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Preparing Press Ready Files

Image Resolution

Image resolution of raster or bitmap image files should be set to 300 dpi at the final image size in your layout. If you enlarge an image, you lower the resolution, if you reduce an image you increase the resolution. We do not recommend enlarging an image in your layout program more than 125%, or reducing more than 30%. Images with a resolution of less than 250 dpi will reproduce poorly on press, looking fuzzy, choppy or pixilated. Resolutions higher than 300 dpi will not appreciably improve image quality, just make for a larger file size, which increases your upload times and our imaging times. Images captures off the web are only 72 dpi. (With the exception of online stock photography) They are not suitable for printing. Images created in Paint are only 72 dpi, and not suitable for printing.

Image Color Space

There are two basic color spaces used in graphics and printing. One is RGB (Red, Green and Blue). Scanners, monitors and digital cameras use a combination of red, green and blue light to display and create your images. The combination of red, green and blue light can create more visible colors than the combination of cmyk can.

The other space is CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black). Printing presses, color copiers and most inkjet printers use these four ink colors to create your images. This is also known as 4-color printing, and is how most magazines and other color materials are printed.

What You See Is Not Necessarily What You Get

Because of differences in how colors are viewed, how good your monitor is, how hold your monitor is, and how well your monitor is calibrated, what you see on your monitor is not necessarily what you will get in print. Once you have received samples of what we printed from your files, we recommend that you adjust your monitor to match the final printed output.

That way the next image you create will look more similar on screen and

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on paper. We also suggest that once you like the way your image looks on

screen, lighten it slightly, especially in the midtone area, as it will most likely darken slightly when printed due to the nature of printing.

Most applications will give you the option to work in either CMYK or RGB color mode. It is fine to begin working in RGB, there are some filters in Photoshop that are only available when working in RGB mode. Just remember to convert to CMYK before submitting your images to us. Keep in mind that red, green and blue light create more colors than cyan, magenta, yellow and black inks do. Therefore, your image may look a little different in RGB than in CMYK. If we must do the conversion here, we are not responsible if you are not happy with the conversion results.

Image File Formats

Please save all bitmap images (like those out of Photoshop) in either tiff or eps format if you will place them in a layout program. If it is for final printing, tiff, eps or jpg with maximum quality format is acceptable. we cannot print gif, pict, dcs, ping, psd, cds, etc. formats. Please do not save your images with LZW compression. Placing an unacceptable format in an acceptable format does not make it useable.

Acceptable File Types

Experience has taught us that, more often than not, when people send native application files, they forget fonts and placed images, forget to convert images to cmyk color, include spot colors, use low-res images, and make other assorted errors. Some reports conclude that 78% of files sent to printers are not ready to go to print without some kind of fix required. To eliminate fixes and ensure quality and fast delivery, the best way to send files is in TIFF, JPG, PDF or EPS format. Done correctly, these formats eliminate the need for you to upload fonts or images used in your files, and also decreases your upload time. See the information following for specifications on how to save files for different applications. If your files are not prepared properly, fonts or images are missing, or your files need any significant repair work in order to be printed, your order will be put on hold. We will contact you with the option to re-submit files or give you an estimate of charges to let us correct your files.

Acceptable Native Application Files

If you must send a native application file, we support current versions of the following software on either Macintosh or Windows platforms: Photoshop, InDesign, PageMaker, Illustrator, QuarkXPress and FreeHand.

When sending native application files, you must also include all fonts you used to create the document, as well as all the images you placed in the document. We do not recommend embedding images, it increases file size,

and if there is something wrong with the image, (i.e. is rgb, not cmyk) we cannot quickly fix the image and update it. Never copy and paste images into a document from your clipboard.

Check documents for returns or spaces in text areas that may have a font attached that isn't used anymore. It's easy to miss a space somewhere when experimenting and changing fonts. Even if it's in just one space, we will need the font or need to find that one space and change it's font before we can image the file.

Non-Supported Applications

While we own and use an extensive list of applications, we cannot be expected to own or know the intricacies of each one. If you are using any programs other than those listed as supported above, you must check your documentation for how to save or export your files to tiff, eps, hi-resolution jpg, or hi-resolution pdf format.

Please research any software prior to creating documents to be sure it is capable of high-resolution output. (Minimum 300 dpi at the final size)

We cannot assist you on how to save files for print in any applications other than those listed above. If your files do not appear to be saved correctly, or you send a file from an application we do not support, the printing and delivery of your job will be delayed while we contact you to fix and re-upload your files.

Non-supported software, including word processing programs and other applications not listed above, cannot be submitted in native file format. Examples are MS Word, Word Perfect and Excel. However, if you can save these files in pdf, eps or tiff format using the guidelines listed for the other programs as an example, we can accept your files. If your files are not prepared properly, your job will be put on hold until we get correctly prepared files from you.

File Bleed and Safe Area

Bleed is an extra 1/8" of image or other elements that go beyond the finished trim size of your project, allowing us to print your job slightly larger than the final size. We then cut it down to size, giving the appearance that the image 'bleeds' off the edge of the card rather than having a border. Because cutting is done in large stacks on machinery, it may vary slightly from the top of the stack to the bottom. Although the automated cutting machines are state of the art, you must allow some tolerance. Please see individual application info for how to include bleed in your files. Keep all important information a minimum of 1/16" from the edge of all printed pieces so it doesn't get inadvertently trimmed off. You wouldn't want to have the last digit of your phone number trimmed off your business cards!

Do not create borders around the edges of your cards smaller than 1/8" wide. This is to allow for some tolerance in the cutting process as noted

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above. The smaller and thinner the rule, the more noticeable it will be if it is not perfectly even.

Convert Fonts to Paths When Possible

Whenever possible, convert all text/type in your documents to paths or outlines, eliminating the need to send fonts you used with your files. This is easily done in programs like Illustrator, FreeHand and CorelDraw. When using Photoshop, flatten files before submitting, which automatically rasterizes all fonts used. While we have an extensive font library, we cannot be expected to have every font or version that is out there.

Use "Rich" Black

Fill solid black areas with a "Rich Black" rather than black only. Rich Black is made up of 30% Cyan, 30% Magenta, 30% Yellow, and 100% Black. This will keep solid black areas from looking gray, and should be used for larger solid areas or heavy type over 36 point. For normal body text, use 100% black, do not use Rich Black. Do not use 90-100% of each color to create a rich black. This will cause problems on the press due to too much ink getting put down in one spot.

Use Unique File Names

Please use unique file names that will clearly identify your files. (i.e. myprinting-front.tif and myprinting-back.tif, rather than card a.tif, card b.tif) If you must resubmit your files, change the file names to reflect that it is a new, different file (i.e. 2-myprinting-front.tif) Whenever possible, have the file name and job name you assign when ordering the same or similar. This helps us match up your files with your job orders. Also try to keep your names as short as you can while still being descriptive.

Same Image on Both Sides

If your postcard or other piece will print with the same image/file on both sides, please let us know. We will hold up your job while we look contact you for a second file when you only intended to send one. If you send two files that are the same, we may think there was an error and hold up your job to contact you and verify that both files were meant to be the same.

Clean Your Pasteboard Area

When sending native files, remove all unused elements sitting around, do not leave them sitting in the 'pasteboard' area. Graphics on the pasteboard can generate errors and stall production of your job if they are not available to link to. Problems can also crop up if a font is missing from the pasteboard or in a graphic on the pasteboard.