

PDF Ad Guidelines

Ad Creation and Preflighting

It is important to make sure that everything is correct in the native application file (page layout file) before proceeding to make a pdf file. When using layout programs that do not incorporate a pre-flight function, we recommend using one of the popular preflight programs such as Flight-Check or Preflight Pro. The following are the important items to check during the file creation and preflight stages:

For full-page ads:

- At least 1/8 inch bleed if the ad contains content that extends to trim edge
- At least 1/4 inch clearance (safe area) from trim to page elements inside trim area

All ads:

- For fractional ads, check that file trim size matches size requested by publisher
- Fonts must not be menu styled (don't use the 'bold' and 'italic' buttons in the measurements palette)
- All images are linked and updated, and none are scaled to more than 120% in layout app
- Effective resolution of cmyk/grayscale/duotone images should be 300 dpi (plus or minus 20%)
- Effective resolution of line-art graphics should be between 1200 and 2400 dpi
- Rgb colors and unintended spot colors should be converted to cmyk; if you leave them to be automatically converted by your page-layout application or your print house, you do so at your own peril
- If you are using Illustrator or InDesign, you should convert fonts to outlines for maximum compatibility
- Avoid very heavy Black - colors in your palette shouldn't exceed 300 in total ink density (sum total of c, m, y, k values)

Generating PDF's

If you are using InDesign, Illustrator, or QuarkXpress 7 to create your files, you can export pdf files directly from the application. We recommend that users of older versions of Quark create PDF files by writing a postscript file and distill them using Adobe Acrobat Distiller. Acrobat Distiller comes with the Adobe Acrobat Standard and Adobe Acrobat Professional applications (but not Acrobat Reader).

If your PDF-creation software gives you control over formatting options, follow these guidelines when writing PDF files:

- set registration marks (and bleed amounts if necessary) for full-page ads
- embed high-resolution images and fonts (do not 'subset' fonts)
- set file resolution to 2400 dpi, and do not downsample images lower than 300 dpi
- If your software gives you a 'color management' option, select 'off' or 'leave unchanged'
- Use compatibility setting 'Adobe 4.0 (pdf 1.3)'

NOTE: If your PDF software has a setting for creating 'PDF/X compliant' files, that setting should be used.

(more on page 2)

Do not crop in acrobat

The crop function in Acrobat alters the page formatting, which can create problems if the file is intended for high-quality printing. When creating fractional ads in your page layout application, set your document size equal to (or a bit larger than) the ad dimensions specified by the publisher.

PDF file Preflight

We recommend performing a 'preflight' on your files. If you have Acrobat Professional 6 or 7, you can use the built-in Preflight function to check for missing fonts, low resolution images, file corruption, etc. (ask your publisher for a settings profile that will check for these problems). If you don't own acrobat Pro, there are utilities available (such as Apago pdf/x) that will check pdf files.

Contract Proof

SWOP certified proofs should be provided for all ads. A contract proof should be at least 1200 dpi and continuous tone. Low resolution laser or Inkjet are useful for checking content and color breaks, but are not considered contract proofs.

Visually check your final PDF

Lastly, ALWAYS open your final pdf and check it visually for quality problems and missing elements. When viewing pdf files in Acrobat 6 & 7, you should turn on 'Overprint Preview' (under the 'Advanced' menu).

Color and Ink usage - Design Recommendations

Knockout type

Reverse type and line art should not be less than .007" (1/2 point rule) at the thinnest part of a character or rule. Small type and fine serifs should not be used for reverse type. In practice, this translates to roughly 10 pt for the average sans-serif bold type; sizing up when necessary for other font styles and unusual fonts based on the nature of the font.

Total Area Coverage (TAC)

Avoid very heavy 4/c black - colors in your palette shouldn't exceed 300 in total ink density (sum total of c, m, y, k values) to minimize ink drying problems. Images with large areas of 4/c black should be checked as well. This can be checked using the Separation Preview or Output Preview in recent versions of Acrobat Professional. All corrections should be made in the original document or placed files rather than in the final PDF.

Minimum Printable Dot (Minimum Tone Value)

Special care should be taken with fadeaway edges where the fadeaway is made up of more than one color. In many cases, fadeaway shadows are best reproduced in black only. Although developments in digital plating and engraving technologies have improved tone reproduction control in the extreme highlights (less than a 5% dot), designers should still be cautious in placing critical image components in this tonal range.