

The TOP 10 TIPS for Printing Effectively

1 DON'T DO YOUR PRINTER ANY "FAVORS".

It is not necessary to create extra crops, impose pages, or set up files in printer spreads. Most printers have imposition software that does this for them automatically. So it might actually take them more time to "fix" your files to make it work with their software. Create your document with the correct size, in reader spreads or single pages, with adequate bleed.

2 AVOID DESIGNING LARGE PUBLICATIONS WITH CRITICAL CROSSOVERS.

Depending on how your publication is bound, your printer may have to make adjustments to your pages to keep things from being cut off. Those adjustments can affect your crossover images. Talk to your printer about how to compensate for those adjustments before you start your design.

3 GET THE DIE-CUT FROM THE PRINTER FIRST.

If you are building a design that will eventually require a die-cut, work with your print supplier in advance to get a mock-up created using the actual stock. Ask them to supply you with the actual die file before finalizing your design. DO NOT alter the supplied die file, place it in InDesign on a separate layer and lock it. No need to concern yourself with defining a perfect bleed around the curves of the die, straight lines extending across the borders is sufficient. Making your bleed fit the exact perimeter of the die may actually cause ghosting on press.

4 USE THE PREFLIGHT FEATURE.

InDesign has a preflight feature built-in to help you locate missing fonts, missing images, low resolution images, RGB colors, transparency, etc. In Adobe CS4, the preflight feature is much more robust allowing for the preflighting of placed graphics as well. With Live Preflight, InDesign monitors your document as you create it instead of just during the post-production process. (Note: If InDesign detects any preflighting issues as you work—for example, if text is overset or you import an RGB graphic—the error is reported in the lower-left corner of the document window. To continually check your work, you can leave the Preflight panel open.) You should create your own set of preflight preferences tailored to your various workflows.

5 USE MASTER PAGES.

Documents that share common components should take advantage of the master page feature, especially for folios or page headers so they end up at the same location on every page.

6 PICK THE RIGHT PAPER FOR YOUR JOB.

Paper can enhance or sabotage your design. Consider the color, weight, grain and texture of the stock when choosing your palettes and supporting art. Scan a paper sample as a visual guide. To do so, place the scanned paper on a layer, then place all your images and text on layer above the paper sample. Set all the images and text to "multiply" to test the effect. Or you can use the scanned paper sample as a background to circumvent the tinted or textured stock altogether. Why is it important to consider grain in your stock choices? Because designs that are printed cross-grain can cause cracking at the fold.

7 USE PROPER EXPORT SETTINGS.

InDesign has built-in PDF export settings, but beware of some of the defaults. You can start with the Press Quality print setting as a base and customize from there based on your job. If your job is printing on an offset press, it may not be necessary to do any file compression, most offset RIPs can handle very large file sizes. If your job is printing on a digital press, some compression is probably necessary. Shannon recommends using the Press Quality defaults in that case.

In the marks and bleeds tab, be sure to include bleed in the export but it's not necessary to include bleed marks, crop marks are sufficient. Crop marks should clear the bleed area, this can be adjusted by entering a measurement equal to or greater than the bleed in the offset area. Registration marks and color bars are not necessary unless your printer request them.

In the case of color management, you generally don't want InDesign to color manage your files. If printing digitally in CMYK, convert all spot colors to process. Some RIPs won't convert them as well as others. These same RIPs may also convert RGB colors on-the-fly with unpredictable results. Do your best to ferret all RGB in advance.

8 CHANGE THE BACKGROUND OF IMAGE BOXES.

If using a colored box as a placeholder for a photo, change it's background to "NONE" or "WHITE" after placing the image. This will help avoid trapping issues in some RIPs and the appearance of halos. (TIP: You can create an object style that uses a fill of "NONE" or "WHITE" to apply this property to multiple image boxes.)

9 AVOID USING PROCESS BUILDS, SCREENS OF A SOLID COLOR, OR METALLIC INK IN TEXT BELOW 18PT OR SO.

This can create a registration challenge. You may not be as pleased with the printed product as you are with the on-screen preview.

10 USE THE TRANSPARENCY FLATTENER TO PREVIEW COMPLEX DESIGNS.

InDesign allows us to build complex graphics and import virtually anything into our documents. Some RIPs handle these busy files better than others. Viewing these regions using the "Flattener Preview - Highlight - All Rasterized Regions" option will show areas where vector images may be interpreted as raster. Bringing the object to front or moving it to a higher layer can help alleviate these issues. Sometimes outlining a font can help as well.

“Creating a relationship with your printer is an important step in the design process.”

— Shannon Cross, Ironwood Litho