



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

PREPARING FILES FOR

PRINTING

IN 4 STEPS



To ensure the artwork you create on screen is reproduced correctly you always need to save your file as a PDF.

What is PDF?

Portable Document Format (PDF) is a file format used to present and exchange documents reliably, independent of software, hardware, or operating system. Invented by Adobe, PDF is now an open standard maintained by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Adobe PDFs preserve all the data in the original file - even when text, graphics, spreadsheets, and more are combined in a single file. PDFs look just the way you intend them to, but this can be a problem as PDFs are not usually editable files.

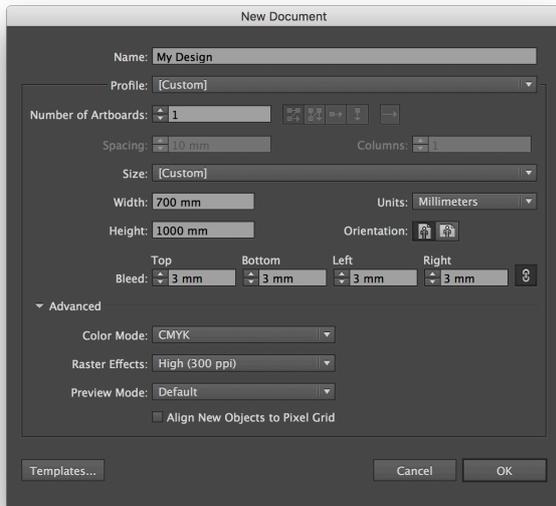
To prevent any potential problems with your file, all you need to do is meet the basic requirements for a PDF.

Don't worry, these standards are easy to implement and won't affect your artwork at all.

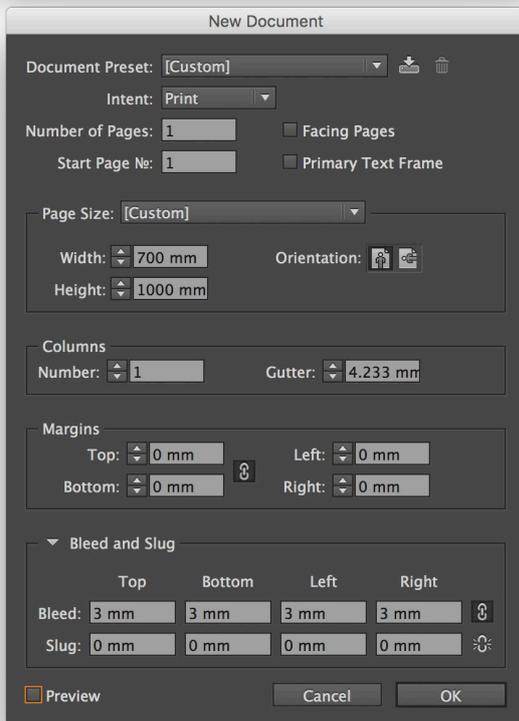
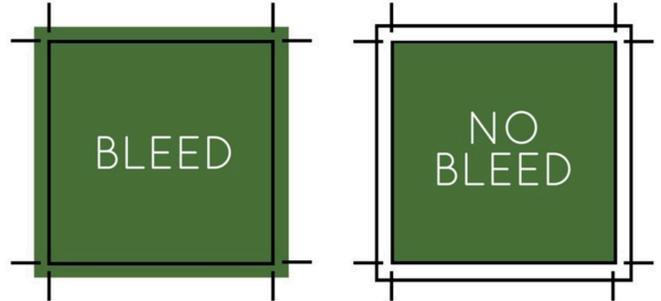


STEP 1

BLEED



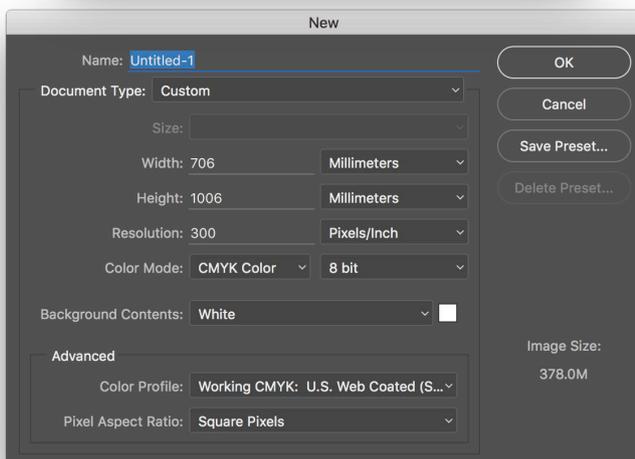
How much bleed?



“Bleed” refers to extending your design beyond the borders of a printed page. Incorporating a bleed allows you to run your design right to the edge of a printed page, so it’s important if your design elements or background color extend to the very edge of your design – the last thing you want is an unexpected white border.

Although generally the bleed amount is set to 3 millimetres or 1/8 of an inch, bleed requirement can be different from one job to another.

- General trim to size:** 3 mm
- Hemmed banner vinyl:** 30 mm
- Hemmed flag knitted:** 15 mm
- Hem & Eyelet flag:** 50 mm



Contact your printer in case of doubt.

STEP 2

COLOUR MODE

CMYK is the Key!

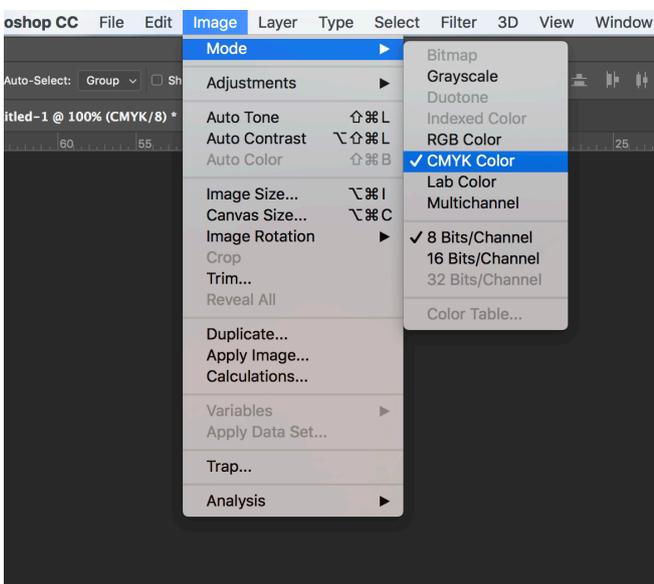
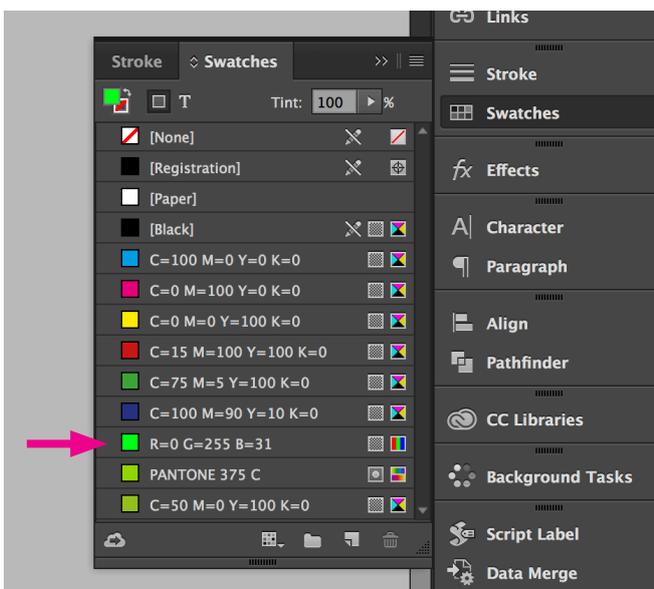
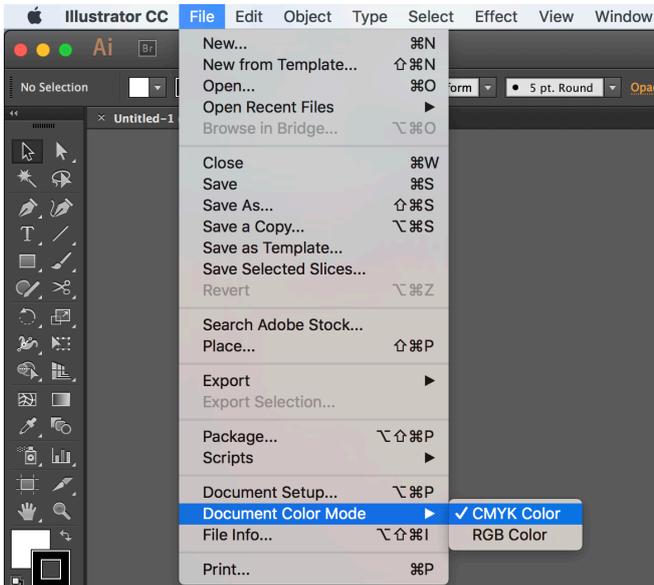
This example shows several CMYK process swatches, one RGB process swatch, and one Pantone Spot swatch. The RGB swatches should be changed to CMYK process swatches.

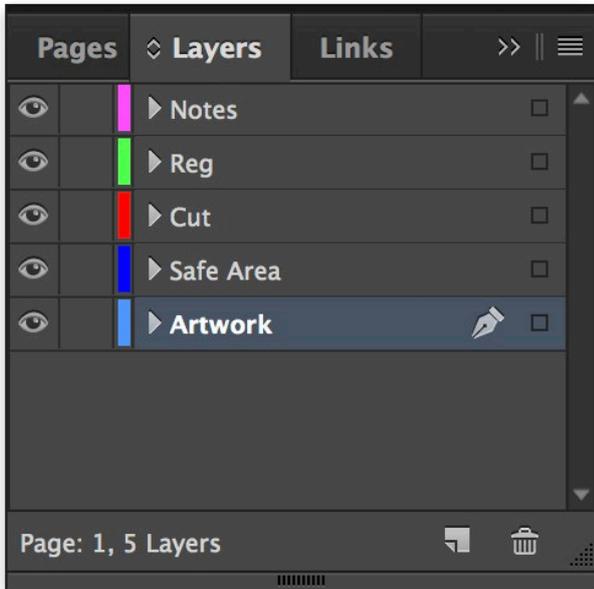
If this job is quoted/estimated to print in only CMYK, then the spot colours should be changed to 4-color process colours.

If this job is to print using just spot Pantone colours, then that is all that should be shown in the swatches palette.

But why?

Computer monitors give off coloured light known as RGB (CMYK is coloured ink). They have a larger colour gamut than printing, which is why a computer can display a million more colours than what can be achieved with printing. Printing deals with absorption and reflection of wavelengths of which we perceive as colour (CMYK). Sometimes you will note that something looked different on screen than it does on paper and it is because of the different colour ranges that computer monitors and printing allows.





Use layers to help your printer

Layers can keep certain parts of a design distinct from others, or provide separations for cut and crease paths.

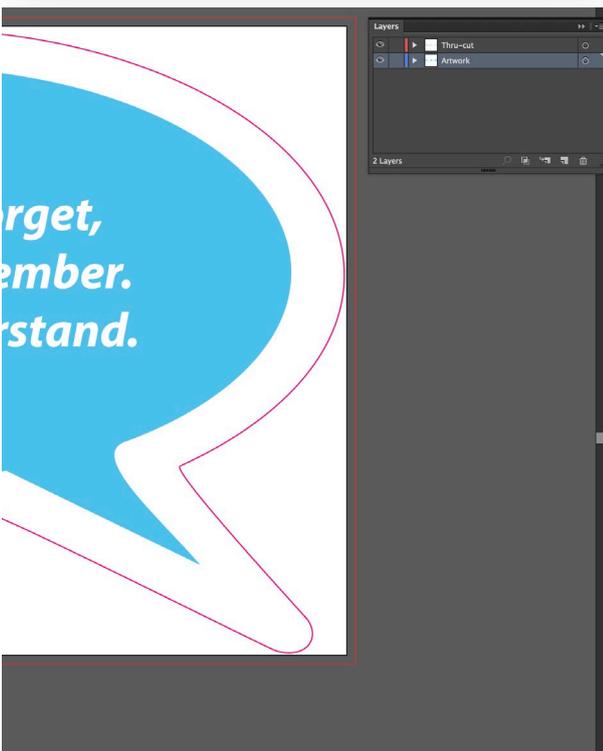
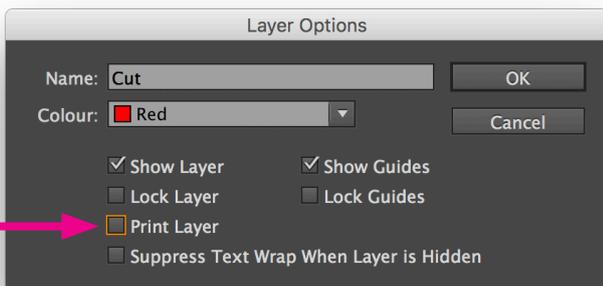
Cutter guides:

For product packaging and bespoke shaped products you will need to create cut and crease lines.

Set up the cut line on one layer and the crease lines on a separate layer, each with a line thickness of 1 point and spot stroke colour named with 'Cut' prefix (i.e. 'Cutter', 'Cut-Crease', 'Cut-Drill'...).

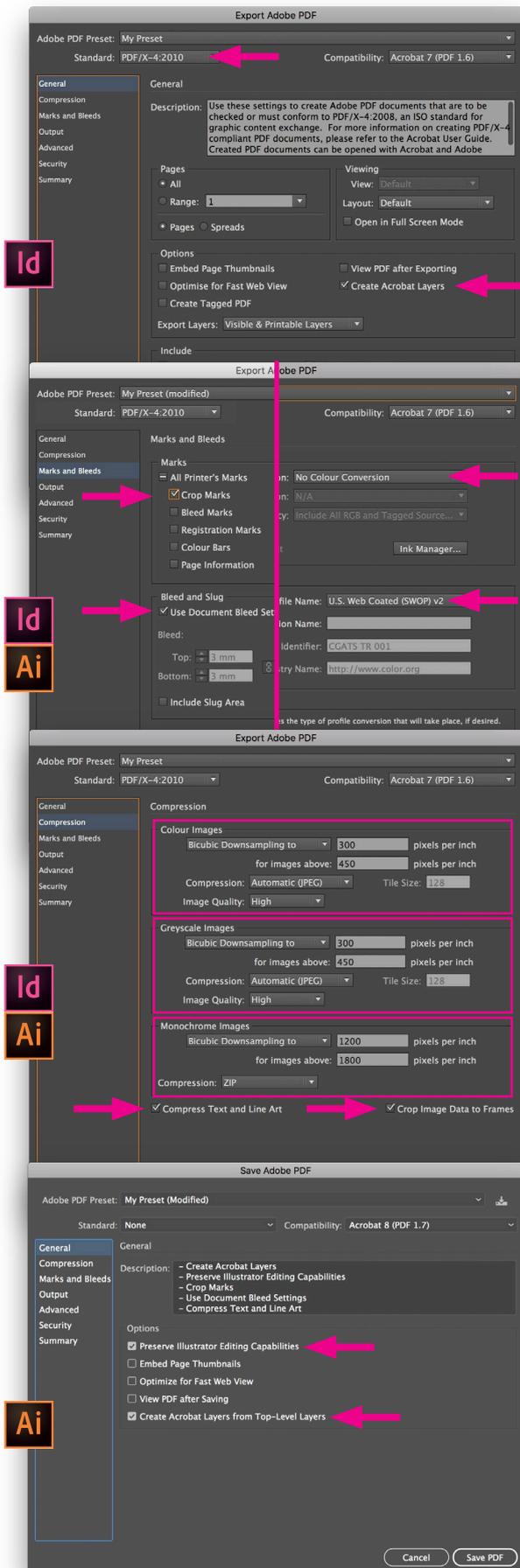
Always save out the PDF with the cut and crease lines visible.

Remember! You'll need to add bleed around your cut guide.



In short, be sure that your artwork is all in a single layer named "Artwork", anything else that your job could need must be in separated layers.

STEP 4 EXPORT/SAVE AS PDF



Great Print-Ready PDFs

Now we have our artwork ready with bleed, in CMYK colour mode and correctly layered, it's time to create a ready-to-print PDF file.

Don't forget to outline all your texts before export to PDF.

You'll find all of the required settings in the screen shots. Here are the key areas to select:

- Create Acrobat Layers
- Preserve Illustrator Editing Cap.
- Standard: PDF/X-4:2010 (ID only)
- Crop Marks (no more!)
- Use Document Bleed Settings
- Compress Text and Line Art
- Crop Image Data to Frames
- Downsampling to 300ppi
- Output Colour Conversion: No
- PDF/X Output Intent Profile Name: **U.S. Web Coated (SWOP) v2** (ID only)

Final Check

Always open and view your PDF before sending it for printing.

You should see the crop marks and bleeds that you set on all of the pages. These will not appear on the final prints, being trimmed off, but are necessary for successful printing.





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