [Infinite Painter](#) – procreate alternative for tablets and phones that's free and supports custom brushes

honorable mentions:

- ★ [Electric Zine Maker](#) – very fun tool :) (download required)
- ★ [Zines Forever](#) (web-based, it's a really neat site!)

zine printable templates

web-based templates by zine.cafe

- ★  mini zine template
- ★  8 page zine template
- ★  16 page zine template
- ★ [Photopea - Mini-Zine Template](#)

downloadable templates by Metaparadox on Itch.io

- ★ [Scribus Zine Templates by Metaparadox](#)
- ★ [Affinity Publisher Zine Templates by Metaparadox](#)

visual materials

public domain and creative commons images

stock photos

- ★ [Nappy](#)
- ★ [The Gender Spectrum Collection](#)
- ★ [Unsplash](#)
- ★ [Pixabay](#)
- ★ [Pexels](#)
- ★ [Rawpixel](#)

aggregators

- ★ [OpenVerse](#)
- ★ [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- ★ [Public Work by Cosmos](#)

museums

- ★ [National Gallery of Art](#)
- ★ [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)
- ★ [The Art Institute of Chicago](#)

historical & archival

- ★ [The Commons – Flickr](#)
- ★ [The Public Domain Review Image Collection](#)

antique book illustrations

- ★ [“Old Book Illustrations”](#)
- ★ [“From Old Books”](#)
- ★ [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#)

the internet archive: magazines, illustrations, and stickers

the best source for finding magazines online is the internet archive, though google books also has a number of collections available too. More than likely what you come across is copyrighted material.

Here are some to start browsing in:

- ★ ["Magazine Rack"](#) – Over 120 *terabytes* of magazines, from all sorts of decades and subjects
- ★ [Magazine Art Collection](#)
- ★ [Time Magazine](#)
- ★ [Field & Stream 1896–2004](#)
- ★ [Popular Mechanics 1902–2016](#)
- ★ [National Geographic 1978–2016](#)
- ★ [Popular Science 1872–2015](#)
- ★ [Vogue \(US Edition\) 1892–2016](#)
- ★ [Harper's Bazaar 1867–2016](#)
- ★ [Curtis's Botanical Magazine](#)
- ★ [Yahoo Internet Life](#) (neat Y2K internet vibes)

Try searching for books with illustrations (like [Flore Médicale](#)) or antique dictionaries and encyclopedias. Also, STICKERS!! like this [vintage furby sticker sheet](#)

‘yikes’ magazines

These magazines are especially bad, fortunately collage is a great way to subvert original purposes of harmful media. Please use these for satire and/or critique of white supremacy culture, american imperialism, and cisheteronormativity. The magazines above also had

this, but these are even more “yikes”. Take care when browsing. By no means an exhaustive list:

★[Chick Tracts](#)

- Chick Tracts are evangelical Christian Nationalist propaganda. They're absurd and violent, these are shared only so that u can destroy and remix them in queer ways

★[Soldier of Fortune](#)

- U.S. mercenary magazine, openly advertised opportunities to fight for Rhodesia's white minority regime ([Lobban, 1978](#))

★[The American Girl 1917-1979](#) – girl scouts publication

★[Boys' Life 1911-2015](#) – boy scouts publication

★[The Police Chief 1953-2013](#) – +°+♡acab♡+°+

★[Foreign Affairs Magazine](#) – neoliberal imperialism, text heavy

more magazines

★[Amiga Magazine Rack](#) – old school computer magazine collection

★[pdf.textfiles.com collection](#) – collection of magazines and zines from the ~80's and 00's. hacker vibes

letters and type

★[letterform archive](#)

★[Typography archives, offline + online](#) by type.online

paper textures

Textures can help make your visuals have the *feel* of being paper or other materials. They can also be used as

backgrounds, layers to put text on, or just another detail for visual interest. ResourceBoy.com has many different, free textures to download.

★ [Kraft Paper Textures](#)

★ [Torn Cardboard Textures](#)

★ [Burnt Edge Paper Textures](#)

★ [Black Paper Textures](#)

★ [White Paper Textures](#)

★ [Texture collection by Matt Barnes](#)

[texture labs](#) has a multitude of free textures to explore.

You can also search for textures at the public domain image sites [listed above](#)

tearing and pasting

One of the joys of making a collage zine is the act of tearing out something you'll add to your work. some may prefer perfectly cutting out the subject, but there's a lot of charm in seeing the 'hand' torn edges- nothing needs to be perfect!

brushes and textures

- ★ [100+ Free Torn Paper PNG Textures | Resource Boy](#)
- ★ [100+ Free Torn Paper Photoshop Brushes | Resource Boy](#) (can also be used in PhotoPea, GIMP, procreate, etc.)
- ★ [Torn Paper Brushes Pack – MANIK METHOD](#)
(requires email sign up)

screenshot shortcuts

For taking screenshots of just part of the screen

- ★ Windows: Windows logo key + Shift + S
- ★ Mac: Shift, Command, and 4
 - (saves to desktop by default)
- ★ Linux: Shift + PrtSc

stickers

just like finding scanned magazine pages or materials, you can search places like the [Internet Archive](#) for stickers. you can also make your own stickers too!

sticker collections

- ★ <https://www.tumblr.com/transparentstickers>
- ★ [pinterest Collection of Stickers by Radford West](#)
- ★ search “Sticker Sheet” on [Internet Archive](#)

making your own sticker effect

- ★ [tutorial by make.art.alive using Clip Studio](#)
 - this tutorial is using Clip Studio but the same approach can be used on Photopea or Photoshop





Changelog

11/19/2025 – added antique book illustrations to materials, created “more magazines” section for collections outside of the internet archive

10/08/2025 – added our Queer Zest Zine Fest video workshop to the tutorial, added a sticker section

8/29/2025 – added P5.riso as an open source alternative to Spectrolite

8/25/2025 – created the changelog and added *letters and type* section to visual materials

8/3/2025 – created document!