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Guide to Plastic Card Printing

Thanks for contacting us about your plastic card printing. We hope this guide will be a useful resource for the artwork preparation for your order. You may want to give it to whomever is designing your card.

1 COLOR MATCHING AND PROOFING

This is one of the most difficult aspects of printing, as color is a perception. Let us bring to the forefront the following statement:

> **"Unless calibrated by a professional, color cannot be accurately evaluated on a computer screen."**

No, really!!! Stop and read this!

"Unless calibrated by a professional, color cannot be accurately evaluated on a computer screen."

Obviously, we cannot stress this enough. Your monitor is probably not calibrated and you need to review an art proof for print production. So, what can you do? We'll get to that.

To best recommend a course of action, consider how important color matching is to you. For some customers, red is red, blue is blue. For others, their company has strict branding guidelines related to color or company logo.

Think about a company like Tiffany & Co., the famous New York City jewelers. Most people know that there is a "Tiffany blue." They couldn't tell you much about it other than they know that the Tiffany bag the little sparklers come in is a certain color "blue" (or aqua or turquoise).

This is an example of a company having a strict color policy for their printing … so strict that theirs is a custom ink color formula not publicly available (and they keep it under lock and key!).

So how can we do our best to communicate color to you, our customer?

CardPrinting.com has several proofing models:

- Digital Proof
- Color Match Proof
- Production Samples

Digital proofs are uploaded to our web site. You can view it on a computer screen (not color accurate) and also download and print an Adobe Acrobat .pdf file. Thoroughly check the art proof in conjunction with the provided checklist, then approve or decline the proof online.

Color Match proofs. These are fairly accurate color representations of your submitted artwork printed on glossy lightweight cardboard and mailed or couriered to you. There is a fee for this type of proof. It also extends the production time. Check with your customer service representative about the extra cost and time it takes to have a color match proof done. We process color match proofs after a digital proof has been reviewed and approved.

Production Samples are a small print run of actual cards or uncut sheets and sent to a customer for approval. There is an extra fee for this service and it also lengthens the production time for your order.

METHODS OF COLOR PRINTING
There are two types color printing that we do:

- Process Color
- Spot Color

Process Color is also known as 4-color process, full color or **CMYK**. Process color prints with four base colors (**C**yan, **M**agenta, **Y**ellow and **B**lacK) and combines them in such a way to form a huge range of colors.

Spot Color. We're going to try to describe this in a simple manner. Printing with spot color is opening a can of the ink color ordered and putting that on the printing press. Think "this spot (or area) will be a specific color."
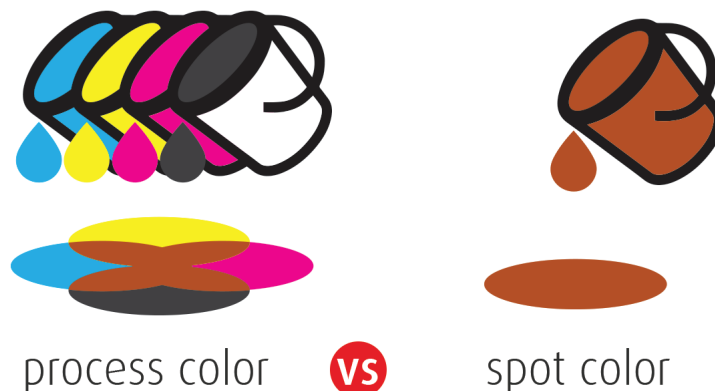
process color **VS** spot color

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Inks used in spot color printing are standardized under a method called Pantone® Matching System (PMS). Pantone, LLC has systemically defined and categorized colors. Nearly every printer in the world knows that Pantone Matching System is a way for printers and customers to speak the same "color" language. This way, the end result of the print run is the color you expected.

Which type of color printing does CardPrinting.com do?   We do both. Which one we use in the end depends on which material you've ordered. On our Composite Laminated cards, we do CMYK printing only.   On PVC cards, we print either CMYK process or PMS spot color (or both).

If you have PMS color requirements and are ordering Composite Laminated cards, we can try to come as close as possible to your required PMS color. Please request a production sample if you are uneasy about how the color may print.

RICH BLACK

"Rich Black" is a CMYK color combination that achieves a very dark black. It is best to use it when black is a background color and there is no small type or small art details in the card design. When there is a black background in a design, and it is printed using only black ink, the black looks like a dark gray when compared to a Rich Black.

A good formula for Rich Black is:
60% Cyan, 40% Magenta, 40% Yellow and 100% Black.
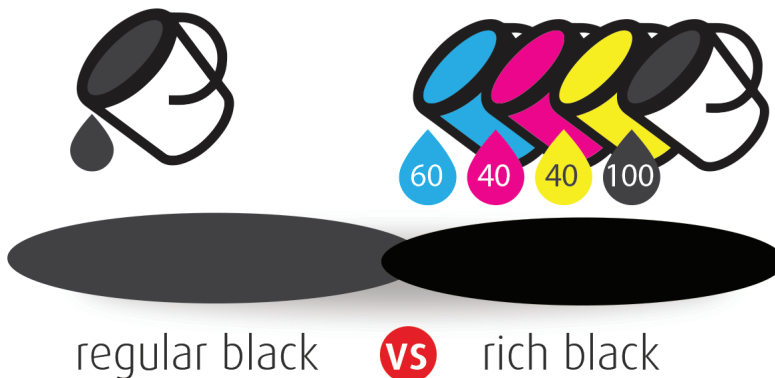
60   40   40   100

regular black   VS   rich black

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IMAGE TYPES

There are two main types of images used in printing: **Bitmap** and **Vector**.

BITMAP IMAGES

Bitmap images consist of tiny square-shaped bits of color information called "pixels." We need bitmap images to be 300 ppi (pixels per inch) for printing. The most common file formats for bitmap images are: .jpg, .png, .psd, .bmp, .tif.

VECTOR GRAPHICS

The other type of graphic is a vector graphic. Here is a definition of a vector graphic:

"Vector graphics are made of paths defined by a start and end point, along with other points, curves, and angles. A path can be a line, a square, a triangle, or a curvy shape. These paths create simple drawings or complex diagrams. Paths are even used to define the characters of specific typefaces.

Because vector-based images are not made up of a specific number of dots, they can scale to a larger size without losing image quality. If you enlarge a bitmap graphic, it will look blocky, or "pixelated." When you scale up a vector graphic, the edges of each object within the graphic stay smooth and clean. This attribute makes vector graphics ideal for any type of printing, small or large."
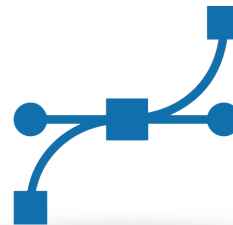
The most common file types for vector graphics are:

• ai (Adobe Illustrator)
• eps (Encapsulated Post Script)
• svg (Scalable Vector Graphic)
• wmf (Windows Meta File)

bitmap

Square-shaped bits of color information called "pixels"

vector

Paths defined by a start and end point

Acceptable File Formats for Printing with CardPrinting.com:

• **Adobe Illustrator (.ai, .eps)** – Outline all fonts before sending to us, and embed all placed/linked graphics.
• **PDF files** – Outline all fonts before sending to us, and embed all placed/linked graphics.
• **Adobe Photoshop** (.psd, .pdf, .eps, .tif) please keep artwork in layers, do not flatten. Remember to embed all placed/linked graphics.
• **Adobe InDesign** – Send the InDesign file, packaged with the fonts and placed/linked graphics. Use the simple File/Package function that is in the application.

Accepted with limitations:

Microsoft Publisher, Powerpoint, CorelDraw. Please contact our art department or your customer service representative if you plan to send us these types of files. The art department is 845 426 2300 ext 104.

Questions? Chat With Us!
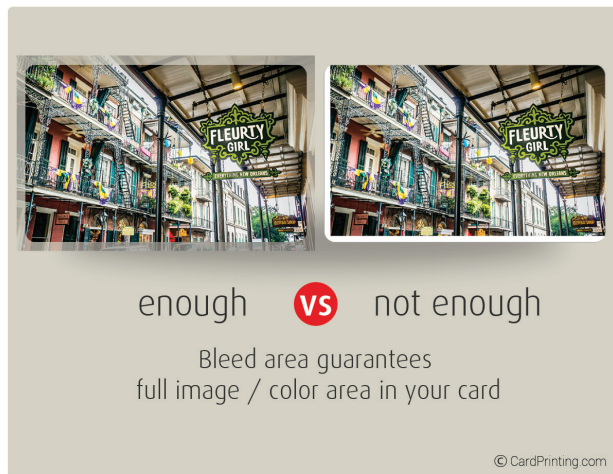To use our online chat please go to **www.cardprinting.com**

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WORKING WITH CARDPRINTING.COM TEMPLATES

We have helpful templates available for every one of the products we print. Each template defines the exact shape and size of your printed piece. It also includes other features and defines the "bleed" and "safety margin" areas.

Your cards are a mass-printed and finished product. That means that your order is produced with automated machines that can be, at times, imprecise. One of the most vulnerable functions is when we die cut the plastic cards from the printed sheets. When designing your card, we ask that you follow these guidelines for best results:

BLEED

One of the most frequent reasons we request changes to artwork is because of "lack of bleed." The "bleed" is the area of artwork that has color or image extended beyond cut line. That extra area is trimmed off in the diecutting phase of production. This ensures the print on the card goes all the way to the card edge.

enough **VS** not enough

Bleed area guarantees
full image / color area in your card

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SAFETY MARGIN

The safety margin is a "no text" zone that defined from the cut edge of the card, and 1/8" inward. This area should not contain anything important, doing so risks it may be trimmed off in production.

safety **VS** no safety

Safety area guarantees important information
will not be trimmed off in production

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PREPARING FILES FOR PRINTING WITH CARDPRINTING.US

Please pay special attention to the following considerations when designing your card.

NO BORDERS

It is best to avoid any kind of border in your design. The process of cutting the card from the sheet (die-cutting) has a production tolerance of up to about 2mm. If your card printed with a border, it could look off center or unattractive if the die-cutting is off.

L U X U R Y

L U X U R Y

border **VS** no border

(exaggerated for effect)

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OUTLINE YOUR FONTS

You will want to save two versions of your artwork when you are ready to send it off to us. One version is completely editable. The second version is what you're going to send to us. But before you do, please outline your fonts. In Illustrator or InDesign, select the areas with active type and then from the menu choose Type/Create Outlines. In CorelDraw it is called "Convert to Curves".

Please remember to Outline Fonts and Embed Graphics even if you're making an Adobe Acrobat PDF file.

EMBEDDED GRAPHICS, NOT LINKED

When placing the graphics into your artwork, please don't forget to embed them. Highlight the graphic and choose "embed" from the information bar under the menu. If you can't embed them, then include the graphics files with your designed card file.

SENDING US YOUR ARTWORK

When you're done with designing your artwork, and you're ready to submit it for your order, simply go to www.mycardart.com. Please do not email us your art files. An alternative is to email a dropbox link or use a service like wetransfer.com, hightail.com or mailbigfile.com.

— **Please do not email us your art files.** —

Upload artwork to www.mycardart.com

Questions? Chat With Us!
To use our online chat please go to **www.cardprinting.com**

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