

Submit Your File for Printing

You have a file. You want it printed. Here are some things you need to know before submitting it as "Print-Ready Artwork" that will ensure it is actually Print-Ready.

Type of File: What is acceptable for print-ready artwork?

If your file is in one of these programs it may be ready for print: Adobe Illustrator (with text converted to outlines), Photoshop (all layer merged or rasterized) , Pagemaker, Quark Express, CorelDraw (all text converted to curves) , .eps, .jpg (or .jpeg - if the jpeg is saved at a resolution of 300dpi or higher), .tif, .pdf (dependent on the way .pdf was written).

Not all printers accept all types of files. There is no one file type that is always the best for every job. Depending on the type of artwork, the type of printing and other factors, different file types may be best suited for your particular print job. Be sure to contact your printer to inquire about the recommended and accepted type(s) of file for your print job. Despite the type of file you submit, ALWAYS request a proof before printing. It will save time, trouble, and money in the long run.

If your files are in one of these programs, expect additional "prepare for print" charges: PowerPoint, Word, Publisher, etc.

These programs are easy to use in your office to layout your ideas for your project, but they are not professional design software. These files can not be separated, manipulated or worked with easily by professional printers. Do not be surprised if you're charged a little extra by your printer if you deliver a word document, PowerPoint slide, or Publisher File as the artwork for your project.

Printing Marks for Folds/Bleeds : Cropmarks and Fold Marks

Non-Bleed Projects: If there is no bleed on your print project, and nothing crosses over the "edge" of the paper you can skip this section. Submit your artwork with the document at "final flat size" and have no worries. Otherwise, read on.

Working with Bleeds: If any portion of your artwork will go all the way to the edge of the paper (or over the edge), you will need to include "bleeds" on the file you submit for printing.

Your printer will specify (or you should ask) how much of a bleed is necessary. In most cases your bleed will have to be at least 1/8th of an inch. This means that your file must contain at least 1/8th of an inch continuation of the artwork on all sides to ensure the final printed version looks/prints correctly.

CropMarks/ Trim Marks - The best way to show your printer what is the "image area" and what is "bleed" is to add crop marks (or trim marks) to your file. Add crop marks (trim marks) that mark where the image will be "trimmed" after printing. The main area inside your marks will be your "actual image" or the final product you will receive. What overlaps these marks will be your bleed. Your printer will print the entire image you submit, including the bleed area. After printing, they will trim the product at the crop/trim marks, allowing your image to extend all the way to the edge of your final, trimmed product. Ensure that your cropmarks are made far enough away from the image (outside the bleed area) so that they will not show up final printed material. Below is a file with cropmarks done correctly that specify where the page will be trimmed after printing to leave only the final image with with bleed to the edge of the page.



Fold Marks – If your finished product will be folded after printing , you should also include fold marks to your print-ready artwork. Your fold marks should be light gray lines placed outside of the print-area of the artwork (horizontally or vertically depending on the placement of the fold) marked “fold marks” .

Supporting Files : Linked/Embedded Images and Font Files

When You submit a file for print, you must also ensure that you are submitting all the supporting files, fonts and images necessary to print the file correctly.

Images and other Linked or Embedded Files: If your artwork includes images, photos, graphs or other files created separately, then inserted into your print file; it is good common practice to include each object (linked or embedded) into a separate “supporting files” folder when you submit your print-ready artwork. All bitmap images should be saved at a resolution of no less than 300 dpi. In some cases lower resolution images can be used, but final quality of the image may be jeopardized. If vector images are included/inserted be sure any text within the file is already converted to curves (CorelDraw) or Outlines(Illustrator) to avoid font problems.

Font Files: If your file includes any text whatsoever it is a good idea to include a “fonts” inside your “supporting files” folder. You can copy/paste the fonts from the “fonts” folder on your hard drive into the “fonts” folder submitted with your artwork. This will ensure that your printer is working with the exact same font(s) that you are and will avoid possible printing problems later.

Color Information : Specify Color!

Especially if you are using spot colors, SPECIFY the colors used on the file in a non-printing area! If color matters on your project – list the exact color (color values) to use for different area(s)-- Place a swatch (small rectangle) of each main color at the bottom of your page (out of print area) that is labeled as it’s correct PMS color or cymk value. Do not assume anything. It is better to have too much information than not enough.

Attach a “Proof”:

It is always a good idea to send the printer a medium-resolution pdf or jpeg of the print file that lets them see what you’re seeing. Computers, operating systems, fonts and other factors all influence how an image is viewed. If you send a “flattened” or alternate version along with our print files, you can ensure that they are seeing it like you are. If there are discrepancies between the “proof” you send and the print file, your printers can contact you and catch potential errors before going to print.