

PRINTING 101: PREPARING YOUR ART FILES FOR PRINT

TIMING IS CRITICAL

When it comes to print, planning is everything. If possible, reach out to your printer during the planning phase of your project. This will help you determine the turnaround time for your project. A project that requires a lot of finishing work may require more time than a project with minimal finishing requirements. Once your print partner has given you timelines plan your project milestones accordingly so that you can get your work into the printer's hands on schedule. Missing your deadline could mean that your run cannot go ahead until your printer has freed up enough free time, which could be anything from days to weeks.

Planning guards against panic around the deadline, allows for unforeseen setbacks, and is essential to getting your product printed and delivered on time and according to specifications.

EMBEDD YOUR FONTS

To maintain your design's integrity, if supplying high resolution PDFs embed your fonts directly into the document that you are printing this will prevent accidental font substitution if your printer does not have your exact fonts. Also include a font file with the elements you submit to your printer. As you know, there is a distinct difference between Garamond and Bookman, Courier, and Times, so it is well worth taking the time to include your font files with the document!

SIZE MATTERS

One of the most common mistakes made when printing is sending a document that is too small, which, if not corrected before the final run, can result in a final product that is soft and lacking in clarity due to a lack of resolution. It is imperative that you create your document the same size as it will be printed to avoid this result. Be sure all your images and graphics are a high enough resolution for the intended final size of your piece. Your images should fit the size of the document, but even if you get the actual size of the image correct, do not forget to check your resolution is high enough. Discrepancies like bitmapping and quality degradation can occur in images which are dramatically enlarged from their original size, a costly mistake resulting in an amateur finished

product. To get the best results in terms of finished product, make the resolution of your images are a minimum of 300DPI.

Designing at actual size reduces the margin for error with graphics, fonts and layout once printed. Without taking adequate precaution, may find that something that looks great on your screen soon turns into a design disaster when printed in the large format for which it was intended.

PROOF YOUR DOCUMENT

Everyone's nightmare: You have submitted your art files and had it printed only to discover the telephone number or web address was incorrect or it contains a glaring typo! Nothing quite describes that feeling in the pit of your stomach the moment you discover the error. What a nightmare! And one that can cost you a lot of money, or worse – make you look bad to client, peers, or boss. It is essential that you allow yourself plenty of time to thoroughly proof your document for any factual, typographical, punctuation and grammatical errors. Remember that a misplaced comma can dramatically change the meaning of a sentence, or a missing period or hyphen in an email address can make it impossible for customers to contact your company or your client. EXPERT ADVICE A second set of eyes. If you are like most people, it is almost impossible to proof your own work- enlist a colleague or friend to proof it too, then sit together a double check information such as phone numbers and email addresses together. If you are designing for a client have them proof it too. It never hurts to have the client sign off on the final document accepting responsibility for any errors.

CONSISTENCY

One of the things that separates a highly successful brand from the rest is consistency in their presentation and style. Make your margins consistent throughout your work, especially on multi-page documents. For booklets, page margins need to be equal on both the inside and outside. When you change something on one page, make sure that change is repeated on every other page, as anything else will look awkward and unprofessional. Look for consistency as part of your final proofing.

CONVERT TO CMYK

To avoid costly color correction, convert your document from RGB to CMYK. Despite seeing no differences on screen, the printing difference is dramatic. Often converting from RGB to CMYK is tricky and requires some tweaking. When it comes to your brand colors accuracy really matters, do not hesitate to ask your printer for a color drawdown.

Drawdown is a basic test used to determine color accuracy. It is a small tip like this that can make or break your design and save you a pretty penny at the same time! For example, Pressworks primary brand color is 100% Cyan we performed a drawdown to assure our printed material, CMYK, match the RGB color on our website as closely as possible.

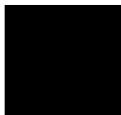


RGB: R-0 G-174 B-239
CMYK: C-100 M-0 Y-0 K-0

BLACKS

It is just as important as colors to properly set up blacks for your printing files. If your design has black and white images, convert them to grayscale to avoid a sepia tint, because they will print with all colors otherwise. Among designers, opinions differ which black to use for certain elements. The reason for this is that layout software allows you use different blacks, such as RGB black, Photoshop black, registration black and many more. On screen, some will look deeper than others, but the results can vary in print. The reason for this is that some blacks use other colors to yield a richer result. This can cause problems with text elements: if there is a slight misalignment of the individual colors, letters appear blurry or shadowed.

Pressworks recommends that you use only the black process color (the K in CMYK) for black or gray elements, especially for text. If you absolutely must achieve a deeper black other than 100% K, use C:40/M:0/Y:0/K:100 or C:30/M:30/Y:30/K:100.



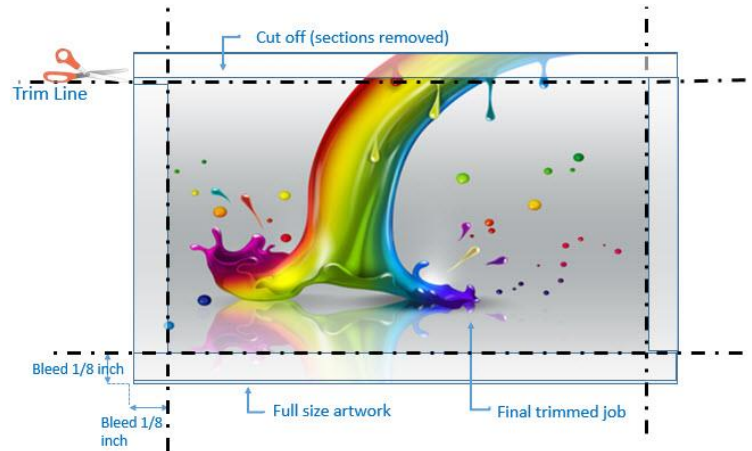
RGB: R-0, G-0, B-0
CMYK: C-40, M-0, Y-0, K-100
CMYK; C-30, M-30, Y-30, K-100

PRINT YOUR OWN PROOF

One of the easiest ways to ensure a quality finished item is to print out a proof of your design for your review and give a copy to your printer. You could also provide notes to add extra clarity and eliminate any questions which may arise during the printing process.

BLEEDS

A document has bleeds when it is printed to the edges of the paper. This is a commonly seen practice for products. The standard bleed for your document should be 3mm or 1/8 inch to allow for any variations in printing and cutting.



FILE FORMAT

Printers can accept many document formats, including the typical **culprits** like Illustrator, InDesign, Photoshop, and PDF. You should check with your printer to find out the preferred file format. Regardless of the format you submit be sure to include a PDF of the piece for their reference.

CHECKLIST

Print out this document and keep in your workspace. It is a simple overview you can use as checklist when you are preparing your files for print.