



**Is Your Artwork Ready for**

**PRINT?**

Let's take a look at a few things (in no particular order) your printable file is going to need in order to make it safely through the press into the hands of your happy clients. Please bear in mind that these are just standard rules and you should check with your printer to verify that they are using the same measurements, etc.

## Proper Resolution

When you're designing for web, your images are usually 72 dpi (Dots Per Inch), which is standard for screen resolution. For most print projects, you're going to need more than 4 times that resolution: 300 dpi. If you try and print your files at 72 dpi you will end up with blurry, fuzzy pictures, and you want the highest quality for your clients, right?



One drawback to printing at such a high-resolution is that it can be taxing on your computer, especially for larger documents. Saving, moving layers and adding effects can become cumbersome. When this happens, it's best to split the file you're working on into parts and save them out as separate, smaller files, linked to the larger Photoshop file. A great way to utilize this effectively is through the use of Photoshop's smart objects.

If your design is made up of 100% vector elements, you shouldn't have this problem as long as the file is saved out properly in Illustrator, as a vector EPS, AI, or PDF. Check with your printer to see which file types they can handle.

# Bleed, Trim and Safety Lines

Whenever I'm setting up a file for print, the first thing I do is create three important areas on the document:

**Bleed:** Whenever your artwork extends to the edge of a document, you must set up a bleed area so that when your work is being printed it doesn't get cut-off irregularly at the edges and leave ugly white lines. Therefore, your artwork should extend 1/8" (.125 inches) beyond the live area of your document whenever necessary. This means that if your business card is 2 x 3.5" when it's finished, then your document should be 2.25 x 3.75" when you are designing the piece.

**Trim:** The trim line is simply the line that shows where your document is going to be cut, and is usually 1/8" after the bleed. So if your page is going to be 8.5 x 11" when it's done, the trim line would make an 8.5 x 11" box inside your document.

**Safety:** The safety line is an additional 1/8" inside the trim line. All of your artwork and text should be inside this box to ensure that it is not cut-off when the page is cut.



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## Bleed, Trim and Safety Lines (Cont....)

So why do we need bleed, trim and safety lines? Well, paper is an organic material, meaning it is subject to temperature and moisture. When your printer is running many pages through the press, the paper can expand or contract very slightly and offset the registration of the printer. On most professional machines this offset is minimal, but in my experience it's always better to be safe than sorry!

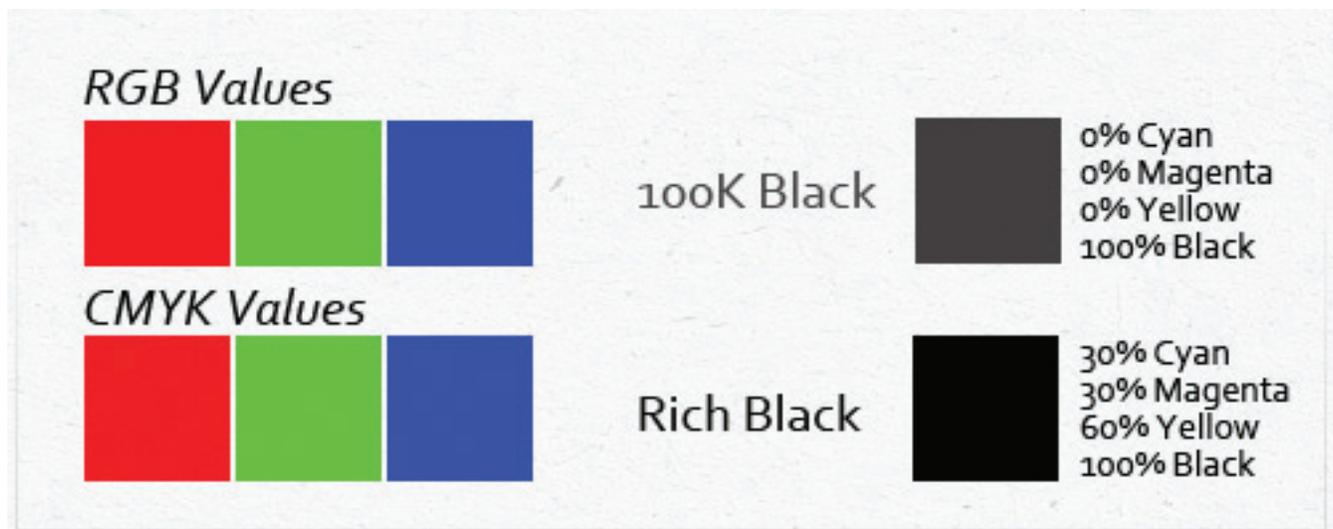
Here's a bonus tip: In Photoshop you can right-click on the rulers when visible to switch between different areas of measurement!

## RGB, CMYK, 100K Black & Rich Black

As a web designer, you're probably used to seeing your work rendered in millions of colours, in gorgeous RGB format.

As a print designer, your work must be created in CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black) format. This is because most printers have Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black inks that they use to reproduce your artwork. If you convert a vivid RGB image to CMYK you can see that a lot of the colours become muted and washed out. CMYK doesn't quite have the same reach in the colour spectrum as RGB.

In CMYK printing, values can be measured in percentages of C, M, Y or K much like RGB values can be measured in amounts of R, G and B.



## RGB, CMYK, 100K Black & Rich Black (Cont....)

To create Rich Black, you can use a mixture of 30% Cyan, 30% Magenta, 60% Yellow and 100% Black. Rich Black is best used for larger areas of black, and not on thin lines or text (text over 34 or 36pt is OK). If you use it on small body text or thin lines, the inks could saturate and blur the artwork.

100K Black is created using, you guessed it, a mixture of 0% Cyan, Magenta and Yellow, with 100% Black. For large areas, 100K Black would just look gray. For small text, it helps keep the text crisp since the printer only has to worry about lining up one colour instead of four.

## Print Formats & Fonts

I have yet to come across a printer that doesn't accept PDF files (vector and raster). That being said, you should be sensitive to the needs of your printer.

Building a good working relationship with your printer is important (especially if they are local). They might not have the same fonts that you do on their machines. Whenever possible, you should create outlines of your text or embed fonts (packaging the fonts with the files also works, make sure you have proper permissions). Not following this step might lead into possible delays or the issue might get missed altogether.

Some printers like it when you give them a low-res JPG reference file to check against when they are setting up your files. It's usually not a bad idea to include one with your print files if your printer allows for it.