

DO YOU HAVE A PIECE OF ARTWORK READY FOR PRINTING, BUT ARE UNSURE AS TO WHAT FORMAT IT SHOULD BE IN?

What on earth is bleed and why do you need to know? There are a number of things you need to think about when preparing your artwork for print. Here is a quick step by step guide.

1. What software to design your marketing item in?

2. Set up your document correctly

3. Remember to allow for bleed and crop marks

4. Use the right colour type

5. Check the image resolution

6. Fonts

7. Saving your artwork

8. Export artwork for print

1. WHAT SOFTWARE TO DESIGN YOUR MARKETING ITEM IN?

Professional DTP software (e.g. InDesign, Quark XPress)

DTP (desktop publishing) software is specifically designed to prepare documents with a view to having them printed on press. They work alongside a family of graphics and imaging programs, e.g. Photoshop and Illustrator. We each have our own preferred software, many of which we can accept. However, our preferences are as follows:



For artwork documents and projects Artwork to be created in Adobe InDesign or Quark XPress and export to print ready PDF (i.e. brochures, stationery, exhibition panels, postcards etc:)

Vector Graphics

Artwork to be created in Adobe Illustrator (i.e. logos, background graphics)

Photographs

Artwork to be created in Adobe Photoshop (i.e. scanned images, digital photography, photo montages etc:)

Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format)

PDF is now the industry standard method for submitting artwork for printing.

2. SET UP YOUR DOCUMENT CORRECTLY

Document set-up

When setting up your document the page size must be the exact size of the trimmed and finished object. There are exceptions such as folders and items that include multi-folds but we will be happy to advise you about those on an individual basis.

The document size must not include additional measurements for bleed or crop marks, as they must exist outside of the printing area. In software such as InDesign when you are creating the document, it gives you the opportunity to add bleed separately to the document size using additional options.

3. REMEMBER TO ALLOW FOR BLEED AND CROP MARKS

Bleed

Bleed this one is important – and often overlooked.

A bleed is where an image or background colour is positioned so that it prints right to the edge of the page. If you're working on a document that has bleeds you need to make the object that bleeds off the page overlap the edge of the page by at least 3mm. Without bleed, when the job is trimmed, you will be left with a white edge to your printed item.

4. USE THE RIGHT COLOUR TYPE

Colour

The most important thing to remember when setting up your artwork is that what you see on your screen is not a good enough reference for what will print. All you have to do is fiddle with the brightness and contrast on your screen, and suddenly the colours are displaying differently.

There are several ways in which computers handle colour in picture files, the main two colour modes being RGBn(red-green-blue) colour and CMYK (cyan – magenta – yellow – key black) colour. RGB colour is based on properties of light, and is suitable when images are to be viewed on screen, not for printing with ink or toner on paper. CMYK colour is based on properties of ink and should always be used when a colour image is to be printed.

5. CHECK THE IMAGE RESOLUTION

Printing digital images. Printing digital images can be frustrating if you don't have an understanding of print quality versus screen quality. A screen quality image, which looks fine on your monitor, will often look pixellated when you print it.

Resolution. What is it? In simple terms its the number of dots within an area or line, usually dots per inch (dpi) or pixels per inch (ppi), to be used when printing the image. As size is increased the resolution decreases and vice versa.

Vector images aren't resolution dependent, which is why we encourage their use wherever possible. For example if you have a logo as a vector graphic, you can resize the image to print at almost any size without the quality deteriorating.

6. FONTS

Fix your fonts - Fonts can be tricky.

Supplying PDF print ready artwork. You can choose to embed all the fonts you have used in your PDF when you create it. If you do this, it won't matter whether we have the fonts you have used or not – the PDF will contain enough information to make sure that your fonts print out correctly.

Supplying DTP file: If you have created your artwork using a font that we don't hold in our extensive font library, we will be unable to output your job. It is important that you include the relevant fonts when you send us your artwork. The best way to do this is to perform a 'collect for output' or 'package' your job. This will create a folder that contains your document, all the links (i.e. graphics and images) and your fonts.

7. SAVING YOUR ARTWORK CORRECTLY

Gather together all elements correctly

Saving your artwork correctly for future edits or if you need to send original design files to us for edits or printing.

Gather together all the elements required to correctly print the document (document, graphics and fonts) and put them in an output folder along with a report detailing the contents. It is highly recommended that you use this tool when sending DTP files for printing.

Most DTP programs have a handy utility which ensures that you supply all the necessary files every time. In Quark XPress it's called "collect for output"; in InDesign it's called "package".

This means that there are 3 different elements which you must provide in order to print your job correctly:

1. **The document** (i.e. the DTP file); InDesign
2. **The graphics/links** (i.e. all the pictures, logos, etc. as separate image files);
3. **The fonts.**

8. EXPORTING ARTWORK FOR PRINT

PDF (Portable Document Format)

PDF is now the industry standard method for submitting artwork for printing, because it generates smaller (i.e. portable) files and, when used correctly, it ensures that all graphics and fonts are properly embedded so that they will print correctly no matter what computer you print them from.

The intention of the pdf workflow is for the customer to provide a 'print ready' PDF that includes bleed and crop marks (see step 3) and is high resolution. The file must also be proof passed by the client so as to minimise the chance of there being any amendments.

Your PDF must be centred with crop marks, all fonts must be embedded, images must be a minimum of 300dpi, no RGB or LAB colour profiles and all pages must be supplied as single pages not spreads or printers pairs.

Where possible we will avoid making amendments to PDF's as we risk the introduction of errors by altering the file.

Checklist: While creating, or before supplying your artwork, check through this simple list to make sure you haven't missed anything.

- **Correct document size**
- **Min. 3mm bleed Crop marks**
- **Correct colour mode**
- **High resolution images**
- **Package/Embed fonts**
- **Package artwork**
- **Export print ready PDF**

