

THE ULTIMATE PDF-GUIDE

THE PERFECT PRINT PRODUCT



AVOID THE TYPICAL FILE SETUP MISTAKES

Did you know that 90 % of print file errors happen in the same places?
This guide helps you spot and avoid the most common ones.

THE SIX DESIGN TIPS

Place the order / Correct colours / Correct file type / Correct resolution / Room for bleed / Overprint and output

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TEMPLATES

Most print providers offer templates

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DOCUMENT SETUP

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PREMIUM PRINT FILES

Guide for premium print / Overprint / Overlap / Small elements / Misregistration / Negative effect

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CHECKLIST BEFORE UPLOAD

Six checks and you're ready

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FREE FILE CHECK

We are ready to guide you!

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THE SIX DESIGN TIPS

1. PLACE THE ORDER CORRECTLY

Remember to include all order details when placing your order.

Typical order details:

- ★ Product (which printed item you want)
- ★ Quantity (how many you need)
- ★ Your phone number – preferably mobile
- ★ Delivery address
- ★ Billing address



Order online and avoid problems

When you order through the website, you make sure all relevant information is included.

2. USE THE CORRECT COLOURS

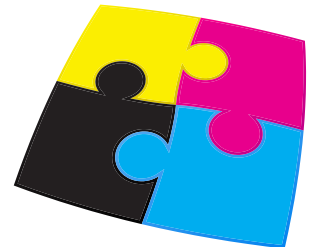
With the exception of certain products printed with Pantone colours, your print products are produced using the four CMYK colours.

Remember to supply your print file in CMYK

Most graphic design programs allow you to work in CMYK colours instead of RGB.

How to define black

If you need to define black for solid areas using CMYK, the best result is achieved with: C=60 M=40 Y=40 K=100. Black text and line drawings should, however, be defined as: C=0 M=0 Y=0 K=100



Pantone colours

As mentioned, some products are printed with Pantone, which are spot colours that cannot be created using the CMYK scale. It is important that the Pantone colour is set up as a spot colour in, for example, InDesign.

3. USE THE CORRECT FILE TYPE

You get the best results when using PDF format with all fonts embedded in the file.



OTHER POPULAR FILE TYPES



TIF/JPG

Almost all graphic programs allow you to save in TIF and JPG image formats. Save the file in maximum quality, in CMYK colours, and at a minimum of 300 ppi. If your print product contains text, we recommend at least 600 ppi for optimal sharpness.



EPS

A popular vector format that typically gives better results than TIF/JPG. Remember to convert all fonts to curves (vectorised/outlined). Fonts may also be embedded in the file.



InDesign, Photoshop and Quark

Export to PDF format. Alternatively, export to EPS, open the EPS file in Illustrator, convert all fonts to outlines, and save as EPS/PDF.



Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher)

Print to PDF format (requires Adobe Acrobat or a free PDF writer).

Please note that Microsoft Office formats are not intended for graphic production, and we do not accept responsibility for colours in the final printed product.

Free PDF generator:

If you have trouble generating PDF files, you can download a free PDF writer from sites such as www.cutePDF.com.

4. USE THE CORRECT RESOLUTION (PPI)

By using the correct dpi, you avoid a grainy or blurry print result. As a general rule, print files should be supplied at 300 ppi. We do not recommend creating text as bitmap.

DPI or PPI?

Although the terms DPI (dots per inch) and PPI (pixels per inch) both describe image resolution or sharpness, they are not the same.

PPI describes the number of pixels displayed per inch on a screen.

DPI is used in print and describes the number of physical ink dots on a printed product.



- ★ **Images viewed at reading distance**, for example a brochure (10–50 cm): minimum 150 ppi–300 ppi for the best result
- ★ **Images viewed at standing distance**, for example posters and roll-ups (more than 50 cm): minimum 60 ppi, preferably 100 ppi
- ★ **Images for banners** viewed from several metres away: 5–50 ppi, depending on whether the viewing distance is 5 or 20 metres.

5 ppi may sound very low, but it means each pixel is 0.5 x 0.5 cm. At 20 metres, such a small dot is not visible, which is why 5 ppi can work just fine.

5. REMEMBER BLEED

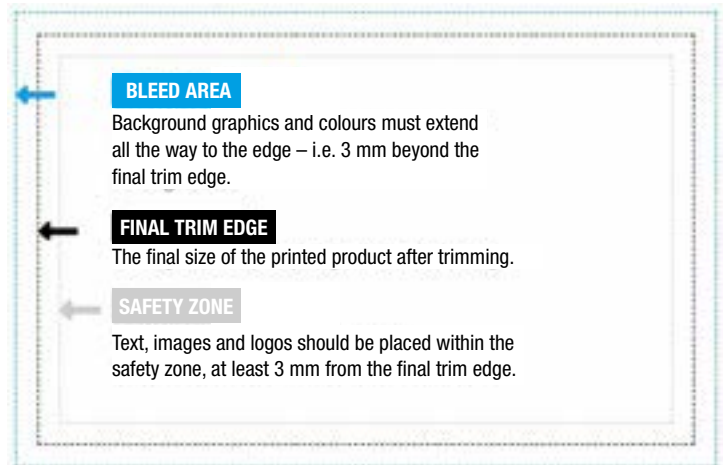
This is the most important advice, as many mistakes happen here.

Add 3 mm bleed to the layout

Most importantly, remember to add 3 mm on all sides of the print product, also called bleed.

Text and graphic elements should have a safety margin of at least 3 mm from the final trim edge of the product.

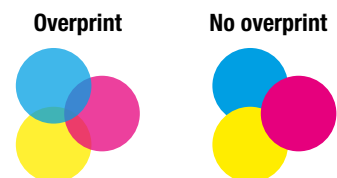
See more trimming tips under [document setup](#).



6. OVERPRINT AND OUTPUT

Avoid unpleasant surprises where elements disappear.

InDesign, Illustrator and Acrobat can be set to always display overprint. This helps you spot any problems with the colour layers in your layout.



Overprint in InDesign and Illustrator

Turn on Overprint Preview in InDesign so the layout simulates the final print result:

InDesign > View > Overprint Preview

Overprint in Acrobat Pro

Check for errors in the print-ready PDF. We always recommend turning on overprint preview:

Edit > Preferences > Page Display > Page Content and Information > Use Overprint Preview > Always

Output Preview in Acrobat

You can also use Output Preview as a tool. Turn on Simulate Overprint in Acrobat:

View > Tools > Print Production > Output Preview > Simulate overprinting.

TEMPLATES

Most print providers offer templates for designing print products. Templates typically include guidance on bleed, safety zones, document size, and more.

Contact your advisor if you want a template for a standard print product.

DOCUMENT SETUP

This is how to set up your file if you do not want to use templates.

1. Start a new document

This may also be called “new page”, “new canvas” or “new artboard”.

2. Document setup – InDesign

Set the document size to the final format of the print product, for example business cards (85 x 54 mm).

3. Add 3 mm bleed and 3 mm safety zone

This is done in the New Document menu under bleed and margins.

4. Document setup – other programmes.

Set the document size 3 mm larger on all four sides than the final size of the printed product. This is called adding bleed.

Example of adding 3 mm bleed:

Print product	Final size	Document size
Businesscard	85 x 54 mm	91 x 60 mm
A6-postcard	105 x 148 mm	111 x 154 mm
A5-flyer	148 x 210 mm	154 x 216 mm

THE THREE TRIMMING TIPS

Follow these three tips, and you will avoid most trimming errors.

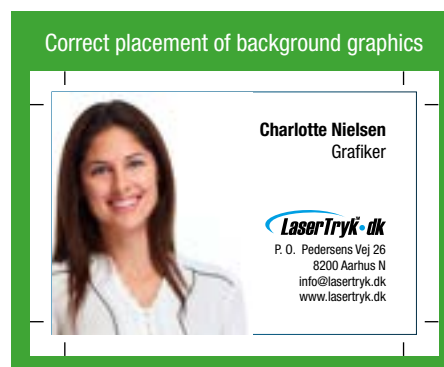
TIP 1

Set up your layout in the correct size from the start.

Final size:	Layout-size (working area):
A0-size (841 x 1189 mm)	847 x 1195 mm
A1-size (594 x 841 mm)	600 x 847 mm
A2-size (420 x 594 mm)	426 x 600 mm
A3-size (297 x 420 mm)	303 x 426 mm
A4-size (210 x 297 mm)	216 x 303 mm
A5-size (148 x 210 mm)	154 x 216 mm
A6-size (105 x 148 mm)	111 x 154 mm
A7-size (74 x 105 mm)	80 x 111 mm
Business card (54 x 85 mm)	60 x 91 mm

TIP 2

Graphics that should go to the edge must cover the entire layout area (including bleed).



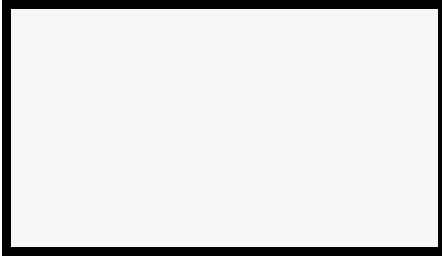
TIP 3

Do not place text too close to the edge.



WHY BORDERS AND TEXT NEAR THE EDGE ARE NOT RECOMMENDED

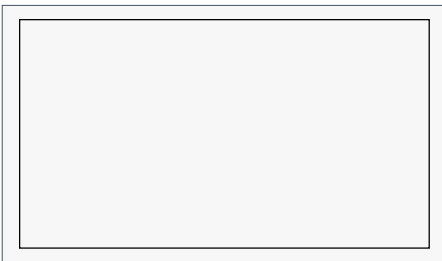
See how a trim variation of just 1 mm affects a layout that is “theoretically” correct. If trimming could be more precise than ± 1 mm, 3 mm bleed would not be necessary — but it is.



Theory: The border should be 2 mm wide all the way around.



In practice: The border may end up being 1 mm on one side and 3 mm on the other.



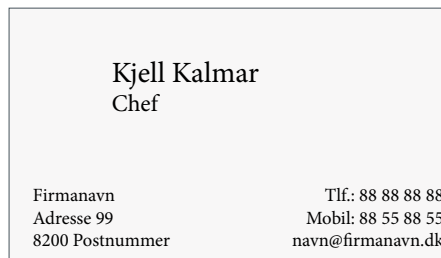
Theory: The border should be placed 3 mm from the edge all the way around.



In practice: The border may end up being 2 mm from the edge on one side and 4 mm on the other.



Theory: Right- and left-aligned text should be placed 3 mm from the edge.



In practice: The text may end up being 2 mm or 4 mm from the edge.

PREMIUM PRINT FILES

This type of print product places specific requirements on your print files.

Choose between:

- ★ Gold foil
- ★ Silver foil
- ★ 3D varnish

Each effect used must be defined in the print file as a unique spot colour. The specific colours used for the different effects are not important, but a strong contrast to the main print file is an advantage.

Partial varnish should be named “VARNISH”, silver foil “SILVER”, and gold foil “GOLD” — always in uppercase.



OVERPRINT

Overprint must always be applied to the partial effect elements, regardless of whether there is print colour beneath the effect.



OVERLAP

Effects that overlap must knock each other out, so multiple layers are not applied on top of one another. This is because varnish is used that adheres to the foil, and overlapping layers therefore become too thick. Fig. A1 on the left shows the three variants in the final file. Fig. A2 shows the elements separated.

Fig. A1



Fig. A2



● VARNISH

● SILVER

● GOLD

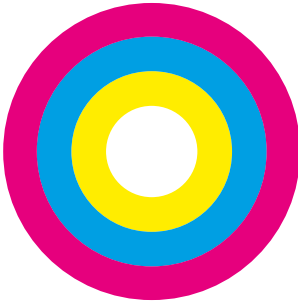
SMALL ELEMENTS

Please note that partial varnish and foil work best when elements are placed at least 3 mm apart, from the edge and/or from a fold. We do not recommend font sizes below 12 pt.

MISREGISTRATION

Since each effect is applied to the print sheet in a separate production step, misregistration may occur on elements with low tolerance. (Fig. B1). Always take this into account in your design. Fig. B2 shows a shift of just 0.3 mm can be visible.

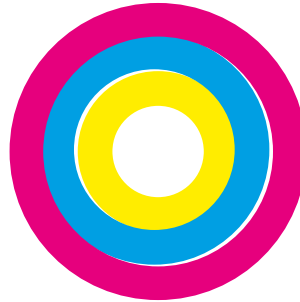
Fig. B1



● VARNISH

● SILVER

Fig. B2



● GOLD

NEGATIVE EFFECT

If you want a negative foil effect, elements – such as the text shown on the right (Fig. C1) – must be created with sufficient tolerance. The foil overlaps the underlying graphics while also accounting for possible misregistration. Fig. C1 is made using a white background box (Fig. C2). The same result can also be achieved using a stroke (Fig. C3).

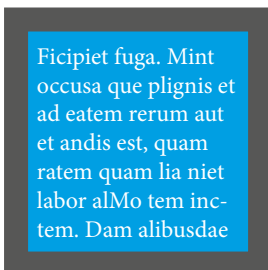


Fig. C1

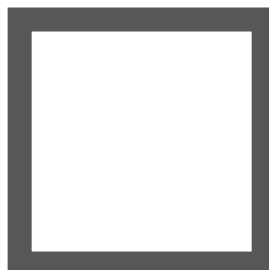


Fig. C2



Fig. C3

COLOUR PROFILES

- ★ For coated paper, such as Silk, FOGRA39 is recommended.
- ★ For uncoated paper, such as offset, FOGRA47 is recommended.

FILE EXPORT

We recommend installing the print provider's export settings if you design your print product in Adobe software such as InDesign, Illustrator or Photoshop.

HOW IT WORKS

1. Download the ZIP file and extract it
2. Double-click the file
3. The export setting is now installed and available in your InDesign menu

Contact your advisor to receive the export settings.

THE BENEFITS OF EXPORT SETTINGS

When you use the print provider's export settings, the following should be under control:

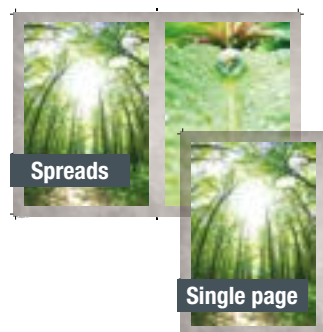
- Transparency issues
- Bleed issues
- Missing fonts
- Unnecessarily high resolution

Always ask your print provider for their export settings.

CORRECT EXPORT – SINGLE PAGES OR SPREADS

When exporting your print file from InDesign, you can choose whether to export pages as single pages or spreads.

- ★ Most print products should be exported as single pages in one PDF document and in the correct order.
- ★ Covers and folded products should be exported as spreads in one PDF document, with the pages correctly assembled.
Remember to include a spine if you are producing a perfect bound book.



CHECKLIST BEFORE UPLOAD

Correct bleed

I have added correct bleed, and my print file is therefore 3 mm larger on all edges than the final printed product.

Correct safety zone

I have placed text, graphics and logos within the safety zone, at least 3 mm from the edge of the print product.

Correct resolution

All images in my print file have a resolution of at least 300 dpi when placed at 100% in the document.

A quick tip: if you are unsure whether the resolution is good enough, zoom your screen view to 200–300%.

If it still looks sharp and not pixelated, it will usually also print well.

Correct colours

My print file is created in CMYK.

If I have inserted images or other elements in RGB or Pantone colours, I let the print provider convert them to CMYK for the best possible result.

I understand that colours may change during conversion.

Correct PDF with embedded fonts

All fonts were embedded when I exported my PDF file.

No spreads in multi-page print products

My PDF file contains the pages in sequence. A 24-page booklet therefore requires a PDF with 24 pages.

Do not submit PDF files with facing pages set up as spreads.

FREE FILE CHECK

Most print providers offer a free, non-binding check of your print files.

Typical checks include:

- ★ Correct bleed
- ★ Correct resolution (dpi)
- ★ Format/file type
- ★ Correct colours

Ask your advisor which errors or issues are included in the file check.

