

Graphics Central Inc.

Acceptable File Formats and Design Guidelines

last revised 08-15-2011

For the best results on quality and color, we offer you the following informational guidelines which should be considered with all files which require printing and/or installation. In large format printing, important values such as image resolution and accurate color setup should be considered. The following document explains these important guidelines to insure your product is completed with the highest expectations and perfection in a timely manner. This document has been greatly improved and tested over several years by trial and error by our staff and our customers.

You may download this document from our website. This document can be revised at any time without notice. Please refer back to the web page periodically to insure that you have the most updated guideline and setup information.

If you have any questions or concerns about any file prep that may not be listed within the following information, call us in Atlanta at 770-455-8804 or toll free at 1-800-972-7558.

Graphics Central, Inc. will accept the following "print ready" files for Large Format Digital Printing:
EPS*, PDF*, TIF, JPG

These "print ready" files require little, if any modifications in our pre-press department before the file is printed. Supplying "print ready" file formats will insure that your project is printed the way it was intended on a normal-to-quick-turn-around basis.

** EPS and PDF files MUST have all text converted to outlines/curves. If converting text to outlines/curves is not possible through your design software, you MUST supply all the printer fonts used in the design in both Macintosh and Windows formats.*

Our pre-press department reviews all files provided in the latest version of Adobe Illustrator. We also use Adobe Illustrator to setup our press files in the form of tiling, ganging, die line setup, etc. We review all the components of the file including color, fonts, resolution and bleed. If an error message is received when we open your file in Adobe Illustrator, we attempt to fix it in a quick manner if possible. If we are unable to easily fix the error, we will ask that you correct the file (based on these outlined guidelines) and resubmit. If all the instructions within this document are followed, there is rarely an issue and your project can be completed on a normal turn-around basis.

The following file types may require a file conversion fee to convert to a "print ready" format.

**AI, PSD, INDD, IDX, FH10, QXD,
DOC, PUB, CDR, PPT**

These file types are NOT considered "print ready". They require their native software to open and must be converted to a postscript language (ps/eps) appropriate to the large format printing process. Cross platform, missing links, special filters, and font issues are the most common errors that arise when we pre-flight these specific file types.

Graphics Central, Inc. requires additional setup time & associated fees to convert these files to a "print ready" postscript file format.

SIZE: the size of the design should be proportional to the final print size. Designing at full size is okay but may result in a larger file which doesn't necessarily result in a better quality print... just more disk space and computer resources. When gradients are used in vector format it is recommended to supply the print file no less than half size so the steps of the gradient are not as visually dramatic upon the final print. This is also true when utilizing special filters or effects within your design. The more we have to enlarge the supplied file to meet the print size requested, the greater the quality depreciates for these special effects or gradient areas.

RESOLUTION: resolution only pertains to rasterized elements or images placed within a design. Vector based art, can be enlarged to any size without diminishing its final print quality. The resolution of any placed images within a design should fall within 85-125 dpi at final print size. Posters and medium size prints that contain smaller text (below 12pts.) within a flat image file should be slightly above the 125dpi range to insure legibility. It is not ever recommended to add resolution to a low resolution file. The results of this procedure is not a higher quality print, rather a softer low quality print.

COLOR: either RGB or CMYK for placed images. Keep in mind that RGB image colors will shift when our rip software converts them to CMYK for printing. Any embedded profiles within a placed image will be ignored by default and overridden by our color rip software's calibrated profiles. CMYK or PMS SPOT COLORS are recommended for vector art within a design. Under no circumstances can our 4, 6, or 8 color printers match a PMS SPOT COLOR perfectly, nor can they match pre-mixed interior and exterior paint colors for buildings or vehicles alike. When specifying a SPOT color, our printer's calibrated profiles will convert your PMS SPOT color to the best build utilizing over 4 colors for the best color results. If a spot color is converted to a cmyk build, the printer will limit its profile ink usage to the 4 color process as opposed to the additional 2 & 4 colors. To achieve a richer deeper black it is recommended to build your blacks as 15, 15, 15, 100 - or similar. This rich black build is NOT recommended in screen printing. If color matching is very critical, Graphics Central, Inc. will require a physical proof test strip to be visually approved by the client before the final project is printed. When attempting to match a color, it is also recommended that a color sample is supplied so color matching can be done by the Graphics Central, Inc. pre-press department staff. Color matching and proofing will be billed separately as setup and proofing fees of \$50/hour setup and \$10/square foot printing. If your project is color critical make sure your Graphics Central, Inc. contact is well aware of this when the order is placed. Under this circumstance, you need to provide a "print ready" file as well as the original native design files for color correcting..

FONTS / VECTOR ART: the fonts for any "print ready" design should ALWAYS be outlined as curves. PDF files don't always embed the fonts correctly and will result in a missing fonts error when opened in Adobe Illustrator. When supplying a PDF or EPS file with fonts embedded (and not outlined) we highly recommend that you supply all the printer fonts within its own folder as well. This insures that the printer has all the fonts needed to print without flattening the file which potentially could diminish the print quality and color space.

SPECIAL FILTERS/EFFECTS: Any effects used in your design software such as drop shadows, gradient glows, transparencies, etc., may not print as expected. When using these special effects within your design, we highly recommend flattening/rasterizing the related elements as a final design. Gradients used and special effects turn out better when they are utilized in a 50% scale design or higher. A gradient or drop shadow effect enlarged over 200% will dramatically "step" (for gradient) or break up (special filter effect) upon the final printing.

GRADIENTS: When gradients are used in vector format it is recommended to supply the print file no less than half size so the steps of the gradient are not as visually dramatic upon the final print. The cleanest gradients can be achieved by rasterizing the gradient at full or double the print size and placing this flat file into your design.

JPG: jpg files are typically for screen resolution only. When saving a high resolution jpg file, the lower the compression the better quality print quality. There are known issues when using a jpg file as opposed to a larger color depth offered by a flat tiff file.

TIF: tif images the most compatible cross-platform "print ready" file type. As a tif file, the design software has already placed each pixel in its appropriate location for the printer. A high resolution tif file is the fail-safe way for supplying your documents to us to print. Although quite large, they are to be considered as print ready as an eps file. When saving a high resolution flat TIF file, do not utilize LZW or similar compression. Both RGB or CMYK files are appropriate. Keep in mind that tif files cannot ensure the crisp edges that a vector file can when using text or graphic elements. TIF files over 100 sq. ft. are not recommended to exceed the 100dpi at final print size recommendations. If they do, our pre-press department may require the image to be decreased in print resolution to allow a much more time manageable digital print file.

BLEED: Although not always required, we suggest that you provide an appropriate bleed for all your print ready designs. Bleed is very important for router "cut to shape" projects, decals which will be applied to a pre-cut substrate, car wraps, and all screen printing. If your files do not contain a bleed, we may have to crop into the image in order to achieve a finished bleed result. Appropriate bleed limits would be no less than 1/8" on all sides that bleed for screen printing and cut-to-shape projects. A 4-6 inch bleed is the minimum required for vehicle wraps. Many times our finishing / production department does not require a bleed on hand trimmed square cut projects using thinner substrates. The pre-press digital department will remove this bleed as necessary for the finishing department but cannot always add bleed if it is required. Your proofs will always reflect any pre-press changes that are required for finishing.

SHAPE CUTTING & DIE LINES: Our cut-to-shape router allows you to create unique displays with eye-catching dimensional effects. "Cut-to-Shape" projects require a die line created for the actual cut area. This cut area is defined by using a uniquely named Spot Color vector shape typically on its own "die cut" layer within your print ready file. It is a requirement to turn the printing of this layer off within your file so it does not print. To learn more about this procedure or the proper way to setup cut to shape files, please call us and ask to speak to a pre-press designer for assistance.

CUT LETTER VINYL: projects requiring cut letter vinyl media must always be provided in a vector format. Our plotter software sees all artwork as line art. Under no circumstances can we cut image files. Fonts must always be converted to curves/outlines. Any lines that cross each other in your file will cut that way. To eliminate this issue it is suggested to expand all shaped graphics as a solid objects and fills. Multiple colors should always be separate elements within your designed file.

CLIENT SUPPLIED PROOFS: when submitting your files for printing, it is suggested to supply a low-resolution color proof of the file for our review. This allows us to pin-point any shifts in text, or effects as reviewed in pre-press. Supplied proofs can be in the form of low-resolution pdf or a color accurate laser copy (or similar). Color critical projects require you to provide a color correct print so we can fine tune the files/printer to better match. As mentioned above in the color section, color matching must be noted when a project is presented to us up front. See the color notes above for more information on color critical projects.

PROVIDING YOUR FILES: We can accept your files in a huge variety of digital media options. We don't recommend emailing us your print files. Our email accounts have a 7mb attachment limitation and most large format print files exceed this file size due to the nature of the file(s). The most recommended way to send us your files is by using our online ftp server. Simply follow the instructions on uploading your files to our server located on our website's home page. The ftp server we supply is on-site so there will be no delay in retrieving your files if you use our ftp server. There may be considerable delays if our pre-press department is to download the files from a third party or client's ftp server.

Additional tools and suggestions for the setup of certain projects can also be found on our "help getting started / helpful tools" section of our website.



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