

Scenic Design

Vectorworks Standards

A practical guide to organizing scenic drawings, coordinating venue information, and issuing clear drawing packages. Use one consistent naming system from the first groundplan through the final archive.



Project files

Shared location. Use a production folder agreed on by the team. Keep venue masters, current design files, issued PDFs, and archives in clearly labeled locations. The storage service can vary by production.

Current and archived files. Keep a stable filename for files used as references. Archive prior versions separately before replacing the current file. Date issued PDFs so the team can identify the drawing package in use.

File type	Naming pattern	Example
Venue architecture	VENUECODE-VENUE.vwx	VEN-VENUE.vwx
Scenic design	SHOW-VENUE-SET.vwx	SHOW-VEN-SET.vwx
Issued drawing set	SHOW-VENUE-SET-YYYY-MM-DD.pdf	SHOW-VEN-SET-2026-10-02.pdf

Agree on abbreviations

Use short, recognizable show and venue codes. SET identifies scenery; VENUE identifies shared venue information. Retain LTG, SND, and VID only when those departments are exchanging files. Apply the same codes to layers, classes, and resources.

In this guide

Project files • Layers and sheets • Classes and graphic standards • Venue references • Scenic resources and coordination • Templates and drawing issue

Layers and sheets

Design layers organize drawing geometry. Sheet layers assemble the drawings for publication. Classes control the categories and graphic appearance of objects across layers.

Design layers

Layer	Purpose
VENUE-STAGE GP	Shared stage architecture and venue geometry
VENUE-HOUSE GP	Audience area and seating geometry when needed
VENUE-2D SC	Existing venue section when supplied
SET-GP	Scenic groundplan
SET-SC	Scenic section work
SET-DETAILS	Scenic detail geometry

Use the venue master's actual layer names for referenced layers. The names above are a consistent starting convention; do not rename the source's layers merely to match this list. Add scenic layers only when they help separate useful work.

Sheet layers

One sheet per drawing. Create a sheet for each published drawing. Use coordinated sheet numbers and clear titles such as Groundplan, Section, Elevation, or Scenic Details.

Sheet content. Place viewports, title blocks, borders, and sheet notes on appropriate sheet classes. Keep model geometry on design layers. Use viewport annotations for notes and dimensions tied to an individual view.

Sheet size	Dimensions	Use
D size	24 × 36 in	Large production drawing set
Tabloid	11 × 17 in	Reduced set or compact details
Letter	8.5 × 11 in	Small details and reference sheets

Choose the sheet size with the production team. Make the drawing scale readable at that size, and include the scale in each drawing title. A reduced print must be identified as reduced; a scale bar helps readers check it.

Classes and graphic standards

Keep the class list as small as the drawing requires. Use meaningful names so another designer can find, isolate, and print the right objects without guessing.

A consistent hierarchy

Example: SET-SOFTGOODS-LEGS. Use SET-MAIN for primary scenery, SET-REF for scenic reference information, and SET-SCENE followed by a useful scene label when visibility changes by scene.

Venue classes	Typical content
VENUE-FLOOR / VENUE-WALLS	Stage floor, walls, doors, and fixed structure
VENUE-BATTENS / VENUE-FLYRAIL	Venue battens and line-set reference
VENUE-REF-CL / VENUE-REF-PL	Centerline and plasterline reference
VENUE-SOFTGOODS	Venue masking, with component subclasses
VENUE-AUDIENCE	Seating, audience floor, and sightline context

Graphics classes for 2D components

▼ Graphics			
1. Light	✓		
2. Medium	✓		
3. Heavy	✓		
4. Extra Heavy	✓		
5. Section Line	✓		
6. Plaster Line	✓		
7. Ceiling Line	✓		
8. Center Line	✓		
9. Phantom Line	✓		
10. Hidden Line	✓		
11. Locus			
12. Dashed	✓		
13. Dotted	✓		

Vectorworks 2026 Organization dialog showing the numbered Graphics hierarchy and line thicknesses.

Use the numbered Graphics hierarchy: 1. Light, 2. Medium, 3. Heavy, 4. Extra Heavy, 5. Section Line, 6. Plaster Line, 7. Ceiling Line, 8. Center Line, 9. Phantom Line, 10. Hidden Line, 11. Locus, 12. Dashed, and 13. Dotted.

The displayed template uses 0.18 mm for Light and the line-pattern classes, 0.35 mm for Medium, 0.50 mm for Heavy and Section Line, and 0.70 mm for Extra Heavy. Set pens to black and use class attributes. Check line weights on a print at the issued scale.

For hybrid symbols, distinguish the instance's category from the classes of its internal 2D and 3D components. Test visibility with both the container class and component classes enabled. Use SET- for scenery, LTG- for lighting, VENUE- for venue information, and Graphics- for graphic attributes.

Reference the venue

Maintain a shared architectural master and keep show-specific scenery in the scenic file. Agree on the origin, units, and reference method before exchanging drawings.

Set up the scenic file

- 1 Start from a template.** Confirm units, design-layer scale, sheet size, classes, and title-block fields. Save the scenic file in its agreed location.
- 2 Establish coordinates.** Confirm the stage centerline, plasterline, and elevation datum with the venue master. Check a known dimension before placing scenery. Use the agreed coordinate system for all reference geometry.
- 3 Choose the reference method.** Use a referenced design-layer viewport where supported and appropriate. Layer import referencing remains an available workflow. Choose one approach with the team and document it in the template.
- 4 Bring in what is needed.** Reference stage architecture, house geometry for sightlines, and the venue section where useful. Include battens and soft goods when they affect the scenic design.
- 5 Check the drawing.** Verify alignment in plan and section, then create scenic layers and saved views. Confirm reference visibility in the sheet viewports before publishing.

Update references deliberately

When the venue or another department issues a revised file, archive the previous source, replace or relink the current reference, and update it in the scenic drawing. Review the affected sheets before issuing a new package.

Protect the source. Treat referenced architecture as shared information. Make permanent architectural corrections in the master file through its owner. With layer import referencing, local edits to referenced content can be overwritten by the next update.

Check after every update. Look for moved architecture, changed line sets, missing resources, altered masking, and naming conflicts. Confirm that the reference points still align.

Vectorworks reference guidance

For the reference commands supported by your installed version and license, consult Vectorworks Online Help. Menu locations and available reference methods can vary.

<https://www.vectorworks.net/en-US/support/online-help-system>

Scenic resources and coordination

Organize reusable objects so they can be located, revised, and exchanged without rebuilding the drawing. Keep venue resources separate from show-specific resources.

Resource Manager

Folder or prefix	Content
VENUE	Venue architecture and shared reference symbols
SET	Show-specific scenic symbols
SET-SOFTGOODS	Show-specific masking and fabric elements
SET-TEX-	Scenic texture naming prefix
Hatches / Textures	Resource-type folders as needed

Use descriptive resource names and consistent discipline prefixes. Add subfolders when they improve navigation. Useful Favorites include people, scenic furniture, soft goods, scale bars, and commonly used scenic components. Resource organization may need cleanup after referencing or importing.

Fly rail and line sets

Use the venue's fly-rail information as the starting point. Place a scenic working copy on SET-REF-FLYRAIL, aligned to the agreed drawing origin. Identify the scenic loads and masking needed for the production. Coordinate changes with the venue and other departments.

If the source is a symbol configured to convert to a group, placing it produces an editable group. Otherwise, preserve the source symbol and create a separate working copy. Keep the plan and section representations coordinated; check positions against the venue's line-set information.

Soft goods

Confirm whether the venue master includes a repertory hang. Use its component classes to control legs, borders, cyc, and scrim visibility. For a custom hang, create show-specific scenic resources and document the revised positions in plan and section. Hide superseded venue masking in the affected views.

Lighting coordination

Include lighting positions only where they affect scenic clearances, masking, sightlines, or access. Keep the lighting designer's information separately referenced and coordinate changes to shared battens or overhead space. Fixture libraries, label legends, circuitry, and light-plot setup belong in the lighting department's documentation.

Templates and drawing issue

A reusable template should carry the agreed drawing structure into each production. Keep it independent of a school, venue network, or individual computer.

Build a useful template

Drawing settings. Set units, design-layer scales, sheet sizes, and a consistent coordinate convention. Include only the layers and classes needed for a typical scenic package.

Publication settings. Prepare title blocks, drawing titles, page numbers, standard notes, and sheet viewports. Leave production-specific fields ready to fill in.

Resources. Include commonly used scenic symbols, hatches, textures, and Graphics classes. Store venue masters and production-specific assets separately.

Workspace. Choose a tool and palette arrangement that supports your drafting process. Keep a backup of custom workspace files and verify compatibility when changing Vectorworks versions.

Before issuing drawings

- ☐ **Files.** Confirm the current scenic file, stable reference paths, and archived prior versions.
- ☐ **References.** Update the needed references and check known dimensions, origin, and alignment.
- ☐ **Visibility.** Review layers, classes, masking, and referenced coordination information in every viewport.
- ☐ **Drawing information.** Check sheet numbers, drawing titles, dates, revisions, units, scales, and title-block fields.
- ☐ **Graphic quality.** Review dimensions, line weights, hatches, dashed lines, and legibility at the issued paper size.
- ☐ **Published PDF.** Inspect every sheet for clipped views, missing fonts, blank pages, and incorrect page size.
- ☐ **Communication.** Place the issued package in the shared location and notify the production team of the revision and affected drawings.

Keep the archive usable

Retain the issued PDF with the native scenic file and the source files needed to resolve its references. Keep superseded packages in the archive so the current issue is clear.

Further reference

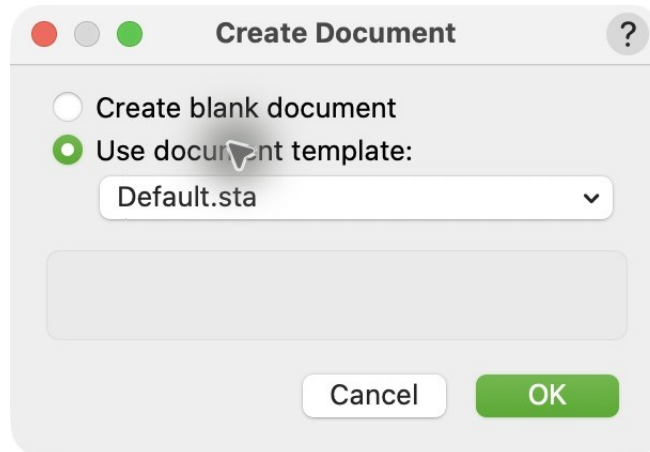
Vectorworks Online Help provides version-specific commands and reference options. Use the help for the version installed on your computer.

<https://www.vectorworks.net/en-US/support/online-help-system>

Template and reference dialogs

These screenshots show the macOS interface in Vectorworks 2026. Use the production template and reference method agreed on by the team.

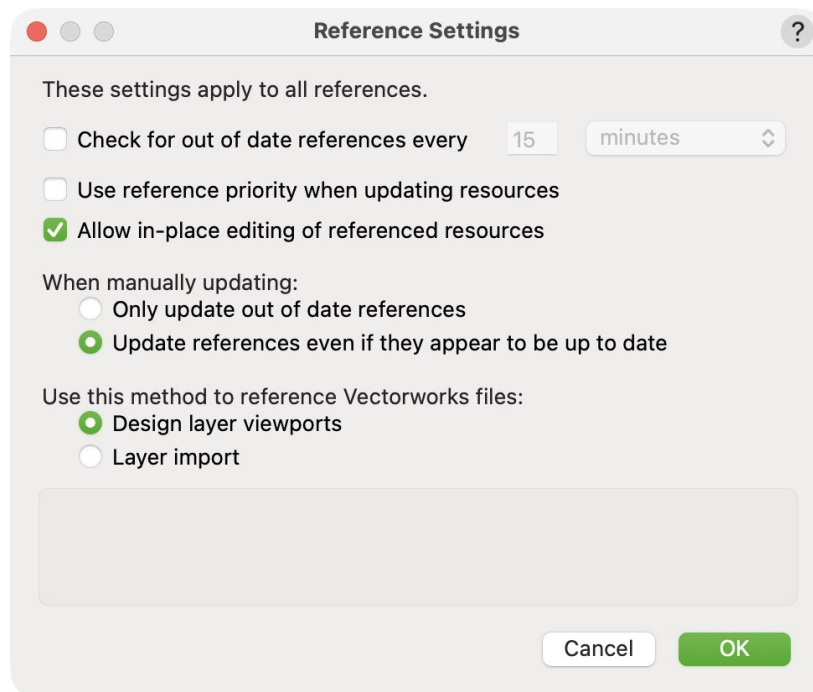
Start with the template



File > New opens Create Document. Select Use document template and choose the scenic template.

Default.sta is the selection shown in this screenshot. Choose the appropriate scenic template for the production; the template name is independent of a school or training program.

Choose the reference method

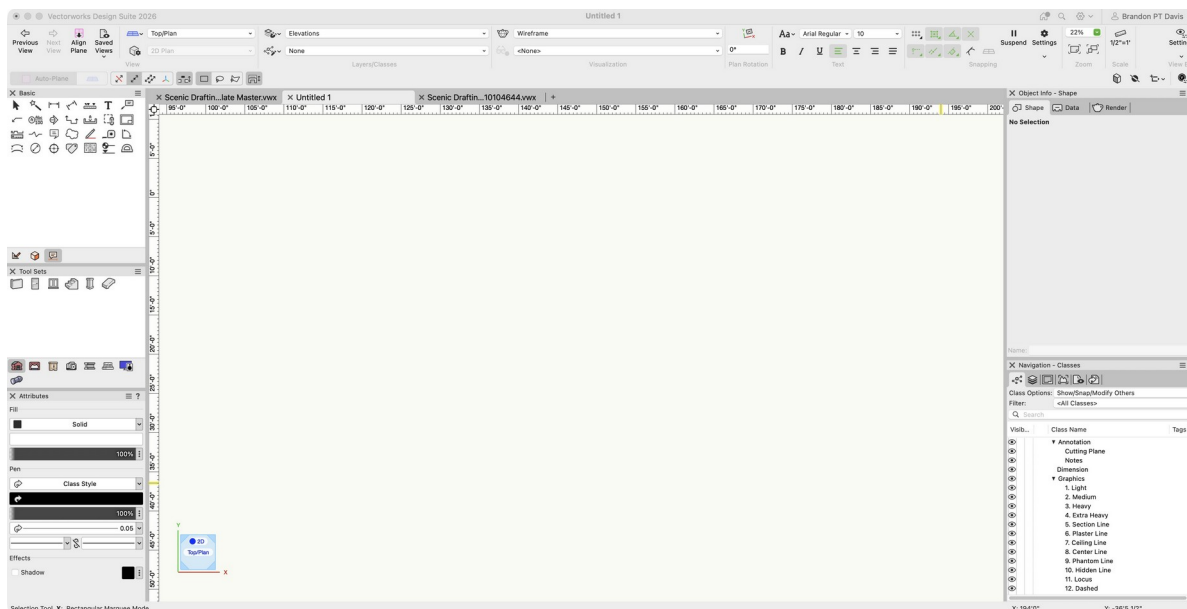


Tools > Organization > References > Settings opens the reference-method controls.

Design layer viewports is selected here. Layer import is the alternate method. Confirm this choice before adding venue references. Review the update and resource-editing options with the team rather than copying every checkbox from the screenshot.

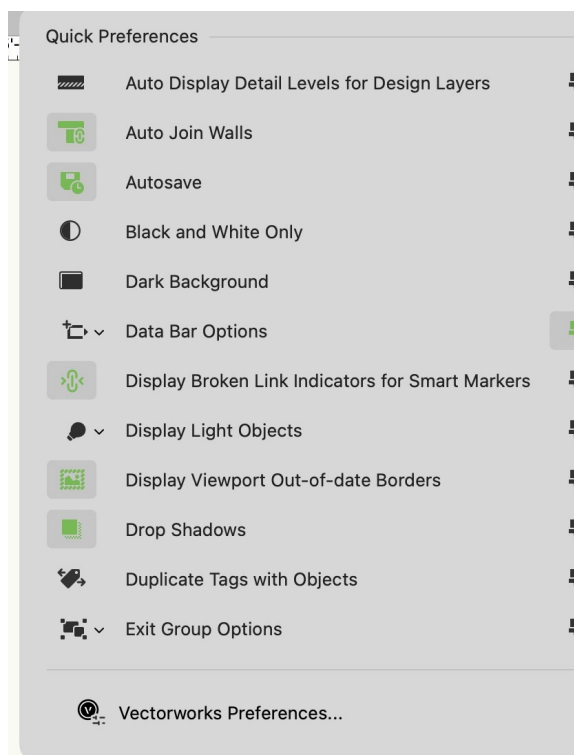
Workspace and quick preferences

Use the View Bar for the current view, layer, class, scale, and zoom. Use the Navigation palette for class visibility. Workspace arrangements can differ between computers.



Vectorworks Design Suite 2026 with the scenic workspace and Graphics classes visible in the Navigation palette.

Quick Preferences



Quick Preferences provides display controls and shortcuts to preferences.

Review Black and White Only, Dark Background, and other display options here. Pin frequently used settings. Use Zoom Line Thickness to review the drawing on screen; check the published PDF separately.