

# Things to Consider When Designing Your Own Print Job

Talk to the printer BEFORE you begin. This will prevent making adjustments later.

1. **Make sure the program you are using is compatible with the printer's.** (InDesign, PageMaker, Illustrator, etc.) The Version of the program is also important. For example, if your printer has PageMaker 6 and your document was done in PageMaker 6.5, the printer will not be able to open your file. You will have to save it down to PageMaker 6 format.
2. **Does the printer have PC or Mac based system?** This is important to ensure compatibility.
3. **How will you get your files to the printer?** Zip, CD, JumpDrive/Flash Drive, Email?
4. **What size is your document going to be?** If you are working on a limited budget, it may be important to know the maximum paper size a press can run so you can plan your document size accordingly. It is better to know ahead of time that you could have saved money if you had made your document 1/2 in. smaller so it could have run on a smaller press. You may also be able save money by running multiple copies on a larger press. Another way to save money is to make sure that your document will be a good cut of paper. A bad cut of paper creates waste. You will be paying for that waste. A good cut of paper generates little to no waste.
5. **Does your document bleed?** If it does, make sure you design your document with the bleed. Be aware of the edge of your page so part of an image or text doesn't get chopped off with the bleed.
6. **Embedded vs Linked Graphics and Photos** - It is not necessary to embed your graphics/photos in the publication. Linked graphics/photos are generally preferred. Embedding the graphics only creates a large file. Just make sure to send the printer all graphic files with your document.
7. **Image Resolution** - Find out from the printer the resolution your graphics need to be. Not all images require the same resolution. Four-color process, gray scale, and bitmapped images may all require a different resolution for print quality.
10. **Color Considerations** - Will it be 4 color process or spot colors? A 4 color process job is one that is in full color. Any job with only a few colors, say red, gold and black, is a spot color job. If you only have a 2 or 3 color job, 4 color process is not necessary. The fewer colors you use, the less expensive it is, so take a moment to consider if your job really needs the number of colors you've selected or if you can eliminate a few.
11. **PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! HAVE SOMEONE ELSE PROOFREAD FOR YOU!**  
If your printer must make a lot of corrections on your job because of multiple errors, it will cost you in both time and money. To avoid this, carefully proofread your own materials and have someone else look at them. Also make sure everything is the color you expect it to be. Print out separations if necessary. If your job will be 4 color process, make sure all your colors have been changed to process. If you're not doing 4 color process, make sure they are spot colors. Eliminate any unused colors to ensure that you have not accidentally left something a color that you don't want in your publication. If you have questions about your colors, don't hesitate to ask your printer.
12. **Make yourself a dummy.** Does it fold properly? Are the margins correct? If you are making a tri-fold brochure, the margins between the columns must be 2x that of the outside margin in order for everything to be centered in the columns. Is it the right size? If you are making a CD case insert, cut it to size. Does it fit?
13. **Timing is everything** - find out when you need to have everything to the printer so you can still meet your deadline. It is always a good idea to allow time for changes that may need to be made after it gets to the printer.
14. **Now that you're done, what do you send to the printer?**
  - Document in its digital form
  - Original Graphics (one not copied or inserted into another document such as Word)
  - Photos (one not copied or inserted into another document such as Word)
  - Fonts
  - Paper copy with colors clearly marked
  - Information about quantity, ink colors, paper stock and any other special requirements needed (fold, perforate, number, die cut, binding, pad, labeling)