Artwork Preparation Tips

PDF Files

Our digital printing workflow uses PDF (Portable Document Format) files for printing. PDF is a file format that provides an electronic image of text and graphics that looks like a printed document and can be viewed, printed, and electronically transmitted. Every PDF file submitted to us must meet certain guidelines. We accept the preset conversion of High Quality or PDF/A ensuring that all fonts are embedded. If you want us to make some adjustments, corrections, or just some "touch up," then we can work with many native files as long as we have the fonts selected in your publication. If you only have access to the Microsoft Office Suite of programs, we prefer Publisher as it has many tools required to produce print ready copies. The best workflow is to make a PDF file from your native file on the computer you are using to create your print job. If not provided in PDF format, the file may have text overflow and other formatting issues when moving from one computer to another. This is caused by inconsistencies in fonts and page specifications. Producing a PDF is the best way to avoid a frustrating situation, and to have a portable, properly formatted file that will give you the quality print results you are expecting.

Always take a final look at your PDF file before sending it to be printed. Make sure it is converted correctly. What you see is what will print.

Book and Booklet Printing: How to Set Up Your File

If you are making a saddle stitched booklet, you will need pages in multiples of 4. To avoid any confusion between reader spreads and printer spreads, please provide your PDF in **SINGLE PAGE (1 page up) FORMAT, COMBINED** in **ONE** complete file and our printing software will put it in correct booklet printing order. This method also allows us to move the individual pages if needed for perfect positioning for a great looking finished product. The exception would be if you have a two page spread where the image runs across and/or connects. Example: a wrap-around cover or a center spread.

Margins: Safety Lines = 1/4 Inch

You don't want your text or images to get cut off. No printer can print an image right to the edge of a sheet. Please make sure your text and images are within the safety lines. If your artwork does not have 1/4 inch of white on all four sides, expect that it will need to be reduced to fit or see directions below if you require the image to go to the edge of the paper.

Adding Bleeds and Crop (Trim) Marks to Documents for Print

No printer can print to the edge of a sheet of paper. Therefore, any standard size print with bleed must be printed on a larger sized sheet and cut down. The term "bleed" refers to any design element that extends to the edge of a sheet of paper or page. This requires artwork to be printed on paper that is larger than the size of the finished product. The excess paper is then trimmed or "cropped" off. Bleeds are needed because any minor paper shift during the production process will result in the color and/or design not extending all the way to one or more of the edges. Please keep in mind that there are added costs to the below method due to oversized stock and the trimming that is needed after printing.

When preparing ready to print files that bleed, add a .125" bleed on all sides. This .125" bleed will make your file size .25" larger than the final size of your document. Let us say you are printing an 11" x 17" document. If you add .125" bleed to the left and .125" bleed to the right, and then do the same on top and bottom, the end result is a document that is 11.25" x 17.25."

Crop (trim) marks are required for most every printing file. These will give the paper cutter operator a guide, so they know where to make the final cuts. These marks should appear as black lines on your final PDF. If you cannot see them, they will not print. They are added at the "Save As" stage in Adobe Illustrator or the "Export" stage when using Adobe InDesign. In general, most layouts requiring special sizing and/or bleeds are not prepared directly from Photoshop but from a page-layout program like Adobe InDesign or an illustration program like Adobe Illustrator.

Sample with Bleeds and Crop (Trim) Marks

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Crop (trim) marks show us exactly where we should cut the product to final size.

The bleed should be a minimum of 1/8" (.125 inches) on all four sides of the artwork. Note that the marks do not touch or intersect.