

Artwork checklist

Ten checks before you send a file to print

Every one of these is cheaper to do now than to discover at proofing. Send us your file either way - prepress checks every file that arrives and tells you what is missing.

01 Supply a print-ready PDF

PDF/X-1a or PDF/X-4. We accept AI, INDD, CDR and PSD, but a correct PDF is the only format that looks the same on our system as on yours.

02 Build in CMYK, not RGB

Screens show colours ink cannot reproduce. Convert late and vivid oranges, greens and blues shift - and the proof is the first you see of it.

03 Add 3 mm bleed on every edge

Extend anything reaching the edge 3 mm past the trim. Do not fake it by scaling the design up - on packaging it stops matching the dieline.

04 Keep content inside the safety margin

Hold text and logos at least 3 mm inside the trim, and further on packaging where creases and corners take space from the same area.

05 Images at 300 dpi, at final printed size

At FINAL size. A 300 dpi image scaled up 400% is effectively 75 dpi. Web images at 72 dpi are almost never usable.

06 Outline or embed all fonts

An unembedded font is substituted silently, and reflowed text on the proof is the first sign. Outline logos; embed anything to be versioned later.

07 Small text as 100% K - not rich black

Four-colour black on small type fringes when the press shifts. Body copy and captions in black only; rich black for large solids.

08 Define spot colours deliberately

Name the coated or uncoated variant: 286 C and 286 U are different colours. If it need not be exact, convert to process before sending.

09 Check overprint settings

White set to overprint disappears completely, because white in CMYK means no ink. It looks correct on screen. Check the setting.

10 Put the dieline on its own layer

A separate named layer in a spot colour, set to overprint. Cut, crease and perf on separate layers. A merged dieline gets printed.

Sending it

- Name files so we can tell them apart

Company, job, size and version - for example acme-monocarton-90x45x120-v3.pdf. "final-final-2.pdf" has caused more wrong-version print runs than any other single thing in this industry.

- Send one file per item

Separate PDFs for the carton, the leaflet and the label, rather than one multi-page file - they go to different processes and often different presses.

- Up to 25 MB through the quote form

Larger than that, send a download link in the notes field. We accept PDF, AI, CDR, JPG, PNG and ZIP.

- Tell us what it has to match

A previous job, a physical sample, a Pantone reference or a competitor pack on a shelf. Any of those is more useful than a description of the colour.