



Tips & Reminders

for preparing your digital files

Every print shop has unique criteria that must be met in order to have your job run smoothly and beautifully on our computer systems and our presses. This guide is an aid meant to save you money and avoid unnecessary delays in the processing of your files, which could affect the production schedule and/or ship date. This guide offers a quick reference to some key points for you to remember. However, for an in-depth look at using your software more effectively, we suggest looking into the many graphic design/prepress resources available online or by subscription. Most importantly, familiarize yourself with your software manuals.

Software Options

The primary page layout software packages we support are: InDesign, Illustrator, PDFs, and Photoshop for graphics.

We prefer that the file be provided in its native format. Providing a PDF alone may not always be usable.

We may require PDF files for documents created using alternative software. Please contact us for specifics and instructions for creating usable PDF files.

Our imaging system runs on a Mac platform. Therefore, if you provide us with PC files, there may be some minor reformatting that occurs.

Page Layout

Please **DO NOT** pre-impose pages

We use program features and imposition software to break up the pages into correct groupings for the presses. Any documents containing printer spreads or ganged pages may be unusable or will require additional work and charges. Multiple files will also increase processing time and charges.

All pages should be in consecutive numerical order (i.e., 1,2,3,...) beginning with the front cover, if applicable, and ending with the back cover. Please inform us of any pages that are to remain blank, and please be sure to place a blank page in the correct position in your document.

Does your Page Size match the Trim Size?

The page size in your document should match the trim size specified in your price quote; not the default settings of your application which is usually letter or 8.5" x 11".

For example, do not float a business card on a letter-sized document. Set your page up for 3.5" x 2" and provide the 1-up copy to us. This helps ensure proper press sheet placement and clean, consistent trims. If you are uncertain of your trim size, contact the person who provided your quote.

Is my Image Area too big?

If the image area in your file is too big, the pages will need to be reduced by 1-3%. Printable image area is determined by the size of the stock your job is running on. If your stock is not oversized, you will need to allow a minimum 5/16" margin for the press to be able to grip the paper. Please confirm maximum image area with the person quoting your job.

Do your pages Bleed?

Images or elements that you want to bleed off the page **must** extend beyond the trim edges in your document. Our bleed requirement is 1/8" (.125 in.) on all sides that bleed. For multi-page documents that will be face-trimmed, we ask for 1/4" (.25 in) bleed on the outside edge, 1/8" (.125 in.) on the top and bottom, and nothing on the inside edge.

Scanning

All photos should be scanned at 300dpi. Scan all line art as bitmaps at 1200dpi. If your scanner is not capable of scanning at 1200dpi, use the highest setting possible, but no less than 600dpi. Your image may appear rough if less than 1200dpi.

For best results, photos should not exceed 93% in the shadows, and your highlights should be no less than 3%. You may need to drop your midtones 7-15% depending on the photo. Skin tones should be around 20%. Please consult your software manual for detailed instructions on the proper use of curves.

Total ink density should not exceed 280% for photos being reproduced on our presses.

If you feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed with this technical aspect of printing, we can adjust your photos in-house for best quality reproduction of your job. Please remember that results will vary depending on the quality of photo supplied.

Are you using the correct Color Mode?

All full-color images should be CMYK – not RGB. All black and white photos should be GRAYSCALE – **not RGB or INDEX.** Spot-colored photos should be GRAYSCALE TIFF images tagged with the PMS color in your layout file. Line art should be BITMAP.

A note about JPEG's

If you are using a JPEG as your original photo file, it is best to open the original file and save it as a TIFF before doing anything to it. JPEG formats are *lossy* formats. This means that if you keep saving the file as a JPEG, loss of information occurs with every save. Your photos become pixelated and poor in quality even though it may look fine on screen. TIFF formats are *lossless* formats. Your photo will remain high-quality throughout the editing and saving processes.

What Graphic Formats are you using?

There are many graphic formats that can be problematic in printing to a high-end digital device. Many of these files will print just fine on your laser or ink-jet printer, but can cause a job to error at our RIP.

All links should be saved as TIFF or EPS. If other formats (i.e., JPEG, GIF, PICT, WMF, PCX, BMP, etc.) exist in your document, please open and re-save them as TIFF or EPS. Do not use LZW or JPEG compression when saving your files. All compression should be turned off.

If you will be using clipart or stock photography in your design, there are special steps that need to be taken in order to ensure their quality. Some clipart will not print at high resolutions and will need to be converted to TIFF format before printing. This is especially true with clipart from the Microsoft Gallery.

Adobe Tables need to be saved as EPS files and linked to your document layout. If we do not have the tables as links, we cannot guarantee they will print with the correct fonts and colors.

Whenever you supply a link as an EPS or PDF, you need to be sure the art and fonts are embedded or supplied along with the link. We prefer that you also supply the native files in case there is a problem with the EPS. If you are confident that there will be no text changes, it is *always best* to convert your text to outlines before saving your EPS. This takes one more possible problem out of the picture for the RIP to deal with.

Any images that require clipping paths should be created in PhotoShop. All images that are using a clipping path need to be saved as an EPS, not a TIFF.

Fonts

Please send us ALL of the fonts used in your document including any fonts used in linked or embedded files no matter how common you may think the font is. We deal with hundreds of files monthly, and there is no possible way we can run the systems with all these fonts loaded at all times. Missing fonts are the most common reasons for a job to output incorrectly or to be put on hold.

You should supply one font folder containing all the fonts used in your job. Do not send us your entire font library. Loading unnecessary fonts slows our production and greatly increases the chance for RIP errors.

We prefer Type 1 Postscript fonts over TrueType, but both are acceptable. TrueType fonts have a higher occurrence of problems than postscript fonts.

When using postscript fonts, you need to supply BOTH parts: each postscript font has a printer font and a matching screen font (screen fonts are usually stored in a suitcase). It is a good idea to look at your fonts and make sure they are complete. A printer font without a screen font cannot even be loaded into our font utility program. A screen font without a printer font can be loaded and will not warn you that the printer font is missing; the file will print with `courier` substituted. Some desktop printers will render the printer fonts from the screen fonts. Imagesetters DO NOT work this way. Do not rely on the fact that your desktop printer prints pseudo-correctly, so the fonts must be right. Thorough preflight checks now prevent delays later.

What Colors are being used?

Color names and definitions should be consistent throughout all of your layout documents and links. This is very important because the color Pantone 032 CVU will print separately from Pantone 032 CV or Pantone 032 CVC. Any variation in naming will produce a different color separation when printed to film even though they may look the same or use the same Pantone numbers and formulas.

When printing with spot colors, it is very important to be sure you files are built using defined spot colors and not process colors. If you do not understand how they are different, please refer to your design program's user guide for a complete explanation.

All color printers use different pigments or inks and various methods of translating that information to paper. Because of these differences and individual calibration settings, it is very unlikely that your printer will produce color that will match the finished product off the press. For full-color jobs, we may not be able to exactly match your printer proofs, but can make adjustments, if requested, to match as closely as possible. Our ColorMatch Proofing system, if requested, will show very closely what your finished full-color job will look like.

Spot color representation on our laser proofs is not accurate. All spot colors will print as they are represented in the Pantone Spot Color Guide.

Trapping

TrapWise is the program we use to handle trapping automatically in the processing of your job. There is no need for you to set any traps in your files unless you have special trapping requirements. If you have set your own special traps, please be sure to notify us when you supply your files.

Overprints DO need to be set in your files; especially in the links. Small black objects and text should be set to overprint. For more details on what objects need to overprint, do not be afraid to call us and ask. We are always willing to work with you to help you get the results you expect while keeping the job printable.

Each job will be a little different depending on the colors you are using and the elements in your design. We can resolve most overprinting issues that may arise in your files. Be careful NOT to have any white elements set to overprint.

Preflight

A preflight check is intended to catch missing files, missing fonts, material not intended for printing, and any components that may prevent the document from imaging properly. This systematic check of your files helps ensure your document will print correctly from our systems. It also reduces the chance that we will have to troubleshoot files for problems and charge you for additional time required to prepare the file for imaging. After you have checked your files, organize them so that we can easily find all the files required to print them.

Programs like InDesign and Adobe Illustrator have packaging features that will collect the fonts and links you use with your file, and save it all in one organized location. We recommend you use the feature built in to these programs each and every time you supply us with files. Errors and potential problems are reduced greatly by doing so. Be sure to check the boxes for including fonts and links. If you are in doubt, it is always better to include too much rather than taking a chance on leaving something out. Consult your software manual for detailed instructions on how to properly package your files.

If you are concerned about the integrity of your files, you can send in test files from your job to be checked by us. Please call first to discuss which pages would be most appropriate for testing.

PDF Files

If you choose to send us PDF files, there are some specific guidelines you must follow to ensure you create high quality PDF files. You should be creating a postscript file and using the Distiller to create the PDF. Exporting a PDF from the program is not good enough because information is lost that is valuable to the RIP. Feel free to call us to get instructions on how to make a good PDF.

If you will be placing PDF's as links, it is best to use InDesign CS or Adobe Illustrator CS.

File Organization

When sending us files for printing, we ask that you follow a simple organization system:

1. A folder named "links" with ALL of your links loose inside. DO NOT place them in sub-folders.
2. A folder named "fonts" with ALL of the fonts used in your layout files and links; NOT your entire font library. If you choose to send your entire font library for backup, please keep it totally separate from the job fonts.
3. A folder named "print files" with all of your layout files to be printed.
4. If applicable, a "postscript" or "PDF" folder.

If for some reason you must have other files on your disk that are not part of your job, please move them to a separate folder and name it "ignore".

File Submission Options

There are several options you can use to submit your files to us. Please be sure to notify the person you are working with to handle your job the method you plan to use and when you will be providing them.

Note: Sorry, but we do not allow customers to bring in external hard drives or connect to our network with laptops or other peripherals.

☞ *Removable Media*

We currently support the following types of removable media: CD or Thumbdrive.

☞ *E-Mail*

Files may be attached to an E-mail message if they are less than 9MB. If they are larger, you will need to use an alternative method. Organize all your files into one folder and name it: ClientName_JobName_mmdd. Please compress this folder using Stuffit or WinZip. Files may be sent to: prepress@ampub.net.

☞ *FTP Upload*

Larger files may be uploaded to our FTP website. Please contact us for uploading instructions.

Uploading files from the Seattle Menu website:

1. Organize all your files into one folder and name it: ClientName_JobName_mmdd. Please compress this folder using Stuffit or WinZip.
2. In your browser, go to: www.seattlemenu.com
3. Go to the Design page and use the upload form.

Your file should then begin uploading. Sometimes there are glitches that occur in submitting files, so if you have any problems, call us and we will try to help you work around them.

ALWAYS CALL AND NOTIFY US WHEN YOUR FILES HAVE BEEN SENT AND TELL US HOW YOU SENT THEM. WE CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR FILE SUBMISSIONS THAT ARE NOT FOLLOWED-UP.

MOST COMMON PROBLEMS

- ☞ Microsoft software is not optimized to create files ready for offset printing. Some of the programs only support RGB colorspace, which cannot be used for creating spot or process separations. There is ALWAYS extra production time involved in making Microsoft files print-ready.
- ☞ RGB or CMYK art cannot be used in a spot color or black-only job. Multicolored art can only be converted to grayscale and tagged with one spot color. We cannot create two-color artwork from an RGB or CMYK piece of art. If you want two-color art in your spot color job, the art will need to be created with the two spot colors. If you need more information on creating spot color art, please call us. Avoid using multichannel DCS files except for duotones. If you are unsure of how to create proper duotones, please call us or ask us to make them for you.
- ☞ Color mismatches between imported artwork and your layout files (i.e., Pantone 032 CVC, Pantone 032 CVU, Pantone 032 CV, Pantone 185 CV, and Red) can cost extra time and money to make your files ready to print because they will all print as separate colors. Be careful not to use more colors than you plan to print. A good idea is to create a 2-color graphic in Illustrator using the colors you plan, and then select those colors from the color palette after you import them into your page layout program. *It saves headaches.*
- ☞ If fonts and or links nested in a linked EPS are not supplied, they will print in low resolution or not at all. This is where you'll have to either keep track of every font and link and be sure they are included, or just get in the habit of converting to outlines and embedding images when saving EPS files to alleviate the problem altogether.
- ☞ Ghost Fonts are fonts that were used at some point in the document and then replaced with a different font. Sometime though, a space between text is left using the original font, or it may be stored in a "type style" or "paragraph style." The document will still require the font to print. The RIP will error and reject it. If the font is not supplied, we will need to wait for you to send it or replace it with another font, which may cause some text to re-flow.
- ☞ Low resolution or low quality digital camera shots will be pixelated or blurry. There is no way to fix them. The best advice we can offer is to provide us with the file as taken off the camera without re-saving it. Most digital camera photos are JPEG formats, and data loss will occur if you open and save to another JPEG file. Simply increasing the resolution of an image in PhotoShop WILL NOT improve your image; it will only make the file larger.
- ☞ Inadequate bleeds can put your job on hold. Some elements can be easily extended, but if there are photos or links that do not have enough image to bleed, we will have to get your permission to enlarge them or alter them to make enough bleed. This could delay your job.
- ☞ Sending us links with names different than what was placed in your files will cause delays. Be sure to give us the exact files you used to create your document, and do not change the names at all. Please limit the names of files to no more than 22 characters, since the MAC system may truncate the name of a file, which will appear as a lost link. Please make sure no two links have the same name.
- ☞ Do not use the "copy" command in graphics applications and then paste that image into your layout file. This does NOT produce a high resolution image. You are only pasting a low resolution placeholder (preview file) without a link to the high resolution image. These images will be pixelated or not print at all. You must follow the correct procedure for placing high resolution art into your layout. Please read your software manual if you are unsure of the correct procedure.
- ☞ Some clipart is designed for desktop printing only and is not suitable for high resolution output. You may be able to rasterize the clipart at a high enough resolution for offset printing, but it will not be as crisp as the original vector art.
- ☞ Artwork that is embedded rather than linked may cause delays if there is a problem within it. Since embedded art cannot be edited, we are unable to fix it if it's in the wrong colorspace or if it is causing an error.
- ☞ CDs burned with the wrong setting may be unreadable in another drive. Please be sure to use a cross-platform compatible setting to burn your CDs. It is a really good idea to check the CD in another drive before sending it to us.
- ☞ When uploading files to our FTP site or sending via E-mail, please place all of your files in a folder with the client and job name. STUFF or ZIP the folder and send us the compressed file. **DO NOT UPLOAD UNCOMPRESSED FILES TO OUR FTP SITE.** Please notify us by phone when you send files.
- ☞ Importing text files from Microsoft Word will add the color "Auto" to the color list. This color contains 100% of every color of CMYK. It must be changed to just black or your text will be four-color text.
- ☞ Using the color "Registration" will cause your art or text to print as 100% of ALL colors.