

FILE PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

Digitally prepared files can either streamline the production of a job, or be a real headache. If a file is good to go, the job can quickly get through the approval steps and be scheduled for printing. However, if digital files are prepared incorrectly, fixes and resubmission can be time-consuming and frustrating. The success and ease of printing your digitally-prepared ad relies entirely on the file meeting our production requirements. Our preferred file format is a high resolution PDF file. If you need to provide us with native files, first make sure the program that the file is created in a format which we accept. We accept print-ready ads & art in the following Macintosh-based formats: Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Acrobat. Please be sure to provide us with all support files and fonts. Photos should ideally be 300 ppi and definitely in a CMYK format. Acceptable image formats are TIFF, EPS, JPEG, AI (Adobe Illustrator) and PSD (Photoshop).

Your file may not be accepted if it is not created in one of these graphics programs.

If a print-ready ad is turned in to the Graphics department that does not meet our quality specifications or standards, we reserve the right to rebuild the ad and charge the customer our standard graphics fee for the piece.

The Most Common Problems (which lead to delays)

1. Platform compatibility

We operate on a Macintosh platform. Although we may be able to open and use a native file built on a PC, there are potential problems with crossing platform, so we would prefer to receive PC platform ads as hi-res PDFs.

2. Failure to include all fonts with your disk

Though we maintain a large library of fonts, there are over 20,000 different fonts out there and we can't possibly have them all. Even if we happen to have a font with the same name as the ones you use, it's possible that they were designed by different companies, and are not identical. Any differences can cause type to reflow, lines to get cut off, hyphenation to change, etc. If you supply native files using fonts which we do not have, your job will be delayed until you can supply us a copy of the font(s), or you authorize us to substitute a similar font that we do have. To avoid most common font issues, if possible, convert all fonts in your document to outlines.

3. Missing Scans or Image Files

Most desktop publishing applications only store a preview image in the files they create, and must retrieve the original graphic files prior to printing. We occasionally receive native InDesign files without the linked graphic files, and must delay the job while we wait for these graphic files to be sent.

4. Unusable Scans

Most of the problematic scans we receive have been scanned at too low of a resolution. Similarly, please avoid submitting artwork that has been downloaded off the internet. Just because a photo looks good online doesn't mean that it will print well. The acceptable standards of photos for screen resolution (the internet) and print resolution are very different. We also receive files with images scanned at many times higher resolution than required. These oversampled scans waste disk space, and greatly increase output time without any corresponding increase in output quality.

5. Failure to use the CMYK color system

Although RGB and spot/PMS colors are automatically converted to CMYK (process) color by our Prepress dept. some colors do not translate well to CMYK and unacceptable color shifts often are the result. Notably, metallic colors, oranges, and some purples and greens are not well represented by CMYK. We have also encountered difficulties in processing some files which contain mixes of CMYK, RGB and spot colors. It is required that all files be built in the CMYK color mode from the beginning, all scans used are CMYK and if spot colors are used in building a file that they be converted to CMYK before submitting the file to us. All of the commonly used graphics programs allow you to choose the color mode you wish to work in. CMYK color should always be the choice for ads that are to be printed.

6. Use of 4-color blacks

The use of 4-color (rich) blacks for smaller text and rules is discouraged in the printing industry. For smaller text it serves no purpose and only tends to leave text muddy and unreadable, particularly with web presses. Small text and rules reversed out of black backgrounds would follow the same rules.

Large blocks of black or very large black text can sometimes be run as a 4-color black to help give the element some weight, but smaller text and rules should never be 4-color black. The most common reason text ends up 4-color black is because the initial file is built in the RGB color mode and when that file is converted to process (CMYK) color the black automatically splits out into all 4 plates. It's important to 'start' building the ad in the process color mode, rather than trying to convert it after the fact.

7. Ad Size

Most of our products do not require bleed. With the exception of Premium Postcards and Smart Cards, ads that we print will have a white margin built around them as part of our page templates. It is not necessary to include margins in the ad you are sending. The Actual Ad Space as listed on our Production Specifications sheet is the live area for your ad and can be completely filled with ad content. This is not to be confused with the Finished (trim) Size.

If you have any questions or concerns about a proposed file format you want to send, please contact our Graphics Team at 503-345-1542, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm P.S.T. and we'll be pleased to help you.