

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  

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PRINTING AND MAILING SERVICES

## Prepress tips and checklist for electronic files

### Document setup

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read your manual. Know your software's limitations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Before you start a project, discuss it with your customer service representative. Ask about mail regulations and paper sizes and weights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use a page-layout program such as Adobe InDesign. Word processing programs such as Microsoft Word often cause problems with line breaks, page breaks, page cropping, and scanning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the "styles" window in your software to save time, reduce errors, and provide consistency in type.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Standardize the software's default settings for page size, margins, fonts, color, and line weights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do not change linked files' names after importing them into a document.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the maximum zoom and numeric coordinates in the control palette to position page elements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Draw crop marks or check the box for crop marks (also termed "printer's marks") in "print options."
- \_\_\_\_\_ Add 1/8-inch coverage outside the trim area for bleeds.

### Folds

- \_\_\_\_\_ Subtract 1/16 inch from the width of each panel after the first one if the piece has multiple folds. An 8 1/2 x 11-inch letterfold, for example, should have the following panel widths: 3 11/16, 3 11/16, and 3 5/8 inches.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recenter columns to accommodate the different panel widths, if necessary.

### Text

- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the tab key, not the space bar, to align type.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reversed type should be at least 10-point.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Type used within a photo retouching program may appear fuzzy around the edges.

### Fonts

- \_\_\_\_\_ Apply a style such as bold or italic by selecting it from the font menu. For example, Optima is the typeface in this document. When it needs to be bold, Optima Bold is selected. Making it appear bold by using the "type styles" window can cause problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Specify whether you have used PostScript or TrueType fonts. Use one or the other, but never both, for a given font. If you have both PostScript and TrueType versions of the same font on your system, remove one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide a copy of every font you use in your document, including dingbats and graphics fonts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide both screen and printer versions of each font when using Adobe PostScript fonts. (TrueType fonts combine the screen and printer functions, so there is just one version of each font to provide with these.)

### Scans

- \_\_\_\_\_ Use these formulas to determine scanning resolution for items to be printed on an offset press.  
**Halftones and process color**, usually 300 dpi:  
dpi = (2 x line screen) x percent enlargement or reduction  
**Line art**, usually 1200 dpi:  
dpi = 1000-1200 dpi x percent enlargement or reduction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Scan at 200 to 300 dpi for color copies and large-format poster output.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Save images in TIFF format for continuous tone, or bitmapped, images and EPS for line art.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Crop images in a scanning program or Photoshop before importing them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the cropping tool, not the arrow tool, to crop images.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Replace low-resolution scans with high-resolution scans, or mark the images on the proofs as "FPO" and give us the original to scan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Link scanned images instead of embedding them. When you place an image in InDesign, you'll be asked whether to include a complete copy. Answer "no" to link the graphic without embedding it.

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### Graphics and visual images

- \_\_\_\_\_ Rules should be at least a half-point in size or thicker—no hairlines.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Convert text to outlines or paths if it is to be exported from an illustration program, such as Adobe Illustrator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Scale, crop, and rotate images in the original graphics application, not in the page layout program. Use the page layout tools for minor adjustments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep clipping paths as simple as possible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Minimize nesting (the importing or placement of one file into another) to two layers, at most.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Save images in EPS format for line or vector graphics and TIFF format for continuous tone or bitmapped images.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Delete unused elements, such as discarded text, from the pasteboard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Look under the “links” menu item in your page-layout program to verify that graphic files are updated and linked. Use it as a checklist of files to give us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A color applied in Freehand or Photoshop imports into page layout programs as a PostScript ink; select that PostScript ink color in your page layout program to match the graphic.

### Color

- \_\_\_\_\_ Designate each color you have selected as either spot or process color.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use a color reference such as the Pantone swatchbook, not your monitor, to determine or evaluate color selections. The color on the monitor is likely not the same as the color that will print.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Convert scanned images from RGB to CMYK before importing them to the page-layout program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If a color touches another color, the prepress software will “trap” the file. Zoom to 200 percent or more to ensure exact placement of elements. Make rules to be trapped at least one-point thick.

### Finishing

- \_\_\_\_\_ Delete extra pages and clutter on the pasteboard, such as unused type, boxes, and art.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Delete unused colors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select the correct “Print Document” information. This includes type of printer, number of copies, number of pages, paper size, scale, orientation, graphics, markings, and PostScript and color information.

### What to send Printing Services

- \_\_\_\_\_ A high-quality PDF of your document file.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The original file with all fonts used (screen and printer versions of each PostScript font), original graphics and image files, and directory of files you are sending.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Laser proof of the most current version of the file (both composite and separations), at 100-percent size and with images marked “LIVE” or “FPO.”

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