



# Printing Tips

## for Graphic Designers





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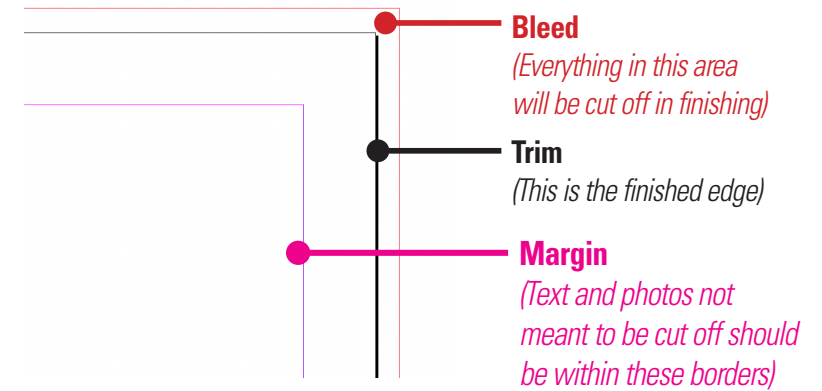
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## Setting Up Your File For Print

Despite the popular insistence that print is a dying field, that couldn't be further from the truth – not everything can, or should be, onscreen! As a graphic designer, creating a piece for printed output will go much more smoothly when you observe a few basic guidelines in your setup.

Many printing operations will usually have at least a designer (if not an entire department) on staff who has been trained to 'preflight' submitted files and address any issues before paper is involved. However, your PDF should, ideally, arrive ready to immediately start printing.

**What app to use?** This depends on what you're creating, as some applications are better suited to certain kinds of output. The industry standard for print is Adobe Creative Suite (primarily InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop), but our challenge is in making *any* file printable – including Canva, Microsoft Office, and more.

**Pages:** Books need to be a multiple of 4 pages in order to fold and bind correctly. The "Facing Pages" option in InDesign will emulate the appearance of a book while keeping the individual pages separate.

**Margins:** Your document margins on all sides create a 'safe' area that eliminates the risk of important text or photos getting cut off at the trimming stage. Anything less than 1/8" (.125") is not recommended; 1/4" (.25") or more is preferred.

**Bleeds:** If you want a photo or block of color to extend to the edge of the page with no white showing, your document will need bleed. 1/8" (.125") is preferred; more or less will be adjusted by the printer if needed.

## Setting Up Your File For Print Cont.

**Fonts:** Type plays a huge role in the impact of your piece! Creative Suite includes many classic font families (with full OpenType features), and even more available at no cost with your Adobe subscription and to download from Google Fonts. If you get an error message about a specific font\*, find a replacement or outline the type so it becomes vector art.

**Vector vs. Raster Images:** Raster (pixel-based) images like JPG and PNG are perfect for photos, and should be 250-300 DPI to print cleanly. Text, logos and clip art should be vector (AI, EPS, SVG) if possible. Be careful about sourcing from Google as these images may be copyrighted; there are many sources for low-cost or free licenseable images.

**Crossovers:** As you can see throughout this book, a well-placed crossover can have a wonderful visual impact – but take care that critical text or images don't fall in the seam, as they may not line up correctly when folded unless they're in the center spread. (Pages 10 and 11 demonstrate this pitfall intentionally.)

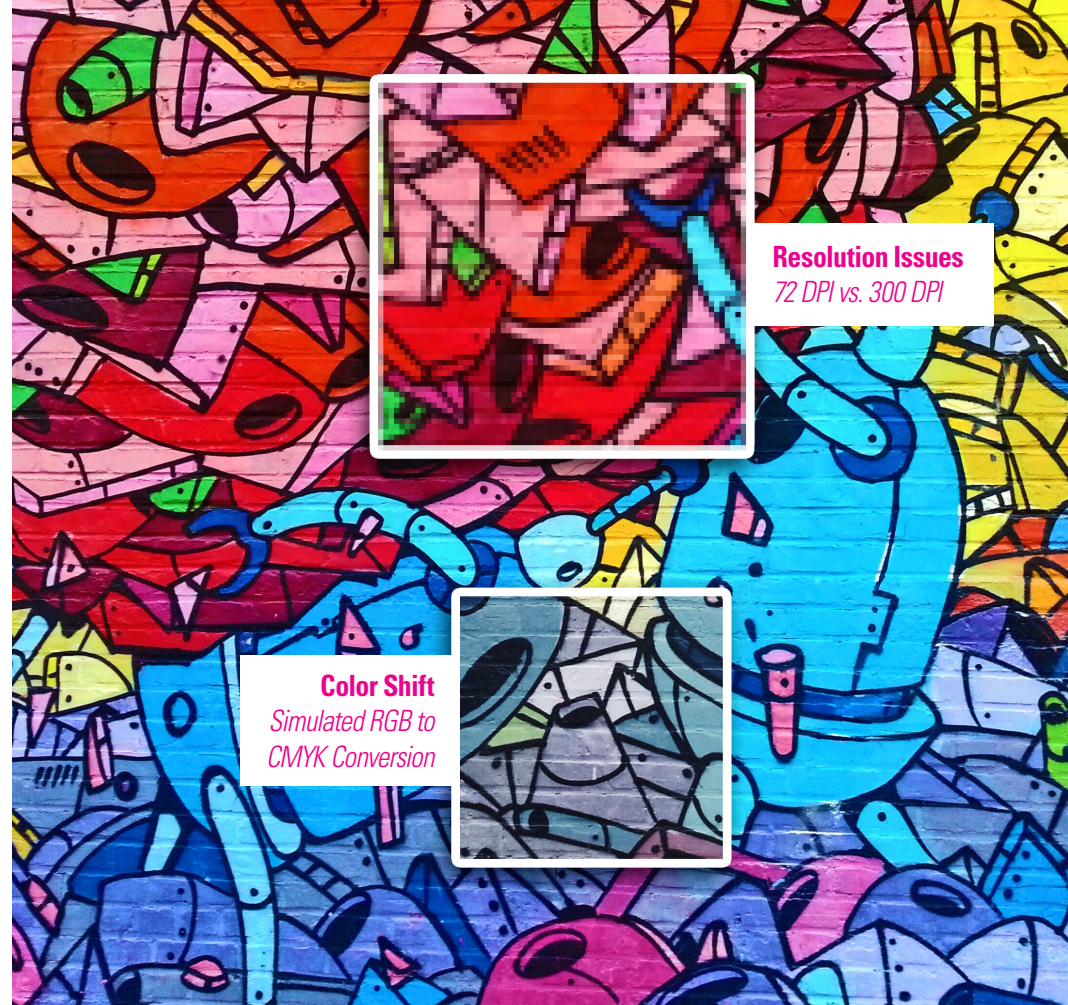
**Color:** Printing uses either 4-color process (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Key/Black, or CMYK) or a spot color. Be mindful of your work's intended outcome; regardless of what you see onscreen, not all RGB or spot colors will convert to CMYK with visually pleasing results. (See page 8 for more about spot color to CMYK conversions.)

If you have an area that is solid black or gray, create a swatch that is "built" black – typically 20/20/20/100. The layering of creates a deeper, more true black than would be achievable with 100% black. ***Do not use this swatch on regular body copy or reverse very thin type out of it, especially if offset printing.***

When offset printing, remember that more ink coverage = significantly longer drying times. Try to keep large areas of dark color at 235% or under (calculated by adding the CMYK values when sampled in Photoshop or Acrobat).

**NOTE: The registration swatch should not be used while designing under any circumstances.** This color is only used during prepress, for small thin marks that tell the press operator all four colors are 'registered', or in alignment – but when used in large areas, the resulting 400% coverage will not dry.

\* This is a common problem with fonts from popular 'free download' sites, where fonts are often designed for looks over functionality, with little regard for features or even proper kerning. PDFs made using these fonts often won't print at all, even when outlined because of the complexity of the resulting art. Use with caution.



**Resolution Issues**  
72 DPI vs. 300 DPI

**Color Shift**  
Simulated RGB to  
CMYK Conversion

**Rich/Built Black – 20C / 20M / 20Y / 100K**

***DO USE*** for large areas of coverage or headline-size type.

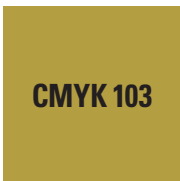
*DO NOT USE* for body copy or reversed type at a very thin weight; registration (alignment) difficulty will cause the text to fill in or appear blurry.

**Standard Black – 0C / 0M / 0Y / 100K**

***DO USE*** for body copy or reversed type.

**Registration Black – 100C / 100M / 100Y / 100K**  
***DO NOT USE.*** For press marks only.





# Setting Up Your File For Print Cont.

**Spot Color vs. CMYK:** A spot color is a premixed ink used in circumstances where consistency between print runs is critical – often for company branding, but also to achieve neons and metallics like silver and gold. Pantone is the most commonly used library between designers and print operations, and these colors will be referred to as PMS [number], for Pantone Matching System.

Much like the conversion from RGB to CMYK, **many Pantone colors cannot be recreated in CMYK with pleasing results.** They will appear darker, or shift hue significantly – blues are especially prone to this tendency, often shifting purple. Remember this when choosing spot colors for a client and refer to a Pantone Bridge Book, which will show both the spot and CMYK side by side for comparison. If your client insists, make sure they are educated on the fact that their choice could force a more expensive production method.



## Digital vs. Offset Printing

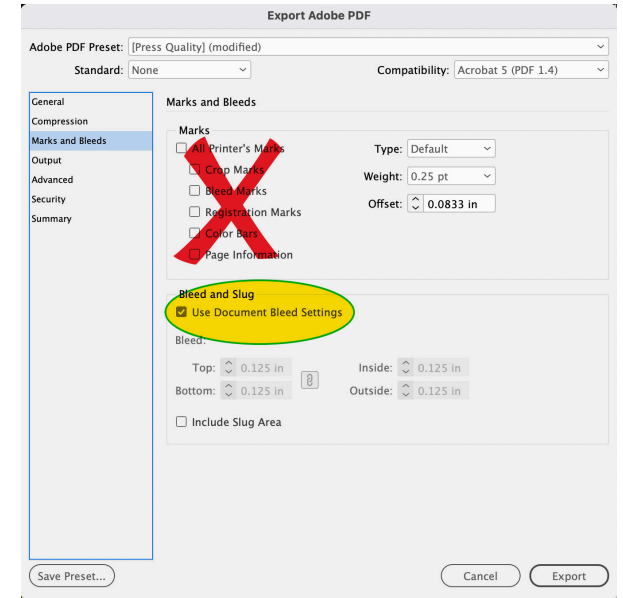
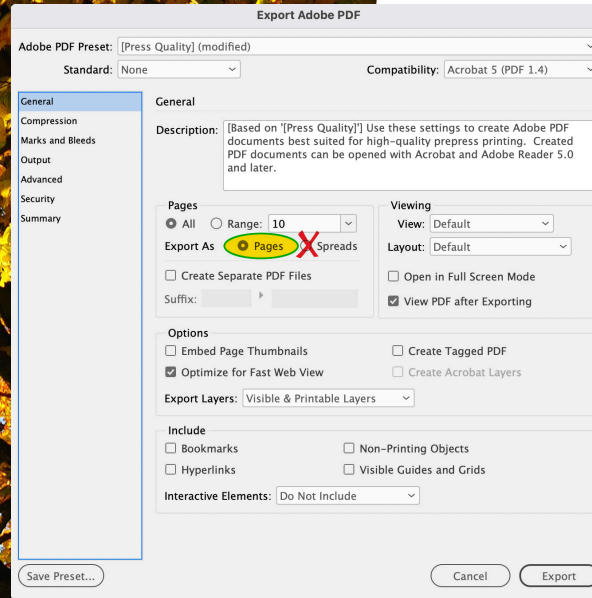
The advent of digital printing has made high-quality full color printing available with smaller quantities and quicker turnarounds. However, there are many cases where traditional offset is still the most cost-effective approach – or, in some cases, the only one large enough to accommodate the finished product. Your printer will make the appropriate recommendation.

**Offset:** At its most basic, this method utilizes a traditional printing press, ink, and plates to transfer an image to paper as it passes through the machine. These machines can process very large sheets at a high rate of speed, and offer more precise control over color. Independent uses a Heidelberg Speedmaster 840 – an 8 color press that can ‘perfect’ (print both sides of) a sheet up to 40” wide. Ask for a tour and see it in action yourself!

**Digital:** Instead of liquid ink, powdered toner is fused to paper using high heat, and the resulting sheet is ready to be trimmed to size and delivered. Unlike a standard copy machine, these are modular for expansion and interface with a computer to offer greater control in how a job is printed. If you’ve ever ordered same-day printing from a retail store, it was likely produced digitally!

# Submitting Your File For Print

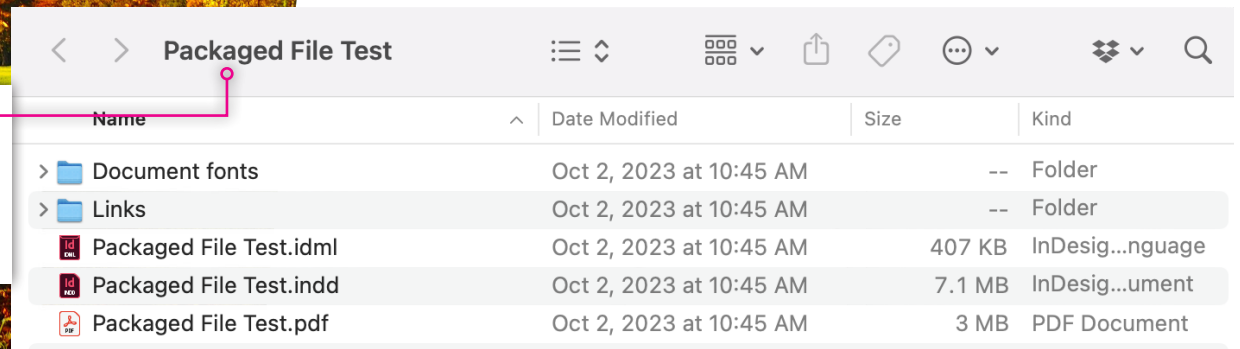
At a minimum, your printer will need a **press-quality PDF with .125" bleeds**. Do not send printer or reader spreads, and do not add extra crop marks or color bars; these are specific to each printer's technology and added in prepress.



You can also opt to send in **packaged files**, which will include the art file, fonts, and links – so that any issues can be taken care of quickly and easily.

## Crossovers

*Crossing small text or images over a fold is risky, where a larger image can be more forgiving of natural 'play' during production.*



# Resources

This is far from all there is to know – no matter how long you’ve been in the industry. A good printing company will be **happy to work with you, review files, provide templates, answer questions, make suggestions, and truly collaborate** to make your finished product the best it can be. The Independent Printing team is professional, knowledgeable, passionate, and committed; we would love the opportunity to work with you and share what we know. Don’t hesitate to get in touch!

*To Be Continued...*

