



Digital File Preparation Guide

File types

Although most major design platforms are accepted, the Adobe Creative Suite design programs (InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop) are by far the most popular industry file types. We will always have the latest versions of all the Adobe Products.

Accepted Vector Based Extensions: .pdf / .eps / .ai

Accepted Raster Based Extensions: .pdf / .psd / .psb / .tif / .jpg / .png

If necessary, we also accept Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint files. However, the Microsoft family platforms are not suited for commercial print production, usually resulting in reformatting issues to the fonts, leading and kerning from one workstation to the next and also, from one version of the program to the next. But the largest problem associated with Microsoft files – all images are pixel based at 72-ppi (see Resolution section below) – meaning all included images are at a very low-resolution – resulting in pixelation when enlarging any file to larger than the basic 8.5”x 11” letter page size.

Note: There will be an automatic “1 Hour” design charge for any Microsoft Family files submitted – due to the time taken to redesign your file in an Adobe Creative Suite program.

Vector vs. Raster

The differences between vector and raster graphics are that raster graphics are composed of square pixels, while vector graphics are composed of mathematical lines or paths. A raster graphic, such as a Photoshop .tif or .jpg, is an array of pixels of various colors, which together form an image. A vector graphic, such as an Illustrator .eps or .ai file, is composed of mathematical paths, either straight or curved. The data file for a vector image contains the points where the paths start and end, how much they curve, and the colors that either border or fill the paths. Because vector graphics are not made of pixels, the images can be scaled very large, without losing any quality. Raster graphics, on the other hand, can become “pixelated,” since each pixel increases in size as the image is made larger. This is why logos and other designs are typically created in vector format – as the quality and sharpness will look the same on a business card as it will on an extra-large billboard.



Resolution

Resolution can be somewhat subjective. The required print resolution of any project can vary by the type of print process used and the audiences' viewing distance. By rule of thumb, we recommend 120-ppi (pixels-per-inch) at full size, for images that will be viewed from a distance under 10' feet. Anything beyond 10' should still be at least 75-ppi. When in doubt, we suggest supplying us with as much resolution as you have available, but not to exceed 120-ppi at full size.

Scaling

We recommend providing us files at full size whenever possible. Although, when the design software layout board forces you to design your art in scale, please make sure you take into consideration the raster requirements when scaling your art. For example: If you are required to submit a 100-ppi file - and the provided art is at 50% scale - please ensure the images in your file are at least 200-ppi (25% scale would be 400-ppi, etc...).

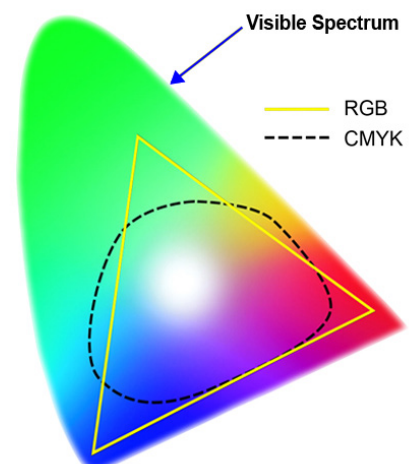
We also recommend noting the scale in the file name (ex: "BigBanner-50scale.pdf").

Color

We will accept files that are CMYK and RGB based color platforms. Although, all printing (home or professional) is CMYK based, therefore we recommend designing in CMYK to ensure the colors designed will stay true. All monitors and images from the internet are RGB based, which have a larger color gamma spectrum, resulting in more vibrant colors. This is why we recommend CMYK supplied files, ensuring there are no unexpected and noticeable color variances from the files provided.

For all solid vector colors, please provide the PMS Coated Number (Pantone Color Matching System) to ensure those solid colors are matched perfectly.

If color matching is critical, please provide a hard-copy sample proof for our printers to match. Or please request a hard-copy color sample proof with your order to be shipped to you for review.



Bleed

We typically require enough image area to create a 1” bleed. Dye-Sub Fabric prints, however, could need up to 3” depending on the amount of stretch in the fabric. You are required to create the bleed in the files provided.

Embedded Links

We recommend embedding all artwork elements into the file, as opposed to linking them externally. Embedding your images makes the pre-press steps much easier and most importantly leaves less room for error. If the images are linked, please provide all related linked files.

Fonts

Whenever possible we recommend “Outlining Fonts” or “Creating Curves” to all live text, making each glyph into a vector shape of the character. ***In Illustrator or InDesign, select all of your text, then click “Type” > “Create Outlines” from the dropdown menu.***

This process allows us to print your image without the errors of font substitution or leading and kerning differences between fonts of the same name. If you need the fonts to remain live, please send us the font used in the document for us to upload to our programs. If you are uploading Mac fonts, please stuff them first, ensuring we do not lose the data fork from the file.

Layout Accuracy

Please provide an accurate and fully updated color PDF file of each print, for design layout accuracy.