

HOW TO BUILD THE PERFECT FILE FOR PRINTING

The secret to a smooth printing process starts with a well-built file.
Follow these guidelines and avoid 95% of printing problems.

1

COLOR MODE

Choose **CMYK** color mode — not RGB. RGB looks vibrant on screen but prints duller because it is designed for monitors. CMYK translates more accurately to printed output. For deep, rich blacks use **Rich Black (C:30, M:30, Y:30, K:100)** rather than flat black (C:0, M:0, Y:0, K:100). Avoid Pantone/spot colors unless your job specifically requires them and you have confirmed this with your CSR.

PRODUCTION SOFTWARE

Use professional design software: Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, or InDesign. Accepted formats: **PDF, EPS, Ai, PSD, PSB, TIF, JPG, INDD, IDML**. Files from Word, PowerPoint, Google Docs, Canva (free tier), Paint, or screenshots do not meet the quality required for high-end printing and will be returned for correction.

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RESOLUTION

Resolution is measured in dots per inch (dpi). The standard for print is **100 dpi at 100% of final output size**. Files built at half size should be 200 dpi, and so on. Low-resolution images print pixelated or blurry. Images from websites are almost always 72 dpi — not acceptable. Purchase high-resolution stock photos if needed (Getty, Shutterstock, Adobe Stock).

TYPEFACES / FONTS

Make sure the right fonts travel with your file. Either **convert all text to outlines/paths** before sending, or **package your fonts** with the document (InDesign: File > Package). Missing fonts cause text reflow, substitutions, and errors. After outlining, verify text still looks correct — outlines cannot be edited.

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IMAGES

Use high-quality images at sufficient resolution (see #3). **Embed all linked images** before sending — do not send files with broken or missing links. Avoid heavy JPEG compression artifacts, which become more visible in large-format print. For photography, shoot in RAW or TIFF for maximum quality. Images from the web are rarely print-ready.

BLEED & SAFE ZONE

Add **0.125" (1/8") bleed** on all sides for any design that extends to the edge of the finished piece. Keep all critical content (text, logos, key graphics) at least **0.125" inside the trim line** — this is the safe zone. Bleed and safe zone prevent white edges and clipped content after cutting. Set up your document at the correct finished size and add bleed in your application's document settings.

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FILE NAMING

Name files clearly so we can identify them instantly. Use: **QuoteNumber_ClientName_Description_v#.pdf** — e.g., Q12345_AcmeCo_Banner_v2.pdf. Avoid vague names like 'final', 'FINAL2', or 'USE THIS ONE'. Remove spaces and special characters. If sending multiple files for one job, number them in production order.

COLOR PROOFING

Screen colors are never an exact match to print. Monitor calibration, ambient lighting, and brightness all affect what you see. For color-critical work, **request a digital soft proof or a physical hard proof** before going to press. Approve all proofs in writing before production begins. Color variation of up to 10% is within industry tolerance on standard jobs.

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UPLOAD

To send large files, use our WeTransfer portal: <https://cr-philly.wetransfer.com> — reference your Quote number, Client name, and Job description, then notify your Salesperson or CSR that the upload is complete. Do **not** email large files (10 MB+ may be blocked). Confirm receipt with your CSR before assuming files are in production.