

Blue Star Print Solutions

12 Steps to Artwork SUCCESS!

**Don't get it wrong, follow these simple
steps to get your artwork in shape.**



www.bluestarprintsolutions.co.uk

12 Steps to Artwork Success!

Getting your artwork right is the first big step in making sure your file will print correctly. Follow these tips to make sure you're not making the simple mistakes.

CONTENTS

- 1 - Bleed** - Why this is critical in design
- 2 - CMYK Images** - Why RGB won't cut it
- 3 - Small Text, 4 Colours** - All these colours, so little space!
- 4 - Clear Zone** - The neutral territory
- 5 - Spell it Out** - Why pressing that ABC button won't help
- 6 - Convert That Font** - Using fonts and why you should convert
- 7 - Resolution** - Not meant for New Year - Images and size
- 8 - Raster Text** - pixel = problem if not correctly used
- 9 - Old Time Movie** - Using Black & White in your design
- 10 - Check The Format** - Why you shouldn't be using gif or png
- 11 - Embed that Font!** - When to embed
- 12 - Flat as a Pancake** - Flattening layers and saving space

1 - Bleed ...

If you don't put a reasonable amount of bleed in your artwork you're asking for trouble. Basically, "bleed" refers to artwork that extends beyond the document boundaries.

This is necessary because the guillotines that trim your print aren't accurate to the millimetre, meaning that although your print will all look the same size there will always be some very tiny differences. If you don't add the bleed then these differences could show as a small white line at the edge of the sheet.

Some guillotines behave better than others, but a safe bet is to have 3mm of bleed for most print jobs that are 'hand-held' such as posters, letterheads and business cards, etc.

✓Tip: Large format prints may require more bleed, so always ask your printer first.

2 - CMYK Images...

If you don't know the difference between RGB and CMYK, you shouldn't be sending anything to print at all!

Learn the basics before making an expensive error. You should make sure that you don't forget to convert all images to CMYK.

Yes, modern PDF software does convert RGB to CMYK automatically upon saving (or should), but the conversion may adjust your colours, which you might not notice until you've received your final prints. This is especially important if you need a specific colour tone for brand awareness or to match with other areas of the design.

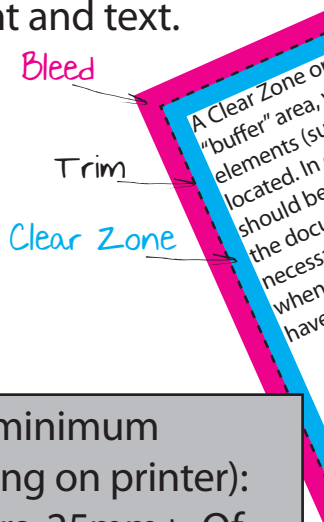
3 - Small Text, 4 Colours...

If you need small text on a black background make sure that it doesn't include large amounts of cyan, magenta and yellow. If you do, the text will print blurred. This will happen because of ink-bleed and possible slight misalignment of printing plates. Even if digital print is used, this is still a problem and a cause of many printing mistakes. For best results only use white text on black backgrounds. The same can be said for printing coloured text on a white background – small text with more than one colour can be hard to register correctly and so may appear blurry.

4 - Clear Zone...

A Clear Zone or Quiet Border is a sort of “buffer” area, where no text or defined elements (such as logos) should be located. In general a quiet border should be at least 3mm from the edge of the document. This imaginary border is necessary because the guillotines used when trimming your document can have some variance.

Without a clear zone this would mean that text could be chopped off. In the very worst scenario, having a 3mm quiet area should mean that there would still be some gap between the edge of your printed document and text.



✓ Tip: Here are some example quiet border minimum widths, which may be appropriate (depending on printer): Business Cards: 3mm, Leaflets: 12mm, Posters: 25mm+. Of course, the design will effect how close texts are to the edge of the document. Note that the quiet border also has as much to do with design as avoiding printing mistakes - the larger the print the wider the clear zone should be.

5 - Spell It Out...

We all make spelling mistakes from time-to-time, however, spelling mistakes that aren't noticed until a design has been printed is an obvious no-no.

Every printer has had a customer call them up on receiving their job saying there's a spelling mistake on it. For small jobs it doesn't usually cost that much to reprint, however, for many jobs a reprint would be unacceptable due to costs and inconvenience.

If you're using a designer then they should be checking the spelling as they're going along but it is always you who should double-check for spelling mistakes before approving the final artwork.

✓Tip: Don't totally rely on spell-checkers as they won't pick up on grammatical errors such as 'their' instead of 'there', for example.

6 - Convert That Font...

It's a good idea to convert all text used in designs to outlines before exporting as a PDF. Of course fonts can be embedded into the PDF, which is useful for larger documents, such as brochures, where amendments might be needed.

Converting text to outlines simply removes any font issues the printer may have. After all, there can be problems with embedded fonts in some cases too (see Step 11) so converting your type is always best.

✓ Tip: Make sure you make a backup copy of your unconverted file so that you can make design changes in the future.

7 - Resolution...

Image resolutions for print need to be a minimum of 300 pixels per inch (ppi) at full size, although it does depend on the type of print machinery that is going to be used.

Setting the ppi too high can cause problems, but the major error some people make is setting the resolution too low. The common mix-up is using a 72 dpi (dots per inch) image (one that is meant for the internet) instead of one that is 300 ppi or higher.

Another common mistake is taking a 72 dpi image that originated on the internet and using it for print by enlarging it, therefore reducing the quality even more.

The only exception to using images taken from the internet is if you're using an originally large image and shrinking it down. This image could be reduced to one-quarter its original size, however, this wouldn't solve the colour problem, which is outlined next. Images for web will use an sRGB colour space. When converted to a CMYK colour space a lot of data will be lost and the colour conversion may not go well - it depends on the image used. If you absolutely have to use an image taken from the internet then always see a proof prior to printing to avoid a costly re-print if it doesn't come out how you expected it to.

8 - Raster Text...

For pretty much any hand held print work, such as leaflets and brochures, using vector type is a must. If you don't, the text won't look sharp. A vector graphic will look sharp because it's made from mathematical calculations. Raster text & images are made from pixels, which are what digital images are made of.

The easiest way to explain this is by using a software example – if you create text straight from Photoshop and use this to print, unless correctly exported, you'll have Raster text. If, on the other hand, you use illustrator and create text, you'll have vector text.

Vector text is always the preferred as it can be scaled without affecting quality. Meaning you can use various pieces of artwork across different sizes.

9 - Old Time Movie...

If you want your Black & White images to stay Black & White make sure they're created as a grey working space/profile. Otherwise cyan, magenta and yellow inks will be added when your image is printed as part of a document.

This is because colour will originally show in the cyan, magenta and yellow channels in your document if you use a CMYK profile.

Of course, you may want some colour in your black & white images to create a richer picture, but you'll need to modify the image in a program like Photoshop first and then convert it.

10 - Check The Format...

.gif and .png files are on-screen-only files. They are not intended for print and will not print well.

This is because they have been developed to handle 72 ppi but images for print need to be a min of 300ppi. For very small images in print you might get away with it but get into the practice of using .tiff images when designing for printed material.

You may be able to get away with using .jpeg files for print (if they are saved at very high quality) but every job is different and requires a variety of image-standards depending on application.

11 - Embed That Font...

If you're sending, for example, a 16-page brochure to print, it's probably best not to convert the font to paths due to the length of the booklet.

In cases like this leave the copy font in place but make sure it's embedded in the PDF when you export.

If you don't do this the printer may not have the same font that you have used and layout issues can occur.

There are many versions of each font, don't assume that the one the printer has will be the same just because you've used a common font name.

12 - Flat As A Pancake...

So you've created your artwork and need to get it sent over to your printer. You're on quite a tight timescale and you've left it quite late to send but you're ok – all you need to do is save the pdf and email it across. WAIT – the file's come out at a huge 20mb! If you're using illustrator for your artwork simply flatten your layers before saving as a pdf. This will reduce your file size to a more acceptable and easy to email size.

✓Tip: If you can't flatten your layers and still need to get your document across to your printer. Think about using a service like Dropbox or an online service like YouSendIt or MailBigFile. These services allow you to upload a file and email the link across to someone for them to download securely.



Blue Star Print Solutions is a print management company looking after print communications for all it's customers. We use our knowledge and experience of the print industry to save you time and money without sacrificing quality, leaving you to focus on your business.

Quite simpy we provide high quality print, managed by experts to help you save on costs while growing your business.

Blue Star Print Solutions is owned and run by Richard Markie who has worked with a range of companies from small local start up's to multinational and internationally recognised brands during his many years in the print industry. He founded Blue Star Print Solutions in 2011 in order to reduce his lengthy daily commute and hasn't looked back since.

To stop making mistakes on your print, and to experience a little print freedom for yourself. get in touch with us now on 0844 272 9109 or email Richard directly at richard@bluestarprintsolutions.co.uk