

How to avoid the top 10 file preparation mistakes.

There is much to consider before a designed file can go to press. We have compiled a top 10 list of some of the most common problems that occur when we receive customer files. By following this checklist, you can avoid many of these problems.

1. Inadequate Bleeds

A bleed is any area on a printed sheet where ink extends beyond the cut edge. One problem of inadequate bleeds is that an image you expect to extend to the edge will show a tiny white line on the trimmed edge because you did not position the artwork 3mm past the cut/trim marks. This leads to an unprofessional look that you want to avoid. We require at least 3mm Bleed.

2. Wrong applications used for complex page layouts

Use publishing programs like Adobe Indesign to design complex layouts. Adobe Photoshop is not an ideal program for designing detailed layouts. It is photo editing software used to correct and resize images, not a page layout program. Software like Microsoft Word, Powerpoint and Publisher are great for word processing at your desk when you can print to your desktop printer. Limitations in these types of software make it difficult to do proper, efficient layout. If you do design in these programs, please send a PDF version of your document along with the native file to ensure your design prints correctly.

3. Placed images resolution too low - always use 300 dots per inch (dpi)

An image or document that has a low resolution will print pixelated and grainy. Images downloaded from the internet do not typically print well because their dpi is usually 72 dpi instead of the standard 300 dpi. Always use images with a dpi of at least 300.

4. Fonts are not embedded in a PDF or missing in the file

When you create a PDF file you need to make sure to embed your fonts. This ensures that even if the person who opens the document does not have the font you used on their computer they are still able to view and print the file correctly. If you send application files like Illustrator or Indesign, you can convert your text to outlines first and send an option with this done.

5. Missing images in applications

If you send a native file and have missing images, it will either print blank or a low resolution image in its place. To avoid this when using InDesign please package the file under the file menu. This will collect all the images and fonts into one folder to send via post or Dropbox to us.

6. Incomplete or corrupt files

Before sending, check to see if your file will open correctly and has all necessary pages, images, etc.

7. Colors that are not converted from RGB to four-color CMYK mode

You might design in RGB and proof in RGB but we aim to print in CMYK. It is very rare that a computer monitor will accurately display the colors chosen in your layout. Your images may print in black and white or with inaccurate color if you neglect to convert images to the CMYK color mode. While Microsoft Word allows you to specify the color of type and graphics, it does so only in RGB. Word does not offer the option to specify process or spot colors. This means that we can print the document only in CMYK by using the digital print machine's best conversion of it.

8. B&W images saved in RGB or CMYK instead of grayscale

They will print with some color if not saved as grayscale, which means an extra cost to you as it counts as colour not greyscale.

9. Files created in Word and Publisher at US Letter size and not A4

When you open a new file in either Word or Publisher you need to specify the page size before you start work. This is because the default page size in both these applications is US Letter which is slightly wider and slightly shorter in height to A4, which is 210mm wide x 297mm high.

10. Spell check

Don't forget one of the most important steps to complete before sending a document to print is proofreading and spell check. When designing, it is easy to focus on the layout and overlook the actual content. Unlike web design, once it's printed, it's too late to fix any content or spelling errors.