



File Preparation Guidelines

*Getting professional quality printed
results from your digital files.*


Uptown Press
2903 Grindon Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21214
800-896-8023
410-254-2294
410-254-2395

Pre-Flight

When we receive all the components of your job, we immediately put the job into our Preflight Department and review your project for potential problems. We try to catch problems before your job actually enters the workflow. This can translate to substantial savings for both you and us.

We use the form shown below and would encourage you to use it as a reference when assembling the components of your job for shipment to us.

Any missing or unusable elements are detailed and you are then contacted by your Uptown Press representative. If anything in your file requires an alteration that might be more efficiently or cost effectively performed by us, we give an estimate of the time required to perform the alteration so that you and your Uptown Press representative can determine the best course of action.



Digital File Check-In Form

Date Received _____

Customer _____

Sales Rep _____

Checked by _____

Chargeable Time _____

	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Correction Required	Time
Job Components				
1) Customer Checklist sheet filled out?				
2) All transparencies, reflective art, or logos included?				
3) Is file on suitable electronic media?				
4) Files provided in file formats supported by Uptown?				
5) Files provided in software versions supported by Uptown?				
Laser Proofs				
1) Are laserprints supplied?				
2) Do they indicate color breaks?				
3) Are they output as laser separations?				
4) Are they 100% size?				
5) Are they tiled?				
6) Are registration and crop marks indicated?				
7) Is a color proof provided?				
8) Are "FPO" images indicated as such?				
9) Do laser seps indicate properly constructed bleeds?				
10) Is a folding/imposition dummy provided?				
Digital Components				
1) Are all linked graphics files included?				
2) Are original native graphics files also provided?				
3) Any "nested" graphics files?				
4) Do bitmapped elements have correct DPI?				
5) Are graphics reduced, enlarged or rotated in layout program?				
6) Are graphic files in a compatible file format? TIFF, EPS?				
Fonts & Text Components				
1) Are fonts all Adobe fonts? (Other reliable vendor?)				
2) Do any graphics have "nested" fonts?				
3) Have all fonts been provided on customer disk?				
4) If not, does Uptown own the necessary fonts?				
5) Both screen and printer font present?				
6) Has text been "stylized" (bold, outline, italic, or shadow)?				
Color Considerations				
1) Are the colors clearly and correctly defined?				
2) Are any process colors created as RGB?				
3) Are spot colors set to separate properly? (Spot or 4/C)				
4) Does job require any traps?				
5) Has customer applied any traps?				
6) Does Checklist indicate who is responsible for trapping?				

022 4/25/99

Software Compatibility

We support the following Macintosh graphics software —

QuarkXPress, Adobe Pagemaker, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, and Macromedia Freehand.

Although there are other software programs currently utilized in the graphic arts trade, we have chosen to support those programs most widely used. If you have a project prepared in a software program not mentioned here, we can output your file through the use of Postscript files. Please call your representative for more information.

Make sure you indicate software version.

We support only the most current version of the software mentioned above. It is possible that if you are using an older version of a program, we do not have it installed to run your files to film. If you are using an older version of software you should call your representative before sending your files to us. It may be suitable to have us open your older version in our newer version. It should be noted though, that this can result in text reflow.

Windows & DOS Users

We can process non-standard files from the MS-DOS and Windows platform through the use of a Postscript file (also known as a “Postscript Dump”). In order for us to image your files, it may be necessary for you to call our technical support staff to obtain instructions.

Avoid using TrueType fonts.

There are no TrueType Imagesetters. Using TrueType is asking for problems. Be aware that some of the fonts shipped with newer Macs are TrueType — look at the icon to determine the type (see below). Some of the fonts shipped with older Macs (New York, Cairo, etc.) are bitmaps only and will not print reliably either.

Postscript Icon:



TrueType Icon:



If you have TrueType fonts in your file, it may be necessary for you to activate the “Substitute Postscript Fonts” or “Send to Printer as: Adobe Type 1” option to stop the downloading of TrueType fonts into your Postscript file. It should be noted that this may cause your line breaks to change. Solution: Use only Postscript Type 1 fonts — preferably Adobe.

Avoid using compression software if possible.

The use of compression slows down the processing of your files. If your media capacity is large enough, enclose the uncompressed files.

The major exception to this is the use of the Internet. Modem transfers are much faster when compressed. Use DiskDoubler or StuffIt to guarantee that there are no compatibility problems. Place ALL THE FILES into one folder and compress that folder as an "Sea" (self-extracting archive) file.

Laser Proofs

Are laser proofs 100% in size?

If laser proofs are not printed out at 100% it could cause confusion about the actual printed size. Try to print proofs at 100%, tile if necessary and assemble into as tight a "comp" as possible. If you have reduced your proofs, *please indicate the percentage of reduction on the laser print.*

Are the provided laser copies the LATEST AND FINAL version?

Often submitted laser proofs are not the final version which can cause confusion about the full project. Additional phone calls and interruptions may be required due to a lack of information.

Make sure any FPO (for position only) images are marked as such on your printed lasers.

If you have an FPO linked into your document, please mark the image as "FPO ONLY". If we are to scan the high-res image for you, please circle images on your lasers that will be replaced by high-res versions. If you have placed a low-res image and want us to relink to a high-res version you have also provided, please note this on your lasers.

Indicate the number of colors actually needed with laser separations.

By printing out laser separations of your document, you can double check yourself and make it clear to us what color breaks are needed and avoid costly extra film charges. These lasers can be reduced and should have crops and registration marks on them to indicate actual print area. Build bleeds at exactly .125" where necessary.

Fonts & Text Components

Have you provided both screen and printer fonts?

Postscript Fonts have two components, 1) the SCREEN font and 2) the PRINTER font. Each part is necessary to image your file. Although we have an extensive font library, it is impossible to have every font that's been created. So be sure to send both your printer and screen fonts to us with your job. These fonts will only be used on your project and will not be maintained on The Uptown Press computers. Please ask for our font list to see what fonts we have in our library.

Are typefaces Type 1 or Adobe fonts?

To speed processing of your job, send along all of the fonts (both the screen and printer fonts) contained in your document. We have a very large Adobe font library and may have the same fonts used in your file. You can skip sending those fonts if you first verify that we have them.

We do not support TrueType fonts and suggest that you substitute Postscript Type 1 fonts wherever TrueType fonts occur.

Do not rename or renumber fonts.

When you rename your fonts we often get font conflicts as a result. The manufacturer of your fonts has given each font a particular name and it also has a postscript number assigned to it. When you rename or renumber fonts, they may conflict with one or more of our installed fonts.

Do not make custom suitcases containing standard "system fonts."

Most Macintosh operating systems contain a set of standard fonts. These fonts are usually Helvetica, Times, Palatino, Courier, Chicago, Geneva, Monaco, New York and Symbol. When you create custom font suitcases containing these fonts, we are unable to open your suitcase without first unloading fonts from our system folder, or we have to substitute our font.

Do you have fonts in your EPS files?

It's easy to overlook the fonts contained in EPS files. This practice is called "nesting fonts" and can cause problems at film output time. If you do not note the name of these fonts or do not provide them on your disk, these font characters may default to Courier at output time. We would like to suggest that if a font needs to be present in your EPS file, you convert them to outline characters if possible. The letter characters then become a graphic element and do not require the font to be downloaded to the output device.

Have you stylized any fonts?

Most software programs allow you the option of highlighting a word and applying italics, bold, outline or shadow to the type characters. This feature was meant to be used for laser printers only and generally causes problems at film output. If you "bold" an already bold font to get a "heavy" appearance, it will probably default to either the plain bold font or to the dreaded Courier font.

Use **ONLY** the actual font variant listed in the font menu (eg: "Garamond BookCondensedItalic" or "HO FuturaHeavyOblique").

Outline and Shadow "Styles" are not adequate. Outlines need to be created in Illustrator or Freehand (or with a Quark Xtension called "Punch"). Shadows can be created externally in Illustrator or Freehand, or within the page layout program by stacking and offsetting a copy of the type over a duplicate of itself in a different tint.

Graphic Components

Don't rotate large images in your page layout program.

Even though QuarkXPress and Pagemaker allow you to rotate images within their application, it causes an increase in time to image the film, or in some cases, causes the file to “crash”. Please rotate images in their native application. If they are bitmaps, it may be necessary to rotate them in Photoshop, or have the images rescanned to the right rotation.

SPECIAL ADVICE on QuarkXPress frames containing TIFFS.

Please select the box and fill it with a color 0%, EX: Black 0%. If you fill it with NONE, the images in the QuarkXPress window can display a jagged edge and also print very rough.

Are all linked graphic files included?

We need to have the native file and the EPS file for any of the graphics you have placed in your document. Also remember to send any TIFF or other bitmap images that are imbedded in your EPS files. If there is something wrong, our technicians can then open the native files and make corrections without wasting valuable time waiting for a new file.

Have you nested EPS files within EPS files?

This occurs when you have created an EPS file and then “place” other EPS files in your “master” EPS file. The process of nesting files within files causes longer processing times and possible extra plates to come out on film (spot colors designated instead of process) or additional spot colors with slightly different names. Both Freehand and Illustrator allow you to copy and paste elements you want to use in your file from other files. This method creates a single file with all the required elements.

Are line-art, grayscale and 4/C files scanned at appropriate resolution?

Make sure your scans have enough DPI (dots per inch) or PPI (pixels per inch) for the size and linescreen at which they are to be reproduced. Images should be scanned at no more than twice the LPI (lines per inch). If you enlarge them greatly in your page layout program, you may not have enough resolution for them to image without rasterized or stair-stepped edges. Your images should not be scanned at lower resolutions and re-interpolated to a higher resolution. Images can become softer and take on a “blurred” look when this is done.

You may want to discuss with our technical service representative, the total ink density setting to choose in your image editing program. The amount of total ink density you select can have a big effect on press, resulting in undesirable results.

If you provide high resolution scans with your file, Uptown will assume you have approved color prior to our printing the file. If this is not the case and you would like us to color correct your files, let us know this ahead of time. If you want color proofs, we can supply them at an additional charge.

Send only the files necessary to output your job.

Unrelated files take up time and disk space. When we copy your files to our drives, we usually have no idea at that point which documents we need to image your file. Please take the time to remove unnecessary files from the disk you send to us.

Have you saved your photos in the proper file format?

We do not support the DCS-Five File EPS Format generated in Photoshop (it is error prone and often cannot be trapped). The image must be saved as a “composite” TIFF or EPS file (Preferably TIFF).

RGB images **must be converted** to CMYK or spot color separations before they can be printed. This conversion can radically affect the overall color of your images. If you are not comfortable with the process, we can make the conversion for you. Discuss this option with your representative.

If you have an FPO image in your layout and want us to link it to the high resolution image on your disk, please indicate this on your lasers and the Digital Prepress Checklist form.

Are you using compression software to get all the files on your disk?

Please make “self-extracting archives” or “.sea” files. It won’t be necessary for us to have the same version of decompression software on our system. Avoid compressing and “segmenting” files if possible (can sometimes result in a corrupt files). Do not compress large scanned images; they take far too long and render very little savings in disk space.

Color Considerations

Have differences in color monitors versus printed colors been discussed?

Each hardware element involved in the digital prepress process is capable of displaying color differently. How you view color on your monitor may inaccurately represent the actual color that is output to film and what ultimately translates into ink on paper. Remember, you are seeing an RGB rendering of a Pantone color. Pick your colors from printed Pantone swatch books, not from swatches represented on your monitor. Uptown Press supports the Pantone Matching System (PMS). We do not support Toyo, Trumatch, FocalTone or other systems – they are more expensive, offer no discernable advantages and frequently cause problems.

Also, colors being converted from spot color separations to process color separations can change radically in how they actually print on paper. Be sure to discuss these issues with your print representative if you are unsure about how accurate they will print.

As an added measure for process color selection, purchase and use the Pantone Process Color Imaging Guide. This shows a wide range of common PMS colors printed side by side with their process equivalents.

Also request the Uptown Press Process Color Chart. This chart shows many of the most common Pantone colors printed as process equivalents on our Heidelberg DI.

Are you using SPOT and CMYK colors in your file?

Please let us know what colors are to be generated as spot and what colors will be 4/C process. Many times we get a disk without information about the actual colors to output. The customer's color palette could contain 40 colors with only two printing as CMYK, but are not defined as process. Be sure to **delete any unused** colors from your palette, and make sure all colors are defined correctly, either SPOT or PROCESS. Please provide color-separated laser prints; this will help you to see if the file has been prepared correctly.

Are colors defined correctly?

Use Pantone or CMYK colors only. Never use RGB, HSL or any other non-trade standard color models.

Have you set-up special overprinting colors?

If you are building your layout to have special overprinting colors, please indicate on your lasers and the Digital Prepress Checklist form what elements you want set to overprint.

Naming Files

Limit your file names to as few characters as possible.

File names can become complex and cumbersome when they are translated to different workstations. If possible, limit your file names to nine characters. Do not use special punctuation like quotation marks ("), apostrophes('), or bullets (•). You can use suffix indicators such as .tiff, .eps, but remember to use lower case, and keep the shortest possible number of letters. Also try to use common sense names — a file called "Annual Report" is a lot less likely to get lost or mishandled than a file called "ar698r22jw".

Trapping

Does the job require trapping?

If your job requires trapping, we encourage you to let us perform the trapping for you. We know the tolerances of our printing presses, and other factors such as paper stretch, due to moisture in the sheet, or the size of the press sheet used.

Trapping your own files can present many difficulties if it is not done properly, and can result in additional charges if we need to repair traps and re-output new film.

We utilize powerful trapping software that allows us to accurately trap your files to produce the best results. Make sure you clearly indicate that you want Uptown to create the traps in your file.

If you have created trap in your file, it is very important that you communicate that to your representative. We recommend that you use .25 pt traps, but you should call our technical staff representative to advise you on a job-by-job basis. Type of paper, ink coverage and printing press size can all effect the amount of trap required.

Do EPS files have trap built into them?

If you have trapped EPS files and then enlarged or reduced them in your layout file, you will be altering the trap size as well. Build your EPS files to the actual size you're going to use them in your page layout program.

TIP: There are ways to create process colors that will trap automatically. By selecting common CMYK values in colors that touch, you can eliminate many trapping problems. A good rule to follow would be to make sure 20% or more CMYK color values exist in your adjacent colors.

Bleeds

Are bleeds built into the file?

Any element that extends to the final trim edge needs bleed extended to .125" (1/8"). Remember, images created in Photoshop or drawing programs such as Freehand or Illustrator should have adequate image area to bleed properly off the page.

If you did not build the page 100% and require Uptown to output the page at a reduced size, it is entirely possible that there will no longer be enough bleed for bindery cutting.

Crossovers

Do any elements spread across two or more pages?

Any element that extends onto two or more pages is commonly referred to as a “crossover.” If you have a multi-page document, and want several items to crossover onto facing pages, it is advisable that you build them as single facing pages to create “reader spreads.” It is not necessary or helpful to build them as oversized landscape pages. Crossovers on all but the center spread of a multi-page document will be split apart in the final imposition. Critical crossovers (ones that have special bindery needs, such as gatefolds) may require special imposition techniques. Please let your representative know about any special folding or other bindery needs your project may have.

Please remember that Uptown’s maximum film size from the Imagesetter is 14" x 30". You should consult with your representative if your multiple facing pages containing crossovers exceed the 14" x 30" size. It may be necessary for us to make special arrangements for outputting to final film.

If your layout is a simple four page, tabloid spread, (2) 8.5"x11" pages inside and outside, we recommend you build them as facing 8.5" x 11" pages for a total of 4 single pages.

Folding

How do you adjust your layout for the type of fold and bind?

Making allowances for the final folded piece can sometimes get complicated, especially when producing publications over 30 or more pages. Depending on the type and weight of the paper you have selected and the total number of pages, it may be necessary for you to adjust some of your pages to ensure that page elements are not lost in the center bind, or elements cut off on the bleed edges.

TIP: When you determine what paper you desire on your print job, contact your representative to order a folded dummy of your project. This will also aid you in determining if you should adjust some of your pages for “creep” (the amount of lost image area do to thickness of the publication).

Creating Graduated Tints and Blends

The use of vignettes, blends, or graduated tints, can cause several problems with your file. Many times the transition from one color tint to the next can cause banding. This is usually because the percentage change in tint value is too great for the narrow distance the vignette is to span or, more commonly, banding can be caused by too little of a percentage change in the tint value for a wider distance that the vignette is to span.

There are many factors that contribute to the problem and several things you can do to help minimize the possibilities of banding in your gradients at the design stage:

1. The length of a blend varies with the colors used but, as a general rule, blend lengths should not exceed 7.5 inches.
2. Don't specify too high a line screen. 133 is common in many magazines; 150 is very common for high quality work. Line screens of 175, 200 or higher are possible BUT are MUCH MORE technically demanding – unless you are very sure of what you are doing, don't use them. They can cause severe problems in many other areas of your job unless carefully controlled.
3. Maintain a percentage of change from the beginning to the end of your blend of AT LEAST 50%. Trying to blend from 30% to 60% will most likely cause banding. Consider the ramifications of specifying a transition to 0% or white. The screen graduation can start to “fall-off” somewhere in the 1-3% dot range on the printing plate and will result in a sharp edge appearance in the final printed piece.
4. Avoid very dark colors in your blends. Blends from very dark colors to white cause the most problems. If possible, use lighter colors or make dark blends short.
5. Consider creating your gradients in Photoshop. Make sure the “Dither” option is checked in the Gradient options. Adding a little noise to the gradient also helps reduce the chances of banding.