Print Specifications Checklist

Copy this form and use it to check that you have provided everything your printer needs.

General Information

❏ Job name

❏ Total number of pages

❏ Quantity

❏ Final trim size

❏ Flat size (if applicable)

❏ Bleeds - yes or no

Stock

❏ Grade name (text or cover)

❏ Paper finish(es) (gloss, silk, uncoated)

❏ Paper weight(s)

❏ Paper color

Inks

❏ Process, Pantone or special inks

❏ Type of varnish or aqueous coating

❏ Spot or overall coverage

❏ Double hits (if applicable)

❏ Drytraps (if applicable)

Files Furnished

❏ Digital files (native packaged or print-ready PDF)

❏ Software application(s)

Proofs Required

❏ Hardcopy proofs

❏ Processed PDFs

Bindery/Finishing

❏ Type of bindery (if applicable)

❏ Number of Folds (if applicable)

❏ List any offline processes (if applicable)

❏ Packing/Shipping

❏ Quantity per carton

❏ Shrinkwrap (if required)

❏ Shipping instructions

Schedule

❏ Delivery date(s)

File Prep Checklist

Copy this form and use it to check that your files match your print specifications and are ready for production.

❏ Page trim size

❏ Total number of pages

❏ Bleed at 1/8th-inch (if applicable)

❏ Panel sizes for folding (1/8th-inch less for each fold-in panel, cumulatively)

❏ Pages back up properly (horizontally and vertically, panel sizes correct for each side)

❏ Inks in use (use "separation preview")

❏ Ink separations are consistent (colors that "look" the same on-screen are actually assigned consistently)

❏ Links (no missing links)

❏ Resolution of raster-images at least 150 ppi

❏ Fonts (no missing fonts)

❏ Line weight (nothing under .25 points)

❏ Color profiles (all images have embedded profiles; InDesign file is set to Gracol)

❏ Varnishes or Dielines on separate layer(s)

❏ Packaged native file(s) with PDF for reference, OR Print-Ready PDF(s) made to PDF X4:2008 standard with bleed

Special Printing Setup Information

Keep this for use when creating files for these types of jobs

Folding panels.
Be sure that each fold-in panel (not outside front and outside back panels) are 1/8th-inch smaller than the final fold size, cummulatively; and that the outside and inside pages of the piece have the panel sizes correct. The outside will have the largest panels on the right, the inside will have the largest panels on the left.

Pocket folders.
If possible, get or create a dieline file on a separate layer, and create the pocketfolder file so that it is open, as it would be before it is cut, folded and glued.

Perfect-bound books that have bleed.
Set up as non-facing pages with bleed all around. Know that the inside cover and the first and last pages of text will be glued together at the spine approximately 1/4-inch.

Calendars.
Be sure that each page is the actual trim size, not two pages together on one page such as a picture on top and the days on the bottom of one page; these should always be separate pages. Pages can be setup as facing-pages spreads, then rotate the spread view for layout purposes.

Postcards.
Be sure to show clearly how the front and back sides of the card back up. When front side is vertical and back side is horizontal the cards can back up either way.

Dielines, spot varnishes, embossing and foil stamping.
Be sure that these are created completely on a separate layer, and that the ink color is defined as a spot color.

Large areas of black on process-color jobs.
Set up as a build of 60% Cyan, 40% Magenta, 40% Yellow and 100% black. Use "Separation Preview" to check consistency before sending file for final production.

Combination-color jobs with multiple pages.
Contact your printer for assistance to determine best use of color for cost.

Digital printing and flat color.
If possible, avoid gradients and use a pattern on top of large areas of flat color.

Top 10 File Prep Mistakes

Keep this as a reminder to avoid these common file prep pitfalls.

1. No bleed.
Files without bleed cannot be put into production. Be sure that your InDesign or Illustrator file is setup to have 1/8th-inch bleed all around every page. Then if creating print-ready PDFs, be sure to include bleed.

2. Colors required by file do not match print specs.
When processed files result in more or different colors than specified for printing, production halts until your printer knows what you want and the files are corrected. Check this in advance using "separations preview" in either InDesign or Illustrator before creating final files. WATCH for black that is not really just black. This happens frequently when importing text from Word. A color "auto" appears that is RGB black and separates to percentages of CMYK. What appears to be 100% black on screen will not reproduce correctly without intervention.

3. Trim size does not match print specs.
For instance, a 6 x 9 postcard setup on an 8.5 x 11 page will produce an 8.5 x 11 page unless the file is altered. This halts production and frequently causes questions or mistakes. Never set up more than one item on a page, as in four postcards on an 8.5 x 11 sheet; your printer has special software that uses single pages to create press forms for the best cost savings for you which is specific to your job.

4. Images are low resolution.
Use InDesign's preflight to catch this common mistake. Avoid graphics snatched from the web.

5. Font problems.
Use InDesign's preflight to catch this other, very common, mistake. Fonts can be missing, and sometimes unlicensed which occurs frequently with "free" fonts found on the web. Some fonts cannot be embedded in print-ready PDFs.

6. Missing profiles on RGB links.
The safest work practice for images is to convert them to CMYK (Gracol) color space, but RGB can be used for production files if they include a color profile. But RGB images that do not include a color profile do not have the color information necessary to convert them to CMYK in any predictable manner, so what you see may not be what you get.

7. Folding panels are the wrong size or front does not match back.
Be sure to plan panel sizes correctly for folding jobs. Make a dummy from your file printout and fold it up and check with your printer if you are unsure of how to determine panel sizes.

8. Failure to use preflight tools.
Get in the habit of having this open when you are creating files. It is "live" and will warn you of possible production problems. It can catch as many things as you want to flag, including overset type, possible bleed problems, and common production problems.

9. Unmarked revisions.
Never send a production file that doesn't match the reference PDF or laserprint. This causes doubt during production and halts the process. Be sure all items reflect the latest files. If there are changes required after proofing, BE SURE your printer knows which pages are affected and clearly knows what the changes are.

10. Messy files.
Be sure your files are nice and neat. If text and graphics are in the pasteboard area, all those resources are requested when the files are opened at the printer's location. This causes alerts about missing graphics that aren't included in the packaged files and halts production to delete these elements wherever they occur before continuing with production. When extra unused colors are still in the swatches palette there can be doubt about color usage and usually means that ink usage hasn't been checked. (See #2)