



FIRST 4.0



FLEXOGRAPHIC IMAGER REPRODUCTION

SPECIFICATIONS & TOLERANCES



Design Guide

An SPI Project



FLEXOGRAPHIC TECHNICAL ASSOCIATION FIRST 4.0 SUPPLEMENTAL FLEXOGRAPHIC PRINTING DESIGN GUIDE

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1.0 DESIGN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

FIRST 4.0 is created to facilitate communication among all participants involved in the design, preparation and printing of flexographic materials. The designer is responsible for creating a graphic design that achieves the marketing objectives of the Consumer Product Company (CPC) and that can be successfully reproduced on press. The Design Section is intended to assist the designer in understanding the flexographic print considerations necessary to create reproducible designs. The better the designer understands the flexographic process, the easier it will be to create aesthetically pleasing designs while optimizing production efficiency and reducing the time-to-market. A primary objective of the Design Section is to provide guidance on how to create electronic files that will enhance quality and speed of manufacturing while minimizing cost. This must be accomplished while allowing the designer to maintain creative control of the project. This can be best accomplished when everyone in the supply chain has a clear understanding of the requirements of flexography and these requirements are addressed during the design phase of development. Because designers and production artists often have overlapping responsibilities, the information in this section applies to both parties.

Depending on the methods and practices of the companies involved and the complexity and frequency of the work among them, FIRST recommends establishing ground rules and procedures for designing products before actual production begins. This is a necessary step when providing services to the flexographic industry because of the complexity of the graphics, print issues, and converting equipment considerations. A dialogue regarding design and production considerations should be initiated among the production team (designer, consumer product company, prepress provider, and printer). FIRST provides guidelines to facilitate the project flow through the design and manufacturing processes.

1.2 Responsibility

As packaging graphics continue to increase in complexity and production timelines continue to compress, the clear assignment of responsibilities is necessary to ensure a quality printed product in a timely manner. The assignment of responsibilities requires planning and collaboration among all involved parties.

- **Consumer Product Company (CPC):** Ultimately, the customer defines expectations and therefore, must drive the collaboration process. The customer determines the effort expended to reach satisfaction. The CPC must facilitate communication between the supply chain parties: designer, prepress provider and printer.
- **Designer / Production Design:** The designer must work with both the prepress provider and the printer to understand the capability of the printing/converting process being utilized. Based upon the print capability, the designer must provide a design concept that will enable the printer to meet the expectations of the customer (CPC). The earlier in the design development process the prepress provider and printer are involved, the better able the team is to determine specific capabilities and ensure the final product meets the customer's design objectives. Additionally, the designer is responsible for:
 - Establishing a basic color scheme and color palette before final files are sent to production.
 - Checking all copy for spelling and kerning.
 - Treating common elements and logos consistently in the layout.
 - Building all copy and vector-based elements in accordance with the specifications of the print provider.
- **Prepress Provider:** The prepress provider must work with the printer to understand the capability of the printing/converting process being utilized. The prepress provider supplies the designer with accurate and timely information regarding print capabilities at the beginning of the design phase to facilitate the creation of a printable design. Based upon the print capability, the prepress provider produces appropriate films/files/plates that will enable the printer to meet the expectations of the customer (CPC). They must document the controls

that ensure the consistency and accuracy of the supplied media (films/files/plates). Additionally, the prepress provider produces a contract proof calibrated to accurately predict the printed result. The prepress provider must provide the printer the ability to objectively confirm the accuracy of the prepress work and the printing process. This can be accomplished through the use of agreed-upon control targets.

- **Printer:** The printer is responsible for consistently reproducing the graphic design to the satisfaction of the customer (CPC). They utilize and document the process controls necessary to ensure that accuracy and consistency are achieved. They work with the other parties and suppliers to define the capability of the printing process. The printer provides the designer with accurate and timely information regarding process capabilities at the beginning of the design phase to facilitate the creation of a printable design.



Mason

1.2: Product Development Responsibilities: In short, the designer creates the image, the prepress provider manipulates the image, and the printer mass produces the image. All members of the supply chain must work together utilizing FIRST to achieve a desirable outcome.

1.3 Assumptions

In order to keep the content focused and pertinent, the following assumptions were made when creating these guidelines:

- The audience consists of professional users who are working with current versions of software and hardware. Designers who expect their work to efficiently move through the production workflow should be working with current versions of software and hardware proven to work with downstream processes.
- Certain programs and manufacturers are mentioned; however, FIRST recognizes these are not the only solutions.
- The audience is familiar with electronic design terminology and workflow in a digital environment. If you are not familiar with electronic design terminology and/or digital workflows, visit www.flexography.org for more information.
- Technology continues to change rapidly. To help address this issue, additional training and support documentation will be updated and available at www.flexography.org.

2.0 GETTING STARTED

2.1 Recognizing Attributes of the Flexographic Printing Process

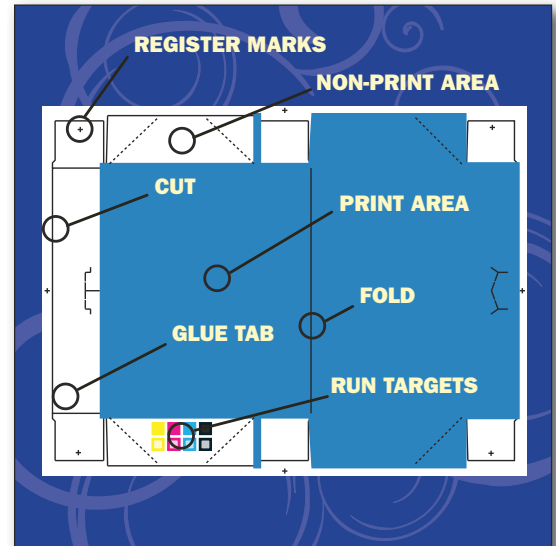
The use of spot colors, specialty inks, and a wide variety of substrates are just a few of the choices available with flexography. Designers must be informed about the advantages of the flexographic printing process in order to make use of them during the design process. The designer must communicate with the print provider to understand their capabilities and how they can jointly optimize the quality and effectiveness of the final product.



2.1: Flexographic Market Segments: The flexographic printing industry offers designers broad choices of types of packaging, substrates, inks and in-line converting capabilities.

2.2 Materials and Information Needed to Begin

- Template or Die Drawing: A die drawing or template (supplied by the customer, prepress provider or printer) must include bleeds, glue areas, live areas, and dimensions. There may also be other pertinent information on the template (e.g., die number, size, count number, etc.) that the designer should reference in the digital file.
- Production information gathered by the design team such as the substrate, number of ink colors, and whether the specified color is a spot or process color build should be documented in the digital file.
- Client or customer specifications.
- Design brief.
- Brand and corporate art guidelines.
- Legal and government regulations.



2.2: Materials & Information Needed to Begin: A template layout along with general production information and customer specifications are critical for successful design development..

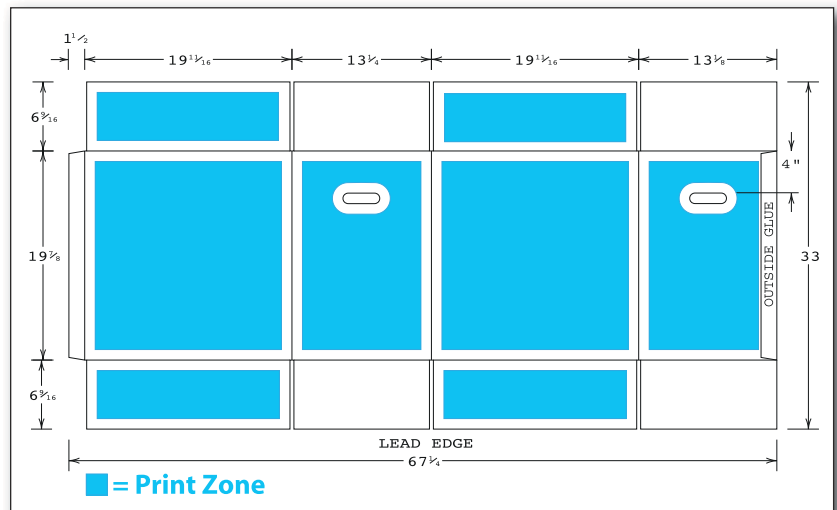
2.2.1 Template Layout / Die-Cut Specifications

Electronic / Die Drawing

A final die drawing or electronic file must be provided with the art, prior to final assembly, for all die-cut jobs. All supplied die drawings must indicate cuts, folds, and scores as well as non-print areas. The designer, in conjunction with the packaging buyer, should indicate the area in which the print control target may be placed. Refer to Design Section 2.5 for print process measurement and control.

Using the Template Layout

A template layout is also referred to as a key line, die drawing or full scale drawing. It is the responsibility of the printer and the consumer product company to provide the design firm with the appropriate electronic file and template, including layout dimensions, prior to the conceptual design phase. The template should include non-image area, non-print area, print direction, varnish area, seal area, and "inside view" identification. It is the responsibility of the design firm to consider the non-print areas during the design process. The designer forwards the final template to the prepress facility where all job elements are verified and correctly positioned for product assembly.



S. Gilbert

2.2.1: Template Layout: It is the responsibility of the design firm to consider the non-print areas during the design process.

Die Origin

Dies are designed using a graphics program or CAD system. Files generated from these systems can be translated into a format compatible with CAD. Incorporation of dies, bleeds, or pressmarks (internal and external) should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Early communication about who will build a die line and how it will be used is essential.

Printing Form Layout Considerations

The printing form layout communicates how individual die cut units are arranged on a sheet or web. This may influence control target placement and create additional design considerations. If certain knives are common, or shared, between individual units, the design may be affected at the perimeter of the unit. This information can only be obtained through contact with the printer. Designers must work with the customer (CPC) and the printer to receive this vital information.

Print-to-print and print-to-cut production tolerances should also be verified with the printer or the customer (CPC). These tolerances may vary depending on several factors including press width and press type (i.e., central impression, stack, in-line). Important elements should be placed away from cuts and scores. Die position tolerance is typically smaller for thin board stock and larger for thicker stock. Consult the printer for job specific print-to-print and print-to-cut production tolerances.

Electronic Format

It is important for the designer to work with an accurate physical representation of the unit's form to avoid downstream adjustments to the design. Sometimes the die is modified to match graphic elements (windows, cutouts, or coupons). Most translation programs provide a link from the more common package design programs to CAD formats (i.e., DXF, DDES2, IGES). The structural designer should indicate what formats can be produced.

Measurement of Die Drawings

Indicate measurements on the electronic die line file including the dimensions and marks for the live print area.

2.2.2 Print Substrate

A sample of the substrate should accompany the project as soon as it is available. The whiteness, color and texture of the substrate should be considered. Printing on foil or colored paper, or printing white behind the graphics, will influence the printed color gamut. Often, the colors on the printed product will deviate from the approved contract proof if the proof is not made to reflect the substrate and/or printed white ink. White ink can appear darker (dirtier) and typically less opaque than white paper or film. In addition, various packaging substrates exhibit different color properties when printed; for example, some paper substrates will inconsistently absorb ink producing a 'muddier' image.

2.3 File Naming Conventions

Alternate versions of an electronic file should have separate and distinct names from the original version. File naming conventions for live, high-resolution images should be in accordance with the criteria of the collaborating parties. For example, workflow may dictate file names, SKUs, job numbers, or UPC references.

When naming a file, special characters such as "!", "@", "#", "\$", "%", "/", "\", and "*" should never be used. Suffixes identify and distinguish formats and variations of working files. Examples of this are as follows:

asparagus.**tif** asparagus.**eps** asparagus.**psd**

or

abcdefgh.**raw** abcdefgh.**rgb** abcdefgh.**cmj**

2.4 Types of Proofs

All parties involved with a project must agree upon the process and terminology used to evaluate and communicate the design – including color. Specifically, every proof created throughout the workflow should be clearly labeled to communicate:

- The purpose of the proof,
- The system or device on which it was created,
- Whether the output device was profiled and which profile was used, and
- The proof's suitability for judging color.

Types of Proofs

- **Concept Proof:** The concept proof is common in the early creative stages of the project. It is used to capture input from all partners in the supply chain during initial design development and is also referred to as a “collaborative proof.” This proof is typically not color profiled and, therefore, not used for matching color.
- **Color Target Proof:** The color target proof is often the selected “concept proof.” It represents the ideal color intent of the designer and client, independent of the print process or the ability of an individual press to achieve that color. Some of the color in this proof may not be achievable in the final print. To avoid rework costs and unachievable expectations downstream, it is helpful, when possible, to produce this proof based upon the known or expected capabilities and color gamut of the anticipated printing process(es).
- **Comprehensive Proof (Comp)/Mock Up:** The comp is formed to the shape of the final product and should indicate whether or not it is color accurate.
- **Profiled Contract Proof:** This represents what the customer is expecting to receive off press.

The profiled contract proof represents the clients full content and color expectations. Printers or prepress providers use a Color Management System or (CMS) and a characterization target printed on the intended press, to develop a ICC profile for the intended proofing device. Color Management Systems are a collection of software tools that quantify and reconcile the differences among monitors, proofers and printing presses.

The contract proof does not have to be a dot-for-dot reproduction, but it must be an overall visual simulation of the expected print results. Therefore, it must simulate the dot gain, color attributes, detail, and contrast of the printed image. It must also contain a control target that is processed and imaged as part of the proof. The control target is used to verify accuracy and consistency throughout the design, proofing, and printing process. It must contain specific screen values, which should be determined with the printer, for all colors printing dots (including vignettes). Although most digital proofing devices may not reproduce a conventional dot pattern, the tonal scales should be measured using a densitometer (or spectrodensitometer) in the dot area function. Each one of the tonal scales must equal the weight (dot area) identified by the press profile. Before a contract proof can be accurately used, the entire reproduction system must be characterized so that the proofing system is calibrated to match the printed result. Afterward, both press and proofing systems must be maintained for consistency and repeatability.



R. VanHandel

2.4a: Profiled Contract Proof: The contract proof must include a control target as well as template layout markings.

A “Proof Compliance Cover Sheet” or label must accompany the contract proof submitted for color match at press and approved by the customer. It should identify the proofing product or system used and the company supplying the proof (contact name, telephone & fax numbers) as well as operator, date, job number, and customer. The cover sheet must also contain information needed to verify the proof’s compliance to the technical attributes required for that proofing type. It is a best practice approach for all proofs to include a “Certificate of Result.” It should include all pertinent measurements: density, dot area, Delta E @ 100% & 50%, trap, print contrast, bar code scan analysis, etc. Proof densities should be within the printers’ on-press density specifications. The Proof Compliance Cover Sheet and Certificate of Result can be combined into one document.

- **Soft Proof:** The soft proof consists of viewing a job on a color-calibrated monitor. It is used at any point in the product development process from a concept proof to a contract proof, depending on how well the system is calibrated. Components include a color consistent monitor and a color management system (CMS).



CGS Publishing Technologies International



AGFA

2.4b: Types of Proofs: Before a contract proof can be accurately used, the entire reproduction system must be characterized so that the proofing system is calibrated to match the printed result.

2.5 Process Control Test Elements

Application: If consistency and repeatability are important to the customer, then space must be allocated on the sheet, web, or package for appropriate process control test elements. Measuring at set-up and throughout the run enables the printer to produce repeatable, consistent and accurate results on every job.

Placement: In order for the printer to deliver the desired print results, the customer and design team must include key test elements in the product design. Some packaging lends itself to placing test elements under flaps, in a glue zone or on the waste matrix; other packaging requires the test elements to remain visible on the finished package. Therefore, each print application should determine where to place the individual elements to be monitored throughout the production run. The designer should consult with the printer and CPC on the necessary test elements and properly place them on the package/sheet/web when creating the design.

Test Element Construction:

- **Size:** The designer must be careful to allocate enough room for the necessary elements of the process control target. ANSI/CGATS.5 (2003 *Graphic Technology – Spectral Measurement and Colorimetric Computation for Graphic Arts Images*) provides the minimum and recommended apertures (and therefore minimum test element size) specified by line screen listed in the following table. While these guidelines are useful, the print application must also be considered. The minimum acceptable aperture may be larger for some print applications. The designer and prepress provider should confirm individual test element size with the printer. For direct-print corrugated, each test patch (solid or tint) should be 2X-3X the flute width to provide a stable measurement target.

3.0 TYPE AND DESIGN ELEMENTS

3.1 Typography: Know the Print Process Capabilities

Due to the nature of the flexographic process, text that prints positive will tend to fatten while text that is reversed out will tend to fill in, lose fine lines and serifs, and become plugged. Therefore, when selecting fonts, care and attention is critical.

Tables 3.1a and 3.1b provide general guidelines by flexographic print segment. Because the minimum type size and rule width are print system dependent, the designer should confirm rule width and type style & size with the print provider.

When attempting to increase the weight of a serif font, it is not always effective to use the bold, heavy, black, or ultra versions. When fonts are changed to a heavier version, verify the text did not reflow. Type can be stroked to increase its thickness, but the “counters” (holes in letters such as a, d, o, e and R) may fill in, so care must be used.

Table 3.1a

Minimum Type Size: General Guidelines										
<i>Minimum type size is print system dependent; determine minimum type size with a press fingerprint.</i>										
Segment	Substrate	Positive		Reverse		Printer Specific				
		Serif (ex:Times Roman)	Sans Serif (ex: Helvetica)	Serif	Sans Serif	Positive		Reverse		
						Serif	Sans Serif	Serif	Sans Serif	
Wide Web	Preprint Linerboard	All	8 pt.	6 pt.	10 pt.	8 pt.				
	Combined Corrugated	White Top	8 pt.	6 pt.	10 pt.	8 pt.				
		Coated Paper	6 pt.	4 pt.	8 pt.	6 pt.				
	Folding Carton	All	6 pt.	4 pt.	8 pt.	6 pt.				
	Multiwall Bag	Coated Paper	8 pt.	6 pt.	12 pt.	10 pt.				
		Uncoated Paper	10 pt.	8 pt.	18 pt.	12 pt.				
	Film Products	Polyester	8 pt.	6 pt.	12 pt.	10 pt.				
		Polypropylene, Polyethylene, & Metallized	8 pt.	6 pt.	10 pt.	8 pt.				
Newsprint	Uncoated Paper	10 pt.	7 pt.	11 pt.	10 pt.					
Narrow Web	Paper Products	All	6 pt.	4 pt.	8 pt.	6 pt.				
	Film Products	All	6 pt.	4 pt.	8 pt.	6 pt.				
	Envelope	All	6 pt.	4 pt.	8 pt.	6 pt.				



3.1a: Typography: If type is stroked, swelled or framed to increase its thickness, the “counters” may fill in. FIRST recommends serif fonts not be stroked.

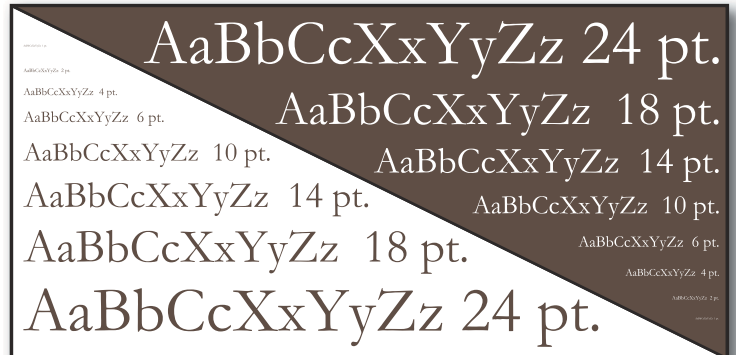
*Type Size Considerations
Quick Reference Guide*

Serif vs. Sans Serif: Sans serif can be printed at a smaller type size than serif print. Sans serif type stays cleaner because it does not have the fancy details on the ends of the letters which tend to fill-in and run together at smaller sizes.

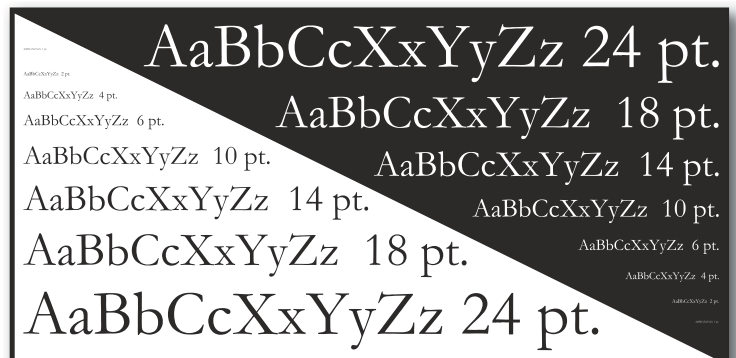
Positive vs. Reverse: Positive type can be printed clearly at a smaller type size than reverse type. Reverse type is more vulnerable to ink volume and impression resulting in type filling-in and becoming illegible.

Single-Color vs. Multi-Color: Single-color type can be printed clearly at a smaller type size than multi-color type. Multi-color type is also dependent on registration. Minimum type size is restricted by the press registration tolerance.

Design Variables: Other variables that influence minimum type size include: substrate absorbency & compression and ink coverage.



B. Pope



B. Pope



B. Pope

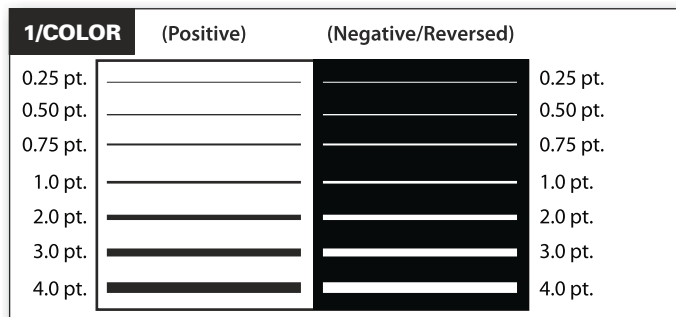


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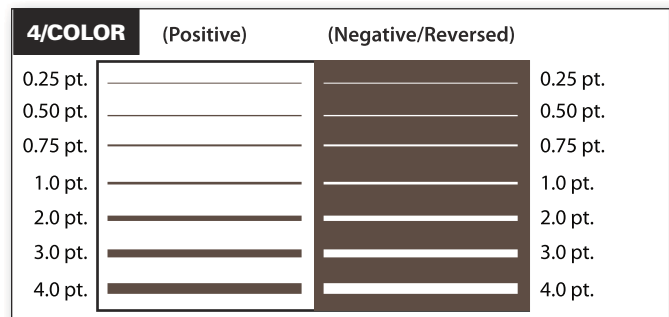
3.1b: Minimum type size: Using type sizes below the printer’s minimum recommended size can result in type filling and is not supported by FIRST.

Table 3.1b

Minimum Rule Width: General Guidelines						
<i>Minimum rule width is print system dependent; determine minimum rule width with a press fingerprint</i>						
Segment		Substrate	Positive Rule	Reverse Rule	Printer Specific	
					Positive Rule	Reverse Rule
Wide Web	Preprint Linerboard	All	0.01"	0.015"		
			0.254mm	0.38mm		
	Combined Corrugated	White Top	0.013"	0.02"		
			0.33mm	0.51mm		
		Coated Paper	0.007"	0.01"		
			0.18mm	0.254mm		
	Folding Carton	All	0.006"	0.008"		
			0.15mm	0.20mm		
	Multiwall Bag	Coated Paper	0.007"	0.01"		
			0.18mm	0.254mm		
		Uncoated Paper	0.013"	0.02"		
			0.33mm	0.51mm		
	Film Products	All	0.007"	0.013"		
			0.18mm	0.33mm		
Newsprint	All	0.007"	0.015"			
		0.18mm	0.38mm			
Narrow Web	Paper Products	All	0.005"	0.01"		
			0.13mm	0.254mm		
	Film Products	All	0.004"	0.008"		
			0.10mm	0.20mm		
	Envelope	All	0.007"	0.010"		
			0.18mm	0.254mm		



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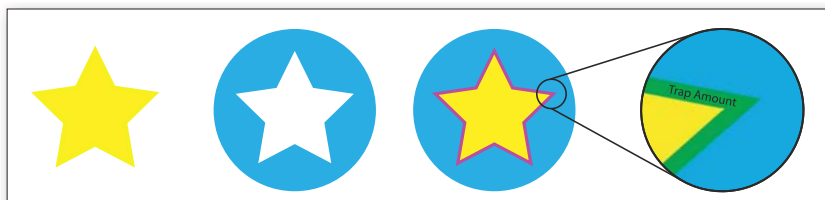


B. Pope

3.1c: Line Weight: The acceptable line thickness will vary depending upon whether the line is positive or reverse printing and whether it is a single color or multicolor line.

3.1.1 Registration Tolerance

When one word is printed in one color and another word next to it is printed in a second color, register shifts can cause these two words to overlap or misalign. Due to this register shift, different color text should be more than twice the image trap dimension away from each other. Table 3.1.1 Image Trap Tolerance provides general trap guidelines by print segment. Confirm the trap tolerance with the print provider.



S. Gilbert

3.1.1a: Image Trap: When trapping two colors, FIRST recommends “spreading” or enlarging the lighter color under the dominant color.

Table 3.1.1

Total Trap Tolerance: General Guidelines					
<i>Trap tolerance is print system dependent; determine minimum trap with a press fingerprint</i>					
Segment			Color-to-Color	Printer Specific Trap Allowance	
Wide Web	Preprint Linerboard	Total Trap	$\leq 0.0156'' (1/64'')$		
			$\leq 0.3969\text{mm}$		
	Combined Corrugated	Between Station		$\leq 0.0625'' (1/16'')$	
				$\leq 1.5875\text{mm}$	
		Through The Press	$\leq 0.125'' (1/8'')$		
			$\leq 3.175\text{mm}$		
	Folding Carton	Total Trap	$\leq 0.0156'' (1/64'')$		
			$\leq 0.3969\text{mm}$		
	Multiwall Bag	Total Trap	$\leq 0.0313'' (1/32'')$		
			$\leq 0.7938\text{mm}$		
Film Products	Total Trap	$\leq 0.0156'' (1/64'')$			
		$\leq 0.3969\text{mm}$			
Newsprint	Total Trap	$\leq 0.0156'' (1/64'')$			
		$\leq 0.3969\text{mm}$			
Narrow Web	Paper Products	Total Trap	$\leq 0.0156'' (1/64'')$		
			$\leq 0.3969\text{mm}$		
	Film Products	Total Trap	$\leq 0.0156'' (1/64'')$		
			$\leq 0.3969\text{mm}$		
	Envelope	Total Trap	$\leq 0.008'' (1/125'')$		
$\leq 0.2032\text{mm}$					

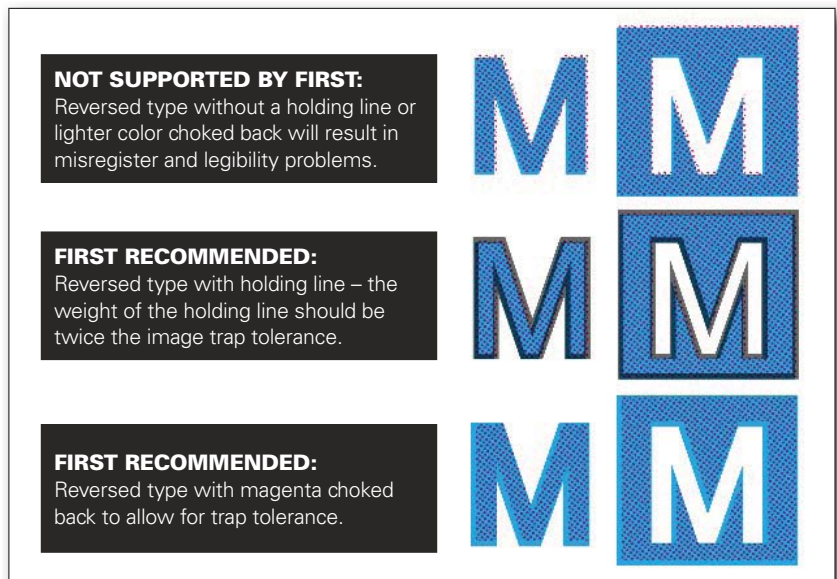
3.1.2 Process Color Type

When identifying colors for text copy, the designer should be aware which colors will be built from process and which will use dedicated spot colors. In general, text copy should be printed with a single color or built from two process colors. As text size increases, a third process color may be introduced. Using more than one color to create text should be discussed with both the prepress and print providers to determine capability.

3.1.3 Process Reverse/Knockout

A holding line should be used when type is reversed and comprised of more than one color. The holding line should be a single, dark color to hide any slight misregistration that is likely to occur during the printing process. The weight of the holding line should be twice the registration tolerance for the print segment as identified in Table 3.1.1, Total Trap Tolerance. Because the values provided are general guidelines, the designer should confirm the trap requirements with the prepress and print providers.

If a holding line is not used, the darkest or predominant color should be made at full size and the remaining color must be choked back the width of one row of dots as determined by the screen ruling. If possible, the background color should be limited to one color.



3.1.4 Line Reverse/Knockout

Reverse copy should be limited to one color. If copy is to be reversed from two or more colors, a holdback or choke must be created for register. Refer to Table 3.1.1 Image Trap Tolerance and the specific print segment. Because the values are general guidelines and print system dependent, the designer should confirm the trap requirement for reverse text with the prepress and print provider.

3.1.5 Drop Shadow

If a drop shadow is abutting another color, it will need to trap. Be sure to move the drop shadow by more than twice the specified image trap for the appropriate print segment. Refer to Design Section 3.1.1 for segment specific guidelines on total trap tolerance.

It is best to use only drop shadows for larger type, unless the color selected for the type is darker than the color it is abutting; remember, these abutting colors will be required to overprint each other to form the image trap.



S. Gilbert

3.1.5: Drop Shadow: If inappropriate image trap tolerances are applied (such as using offset traps on a flexo job), objectionable type will result.

Drop shadows that fade should be limited to a single color so as to allow for special screening to support the light tones of the gradient. Refer to Design Section 4.5 for additional information on Blends/Vignettes/Gradations.

3.1.6 Spaces and Tabs

Always use tabs rather than multiple spaces to position text. If a font change is required, the spaces will change size, while tabs will not change.

3.1.7 Text Wrap

Most programs will wrap text around imported images. If an image is replaced in production, text will reflow if automatic text wrapping features were used to define the text wrap area. Use the polygon tool or other shape to define the text wrap or run-around instead of letting the text automatically wrap around the image. When the high-resolution image is placed into the file, the program may see its edges differently and rewrap the type. The prepress provider will have to rebuild the desired wrap to get the text to reflow the same way.

3.1.8 Fonts

It is possible for a font to have the same name but exist in different file formats. For example, two different companies that make the font (sometimes called foundries) may name the font the same. Substituting a different font file format may cause the text to reflow and change the original design.

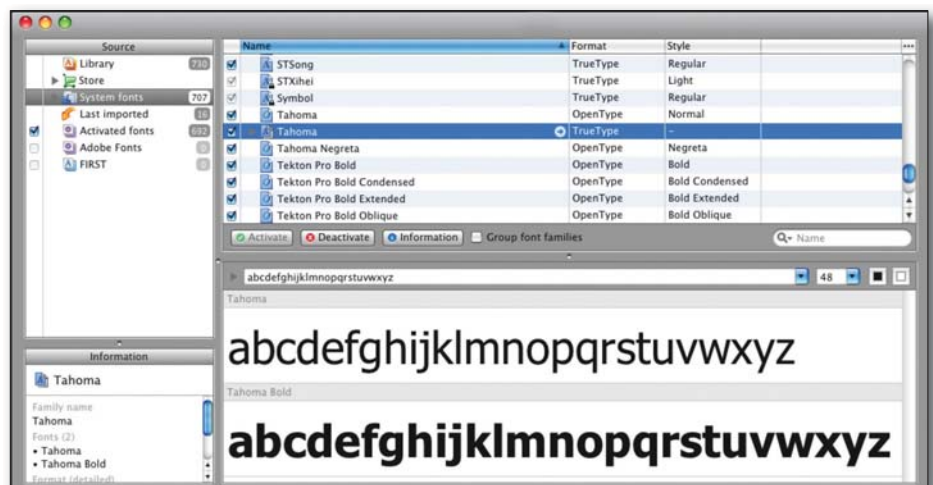
Fonts may be selected and used from a variety of sources. It is possible for a font to vary in appearance or performance in downstream operations based upon its source. For that reason, it is recommended that, in addition to the original file, a copy of the font be supplied with type converted to outlines. Refer to Design Section 3.1.8, "Converting Type to Outlines", for additional information.

PostScript/Type 1

A PostScript font is a Type 1 font and is created from two components: a printer font and a screen font. The printer font contains the outlines that allow the output device to accurately render the font in any size. The screen font allows the font to be viewed on a computer screen (monitor). Type 1 fonts require both pieces to work properly. PostScript fonts are the de-facto standard for professionals in the creative and print environments.

Open Type Fonts

There are several advantages to the Open Type format. First, as with TrueType, the entire font is housed in a single file. Second, this file is cross platform – the same file can be used on a Mac or Windows platform with consistent results. Third, an OpenType font can contain either PostScript or TrueType outline data. Lastly, OpenType can support Unicode information, which can contain thousands of characters including high quality ligatures, swash glyphs, and other advanced typographical features. This is a significant benefit over PostScript Type 1, which is limited to 256 characters.



3.1.8a: Font Utility Programs: There are many font utility programs to help manage fonts effectively.

Manufacturers

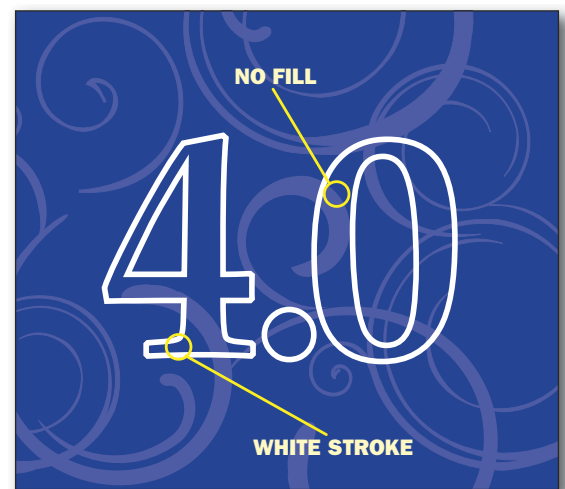
Sometimes downstream companies (such as prepress providers and printers) working on a design file may not have easy access to fonts used. If so, the design firm (or whoever is creating the content) should convert these fonts to outlines or paths. Refer to Design Section 3.1.8, “Converting Type to Outlines;” for additional information.

Styles of Fonts

In some applications, there is a style menu with type attributes such as bold, italic, outline, shadow, small caps, and all caps. Do not use this feature. Use only the actual font, such as Times Bold, rather than Times with the bold attribute. When using attributes, results vary depending on the RIP, printer drivers, and application being used. Selecting style attributes usually creates a pseudo version of the typeface, which is a degradation from the original font design. Many newer RIPs, printer drivers, and applications ignore pseudo commands and simply use the plain printer font. For example, if the italic command from the style menu is selected for Humanist 541 Condensed Bold (which has a corresponding printer font), the font will display as a condensed bold italic on screen but will typically not print in italics.

Outline Effect

To create an outline only, use a vector program and give the type a stroke in the desired color and a fill of ‘none’ or ‘white’. To stroke only the outside, use a copy of the type with no stroke and a white fill exactly on top of the stroked copy. Be sure the stroke is at least twice the specified image trap for the applicable print segment. Refer to Table 3.1.3 for print specific total trap tolerance guidelines.



3.1.8b: Outline Effect: To create an outline only, use a vector program, and give the type a stroke in the desired color, and a fill of ‘none’ or ‘white’. Be sure the stroke is at least twice the specified image trap for the applicable print segment.

Proprietary Fonts

Fonts designed for a specific client or job are considered proprietary and should be included with the submitted files for the job.

Other Font Architectures

Multiple Master, TrueType GX and other font architecture should be avoided. If their use is unavoidable, confirm the prepress provider can work with the required font architecture.

Poorly Written Fonts

Poorly written fonts may be node heavy (built with too many points), have bad kerning pairs, or incomplete character sets. They should be avoided. If there is a typeface that absolutely must be used, test it first through an imagesetter. If using a font that is not available from the output supplier, convert it to outline. If the font is public domain, send it with the files.

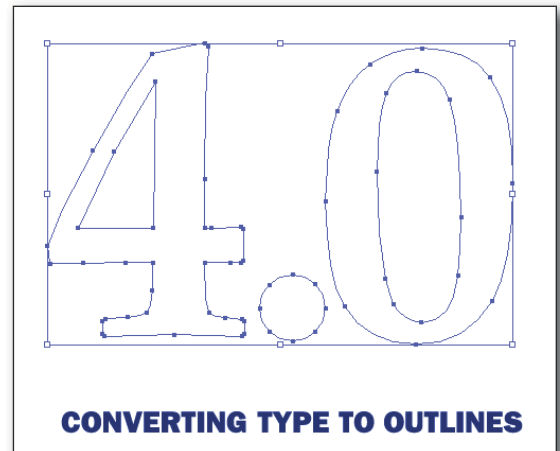
Supplying Type Fonts

To avoid copyright infringements or unauthorized use of type fonts, the licensing responsibility resides with both the creator of the file and the company outputting the file. The creator must check with the supplier of the fonts to confirm that the license held for the fonts allows the fonts to be used by both the creator and the output supplier.

Converting Type to Outlines

A common practice for handling type is to convert type to outlines in order to prevent font problems and lock content. However, this makes the text no longer editable and may alter its appearance. When converted to outlines, small type may appear heavier and should be reviewed prior to the final conversion.

- When a file with outlined type is supplied, it is advisable to also send a copy of the original file, including fonts, prior to outlining the type.
- Electronic files (.ai, .eps, .psd) containing text that are to be placed in another document, should also have all text converted to outlines. Fonts in placed images often are not reported as missing until the file is RIPed.
- Converting fonts to outlines helps identify poorly written or corrupt fonts.



3.1.8c: Converting Type to Outlines: Type converted to outlines minimizes font problems but cannot be edited.

3.2 Custom and Special Colors

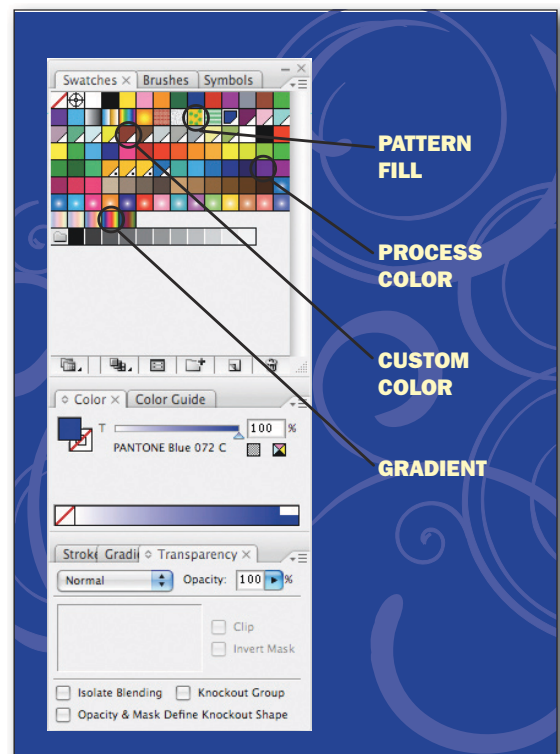
“Custom Colors” as defined in a file should represent only the actual inks, or tints of those inks, that will be printed.

A designer should specify or confirm the actual colors that will be used on press. Many products are printed with both spot colors and process colors. Correct identification of “custom colors” versus colors built from process inks, can expedite the production process. A file containing 15 or 20 custom (spot) colors is not printable; therefore, requiring the prepress provider to attempt to interpret the intentions of the designer.

In some programs, the designer can specify whether a custom color is meant to be created using a CMYK (process color) mix, or a single custom color ink. The designer must be sure the color specification is clearly indicated. On the annotation layer, it must be specified how each color is created. Using industry standard ink color designations such as Pantone®, TOYO®, etc., will assist with proper color communication and allow for standard colorimetric data/values to confirm the final match.

CMYK equivalents of custom colors do not always match. If the custom color is to be built with process colors (CMYK blend), the prepress provider must know if they are expected to use exact percentages or if they are responsible for verifying that the necessary tints are used to match as close as possible to the custom color callouts.

It is not uncommon for special colors to be used in process illustration, either as an enhancement or as a replacement for one of the traditional process colors. In these cases, special separation and proofing techniques are required.



3.2a: Custom Colors. Most products are printed with colors other than CMYK. Correct usage of “custom colors” can expedite the production process.

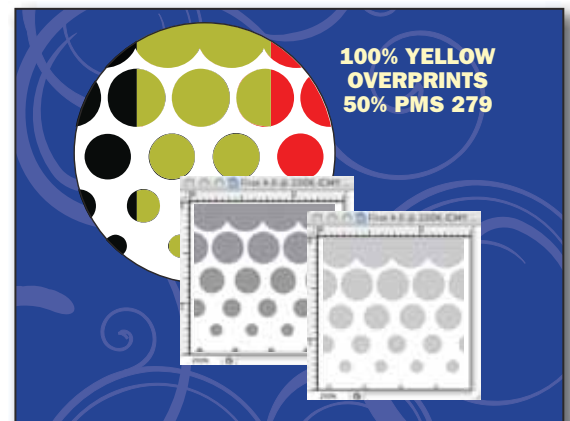
Differentiating White Ink from Unprinted Areas

If white is to be an ink, a custom color is created and used to specify which areas print white, as opposed to not printed. This color should be named “white ink” in the color palette. To further distinguish areas that are to be left unprinted, create an additional color named “Unprinted” or “Clear.” Either the white ink or the unprinted area needs to be filled with a differentiating tint.

Custom Color Proofing: Color Proof Files vs. Production Files

If a file includes spot colors that overlap to intentionally create a third color, it is necessary to set the top color transparency to “multiply.” This will display a created third color.

The best way to predict the third color result of overprinting two spot colors is to have the printer (or the ink supplier) create overlapping ink drawdowns of the two inks. If it is necessary to create a proof that accurately represents the overprint, it may be necessary to create a separate proofing file with the color of the overprinting area defined by CIE Lab data obtained from the overlapped portion of the ink drawdowns.



3.2b: Color Proof vs. Production Files: If a file includes custom colors that overlap to create a third color, produce two files: One file to produce a color comp proof; and a second file for production plates.



E. Scarpetta

3.2c: The Pantone Matching System (PMS) is a common way to specify custom colors.

3.3 Bar Code Design Considerations

Formerly, the Uniform Code Council (UCC) was responsible for managing the bar code system in the USA. The UCC is now the GS1 US organization. GS1 US manages the GS1 system and assigns GS1 company prefixes to companies/organizations in the USA. The most common use of a GS1 assigned company prefix is the creation of UPCs (Universal Product Codes), which contain a 12-digit Global Trade Item Number (GTIN).

The GS1 US publishes the following electronic data interchange guidelines based on the ANSI ASC X12 standard:

- Industrial/Commercial EDI.
- Uniform Communication Standard (UCS) – used in the grocery industry.
- VICS EDI – used in the general merchandise retail industry.

The GS1 US is also the code manager for the United Nations Standard Products & Services Code (UNSPSC). The UNSPSC provides an open, global, multi-sector standard for classification of products and services. Identify applicable commodity codes on UNSPSC website (www.unspsc.org).

You can also contact GS1 US at their website (www.gs1us.org).

3.3.1 Bar Code Specifications

Bar code print specifications are produced by combining three types of related specifications:

1. Application Standards are published by accredited standards organizations.

Bar codes are used in many different applications with different scanning conditions. For example, one application involves packaging for retail check out lanes while another application is for coding shipments for conveyor lane routing in distribution centers. The specifications for bar codes used in these two applications are different because the conditions for scanning the bar codes are different. Accredited standards organizations provide specifications in the form of guidelines and standards to assist in:

- Selecting the bar code type to be used,
- Structuring the data inside the bar code,
- Defining the printed human-readable information that is inside the bar code,
- Selecting bar code size within the acceptable range,
- Understanding where the bar code should be placed on the product, and
- Defining the minimum print quality requirements.

2. FIRST Print Specifications prescribe a minimal level of capability for all compliant printers.

These specifications fall within the acceptable limits of the appropriate Application Standard for the bar code being printed and will assist in:

- Determining the minimum size for a bar code depending on the printing press and substrate, and
- Identifying the preferred bar code orientation given the direction the web or sheet will travel.

3. Job Specifications should be published for film or plate output.

These specifications should assist in:

- Identifying optimum film/plate output resolution, and
- Determining bar width reduction (BWR) required by the specified print conditions.

3.3.2 Designer Responsibilities

The designer, prepress provider and printer all bear responsibility for producing quality bar code symbols. Designers play a critical role in assuring a bar code conforms to all applicable Application Standards and FIRST Print Specifications. When creating an FPO (for position only) symbol, the designer must determine and communicate the symbol type and size, the color(s) used to print it, as well as the location and orientation on the printed product. Design Section 3.3 highlights the necessary information for creating an FPO symbol for flexographic packaging applications.

Because designers are often involved in the substrate and color selection process, as well as the bar code placement, orientation and size determination, they should be aware of the design parameters for bar code performance. The designer should consider if the current design specifications might create scanning problems. Common design revisions requested because of the selected substrate or color include a larger symbol, a different symbol orientation, an extra layer of background ink, or a dedicated bar code print station.

Please consult your product manufacturer, printer/seperator for direction.

1. Selecting the Appropriate Symbology

The type of bar code selected depends on many factors including the Application Standard, where it will be scanned and how it will be printed. The designer must defer to the customer to identify which bar code type to use. Some of the common bar code types printed flexographically include:

- U.P.C. –Version A and Version E (including add-on and composite component)
- GS1-128 (formerly known as UCC/EAN-128)
- EAN 8 (including composite component)
- EAN-13 (including add-on and composite component)
- ITF-14 (Interleaved 2-of-5 also referred to as Code 25)
- Code 128 (full ASCII character set supported)
- Code 93 (full ASCII character set supported)
- Code 39 (supported with and without check code)
- MSI (including option to display data)
- JAN 13 (variation of EAN 13 used in Japan)
- JAN 8 (variation of EAN 8 used in Japan)
- Plessey (hexadecimal character set)
- Telepen (including compressed numeric mode)
- 2D Codes
- Codabar (both USS and Traditional format supported)
- USPS 4CB (United States Postal Service Intelligent Mail Barcode)



3.3.2a: Bar Code Type: The type of bar code depends on many factors including where it will be scanned and how it will be printed.

2. Designing for Printability and Symbol Contrast

Substrate Considerations

- *Texture & Porosity:* Bars and spaces are most accurately produced on smooth substrates with high ink holdout. The rougher, more textured and more porous a substrate, the greater the potential for printing bars with voids and/or printing specks in the spaces, either of which can reduce scanning rates. Textured and more porous stocks also tend to increase bar edge roughness, bar growth, and bleeding. Any of these substrate characteristics can negatively influence scanning rates.
- *Color & Transparency:* Bar codes scan most successfully with an opaque white background that provides white spaces and quiet zones with the maximum reflectance possible. When printing on a transparent or colored substrate, a solid, light-colored (white is optimum) background, with maximum opacity, is recommended in the area where the bar code is to be located. Special consideration for the background ink formulation and press set-up (anilox, double bumps of background color and mounting material selection, etc.) may be necessary in order to achieve maximum opacity.

Please consult your product manufacturer, printer/seperator for direction.

Color Considerations

The optimum bar code color combination is opaque black ink for the bars and opaque white substrate or ink for the background. Bars printed in opaque black, dark blue, or dark green and backgrounds (spaces and quiet zones) printed on an opaque white material or on a white, red, orange, pink, peach, or yellow ink generally scan successfully. It is important to remember that colors with acceptable ANSI/ISO Symbol Contrast on an opaque substrate may not be acceptable on an opaque substrate of another color or on a translucent or transparent substrate. When printing on a transparent substrate or colored substrate, a solid, light-colored (white is optimum) background with maximum reflectance is recommended in the area where the bar code is located. It is recommended that the bar code symbol not be placed on a printing plate used to print a large solid ink coverage. Printing plates that print large solid areas typically have requirements for extra impression and higher ink volume, which are not conducive to printing bar codes. Ink color specifications should be evaluated individually for different substrates.

Bar codes require bars with sharp edges in order for the scanner to perform successfully. Because scanning accuracy is reduced when variation in register occurs, the bars comprising a bar code must be printed in one color, using a solid line image on a single print station.

3. Determining Optimal Size and Location

Location Considerations

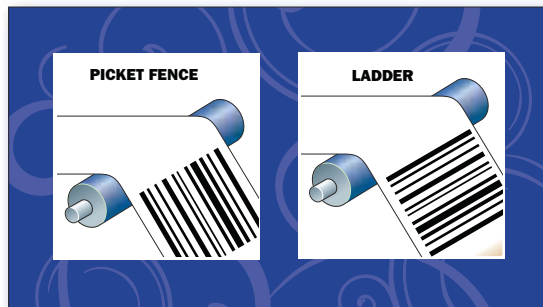
Bar codes are placed in different locations based on the shape of the product and where the product will be scanned. The designer should check with product manufacturer, printer or separator for placement specification based on these factors.

Orientation Considerations

It is strongly recommended that the bars in a bar code be printed parallel to the direction the web is moving through the press to avoid slurring. In certain situations, the bars in a bar code must be placed in the transverse (across the web) direction. In these cases, the printer should be consulted. It may be necessary to use a larger symbol to meet the minimum print quality requirements specified by the appropriate application standard. If print slur occurs with the symbol printing in the machine direction, the bars grow in length only and are still scannable; however if the symbol is printed in the transverse direction, the bars will grow in width, likely causing the code on the printed product to fail to meet specifications. Printing bar codes in the transverse direction is not supported by FIRST.



3.3.2b: Color Considerations: The optimum bar code color combination is opaque black ink for the bars and opaque white substrate or ink for the background.



3.3.2c: Bar Code Orientation: Bar code orientation is critical. The left figure illustrates the bars on the UPC symbol traveling in the machine direction, while the right figure, illustrates the bars running across the press direction.

Size Considerations

The area reserved for a bar code depends on several interrelated specifications. First, it is important to know what symbol type is specified based on where the product will be scanned. For example, if the product will be scanned at the retail POS (point of sale), an EAN/UPC symbol is typically specified. After the symbol type is known, it is important to know the allowable range of dimensions (height and width) for the symbol, including the human-readable text associated with it. It is important to note that certain symbols have a fixed relationship between their height and width, while others have minimum heights specified. Bar code truncation is a reduction of a symbol’s height below the application standard or symbol specification and is not supported by FIRST.

All compliant printers will be able to meet the minimum bar code sizes outlined in the table below. However, the smaller the symbol’s size, the tighter the tolerance on bar width growth; therefore, larger symbols are better. Printing a bar code below the minimum size specified by the bar code application standards is not acceptable.

Please consult your product manufacturer, printer/separator for direction.

Minimum Bar Code Magnification: General Guidelines			
<i>Bar Code magnification is print system dependent; determine optimum magnification with print characterization</i>			
Segment		Machine Direction	Printer Specific Minimum Magnification Machine Direction
Wide Web	Preprint Linerboard	100%	
	Combined Corrugated <i>flute dependent</i>	UPC: 110% - 200%; ITF-14: 100%	
	Folding Carton	100%	
	Multiwall Bag	115%	
	Film Products	100%	
Narrow Web	Paper Products	80%	
	Film Products	100%	

Quiet Zone Considerations

The quiet zone is the area, free of printing, that precedes the left bar and follows the right bar in a bar code symbol. The quiet zones allow scanners to detect when a bar code starts and stops. Quiet zones are based on multiples of the symbol’s narrowest element width (X-dimension). Minimum quiet zone specifications depend on the symbol specified.

3.3.2d: Quiet Zones: Quiet zones allow scanners to detect when a bar code starts and stops. Minimum quiet zone specifications depend on the symbol specified and its magnification.



3.3.3 USPS Intelligent Mail Bar Code

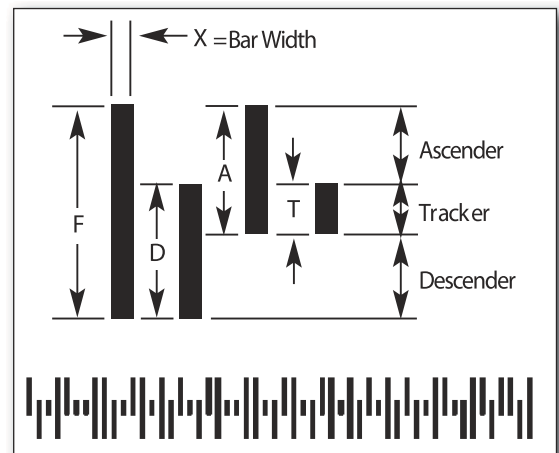
The Intelligent Mail Bar Code (CB4), used by the United States Postal Service (USPS), is a 4-state bar code that consists of 65 bars. The information in this section was obtained from the United States Postal Service Intelligent Mail Bar Code specification USPS-B-3200C.

Dimensional Parameters

- **Horizontal Dimensions:** The overall bar code width must be within 20 - 24 bars per inch.
- **Vertical Dimensions:** The overall bar code height must be within 0.134" (3.4mm) and 0.23" (5.84mm).
- **Quiet Zone**
 - Minimum 0.040" (1.02mm) above and below bar code.
 - Minimum 0.125" (3.18mm) on either side of bar code.

Specifications for Human-Readable Information

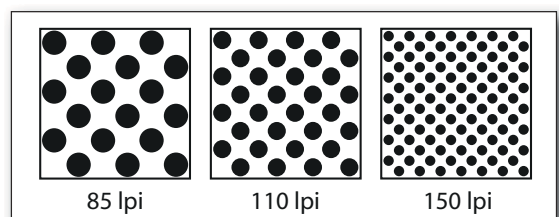
- **Vertical Position:** When human readable information is required, it shall be printed immediately above or below the bar code but outside of the quiet zone. The human readable information shall be at least 0.04" (1.02mm) above or below the bar code but not more than 0.50" (12.7mm) above or below the bar code. No other printing is allowed between the bar code and the human readable information.
- **Horizontal Position:** The human readable information, when required, shall be printed so that the left edge of the leftmost digit aligns with the leftmost bar of the Intelligent Mail Bar Code.
- **Content:** When human readable information is required, it shall consist of the 20-digit tracking code and the 5-, 9-, or 11-digit routing code, if present. The tracking code shall include a space between each data field. When the bar code contains a routing code, the 5-digit ZIP code, the 4-digit add-on and the remaining 2 digits shall be separated with a space between data fields.
- **Font Specification:** The human readable information, when required, shall be printed using a sans serif font and a minimum 10 to 12 point type size.



3.3.3: USPS CB4 Bar Code: The Intelligent Mail Bar Code (CB4) is a 4-state bar code that consists of 65 bars.

3.4 Screen Ruling

Screen rulings vary based on imaging method, plate material, and print conditions (such as press width, anilox configuration, and substrate). The range for both conventionally and digitally imaged plates is determined by print and substrate constraints. The graphics and process images to be used should be selected carefully because some print conditions require lower screen rulings. The screen ruling should be specified by the printer and considered by the designer. Table 3.4 provides general line screen guidelines by market segment and substrate category. The designer should consult the prepress and print providers to determine the optimum line screen for a specific design.



S. Gilbert

3.4: Screen Ruling: The higher the line screen ruling, the more dots per square inch and the smaller the diameter of each dot. Generally, dot gain increases with higher line screens.

Table 3.4

Line Screen (lpi & lpcm): General Guidelines					
<i>Line screen is print system dependent; determine optimum line screen with press fingerprint.</i>					
Segment		Substrate	Conventional Plates	Digitally Imaged Photopolymer	Laser Engraved Rubber/ Cured Polymer
Wide Web	Preprint Linerboard	SBS Board	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)	110 - 175 lpi (43 - 69 lpcm)	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)
		Uncoated	100 - 133 lpi (39 - 52 lpcm)	100 - 133 lpi (39 - 52 lpcm)	100 - 120 lpi (39 - 47 lpcm)
	Combined Corrugated	All	55 - 110 lpi (22 - 43 lpcm)	55 - 110 lpi (22 - 43 lpcm)	55 - 110 lpi (22 - 43 lpcm)
	Folding Carton	SBS Board	120 - 150 lpi (47 - 59 lpcm)	120 - 175 lpi (47 - 69 lpcm)	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)
		CRB Board	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)	110 - 120 lpi (43 - 47 lpcm)
	Multiwall Bag	Coated Paper	75 - 120 lpi (30 - 47 lpcm)	75 - 120 lpi (30 - 47 lpcm)	75 - 110 lpi (30 - 43 lpcm)
		Uncoated Paper	65 - 85 lpi (26 - 33 lpcm)	65 - 100 lpi (26 - 39 lpcm)	65 - 100 lpi (26 - 39 lpcm)
	Newsprint	All	85 - 100 lpi (33 - 39 lpcm)	85 - 100 lpi (33 - 39 lpcm)	n/a
	Film Products	All	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)	110 - 150 lpi (43 - 59 lpcm)	85 - 133 lpi (33 - 52 lpcm)
Narrow Web	Film Products	All	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)	110 - 175 lpi (43 - 69 lpcm)	85 - 133 lpi (33 - 52 lpcm)
	Paper Products	Coated Paper	133 - 175 lpi (52 - 69 lpcm)	133 - 175 lpi (52 - 69 lpcm)	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)
		Uncoated Paper	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)	110 - 133 lpi (43 - 52 lpcm)	100 - 120 lpi (39 - 47 lpcm)
	Envelope	Coated Paper	133 - 175 lpi (52 - 69 lpcm)	133 - 175 lpi (52 - 69 lpcm)	n/a
		Uncoated Paper	85 - 133 lpi (33 - 52 lpcm)	85 - 133 lpi (33 - 52 lpcm)	n/a

3.5 Tints

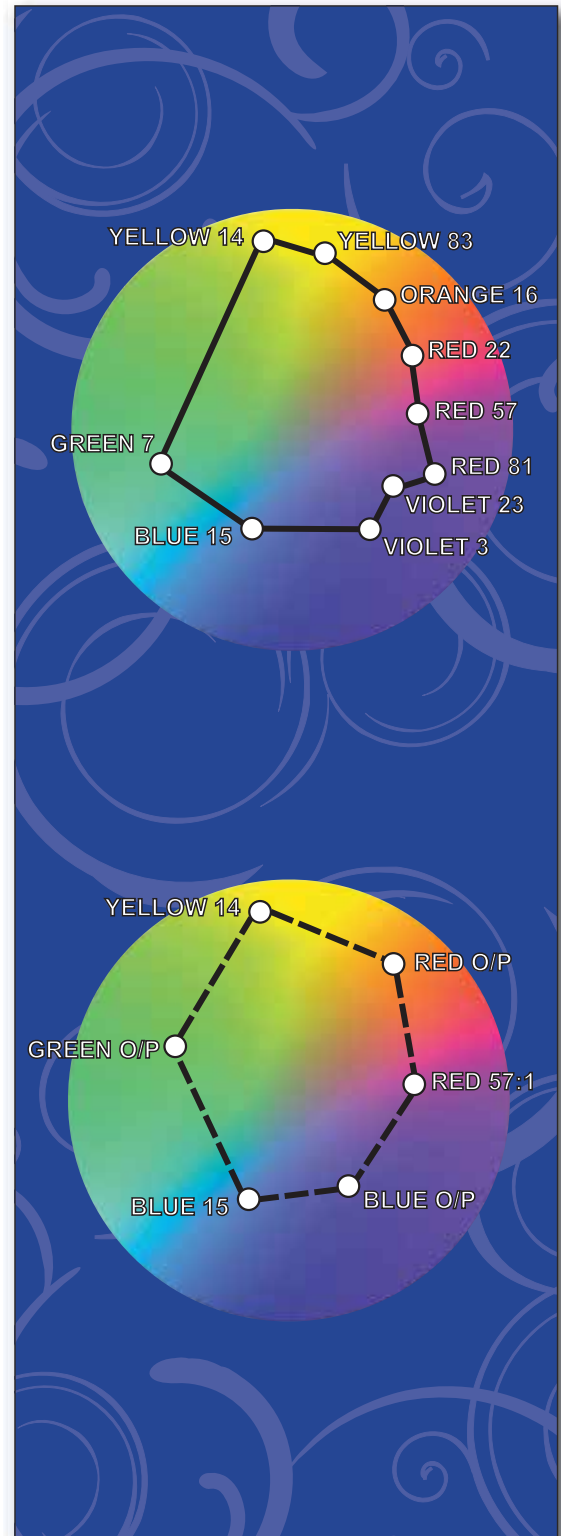
When tints are used, the values are adjusted during output using a print curve to compensate for the dot gain experienced in the printing process. A 2% minimum dot typically prints between 8% to 15%, while a tint value of 75% may print as 100%. Consult the print or prepress supplier for more information about profile specific dot gain considerations. The prepress provider applying the cutback curves can provide guidance on dot gain compensation.

3.6 Ink Colors

A designer should collaborate with the printer and consumer product company to determine how many colors are available for a product line. Many products are printed with additional colors other than CMYK. Transparent and/or opaque inks may be used and must be identified and listed in the color palette. The characteristics and print sequence of the inks used may require special considerations during the prepress phase.

In an effort to improve color matching across the product line, twelve ink pigments have been identified by color index name and number and recommended by FIRST. These twelve pigments are combined to create custom line colors (e.g., PMS 186 or "Shelly's Soda" Red). These pigments are recommended because they provide the largest color gamut with reasonable fade resistance required by most packaging applications. Standardizing ink pigments improves the consistency of the color match between press runs and between printers while minimizing metamerism. This results in a more cohesive product appearance on the store shelf. When these twelve pigments are plotted to create a color gamut, colors within the gamut can be reasonably matched. When a designer or consumer product company selects a color that falls outside of the gamut, the printer will not be able to achieve an accurate color match using FIRST pigments. In such cases, the printer may opt to include additional pigments that expand the color gamut in order to achieve the desired color. However, due to limitations in the pigments available for a given ink chemistry or application requirement, it is not always possible to match a color precisely. Any combination of ink pigments, proofing/printing methods, and substrates result in color matching limitations. The designer must consider the potential color match limitations of the inks, printing method, and substrate specified for the project.

In figure 3.6, the FIRST recommended pigments for line inks have been proofed on Leneta stock and plotted to create a color gamut (top illustration). The bottom graph depicts the printable gamut using FIRST recommended process inks. Printers should proof FIRST pigments on substrates typically printed and, using a spectrophotometer, plot the color gamut that will best predict their ability to match color on press. All colors are dependent on the substrate to be printed. The designer and consumer product company should see drawdowns of the specified color match on the intended substrate before any job is approved for prepress. Substrate substitution in this approval process is not recommended.



3.6: FIRST Ink Pigments

When composing a job in a drawing program, always include the die drawing or template information on a separate layer or use a unique spot color such as “die line” so it can be isolated at output. FIRST recommends die-cut jobs (labels, cartons, corrugated) be produced entirely within a drawing program.

2. Photo Editing Programs: Photographic images or art created in photo editing programs may contain thousands of shades of color and are referred to as ‘raster’ files. The graphics are made of many rows of pixels and each pixel can have its own shade. These files have a fixed resolution when created or scanned and cannot be enlarged without losing detail. When enlarging a previously captured image, check with the prepress provider for input on maximum enlargement without significant loss of image detail.

3. Page Layout Programs: Page layout programs provide an assembly environment where all kinds of elements can be combined. These programs, such as InDesign and QuarkXPress, are generally superior for dealing with many scanned images and volumes of text in multipage documents, but are less adept at accurate placement of elements relative to a template. Therefore, FIRST does not recommend using page layout programs for package design.

If documents with placed (nested) images are imported into another document the final RIP may not find the nested elements. For this reason, FIRST does not recommend placing files with nested images in page layout files. If it is necessary to deliver embedded or nested files, always send the original file with the job in case editing is required.



3.8: Raster Images: These files have a fixed resolution when created or scanned and cannot be enlarged without losing detail.

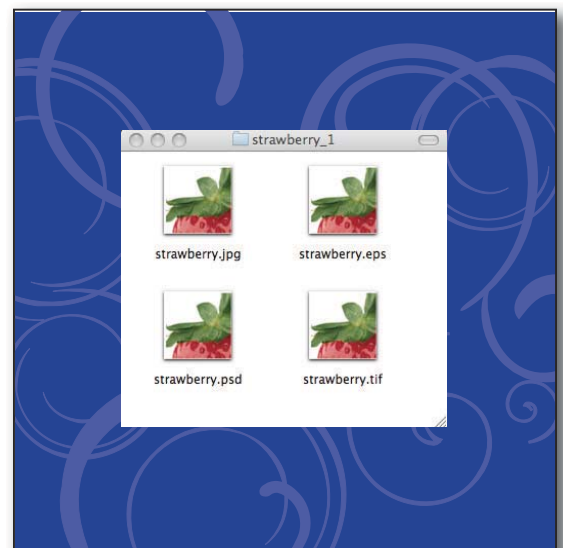
4.0 DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

4.1 Naming Conventions

When the design process is in the early stage, identifying a common naming convention is in the best interest of all parties and is vital in assuring smooth production. Many times the product being developed is part of a larger project or product line. Before the design and production files are created, check with the consumer product company to identify if they have already developed a common naming convention to be used by all suppliers.

File Names

File names should be short but descriptive. On some systems, file names may be truncated to the first eight characters when RIPed. Some systems cannot handle characters such as asterisks, spaces, or punctuation, so FIRST recommends never using these characters when naming files and/or document elements.



4.1: File Names: File names should be short but descriptive.

Naming for Image Replacement

In some production environments, low-resolution versions of images (FPOs) are used through various stages of concept, design, and approval. These low-resolution images are smaller in size and faster to process than the actual high-resolution version. With the correct and agreed upon naming convention, the FPO can be linked to the high-resolution file and replaced automatically during the output stage. Determine with the prepress provider if image replacement procedures will be used and what naming procedures are to be followed.

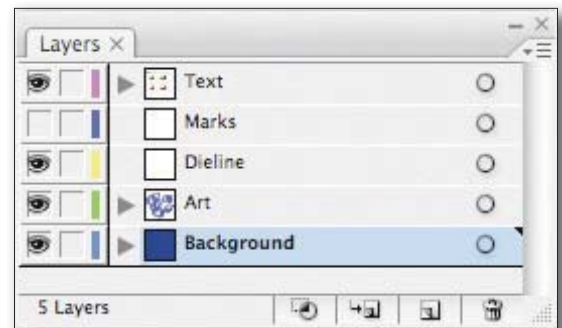
4.2 Document Size

Designs must be built to actual size. If the art is too big to proof in one piece, it will be necessary to tile the proof. All proofs should be made to the final size (100%) of the printed product.

4.3 Working in Layers

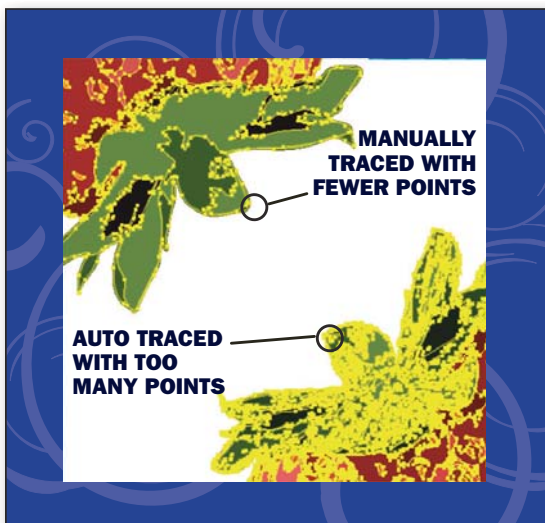
FIRST supports the use of layers to organize a file. Additionally, FIRST recommends putting the template on one layer, marks on another, and design elements and copy on different layers. Some workflows may require that colors be pre-separated; layers are an ideal way to organize these separations. Separate layers can also be used for variations in designs, such as special price banners or line extensions. This makes certain that the underlying graphics are identical in content, placement, and prepress execution. This can also be helpful in jobs with common colors (cylinders or plates shared between two similar designs).

When documenting the file, give the layers meaningful names. Put notes, instructions, color mixes, and other documentation on a layer, or include them on a separate annotation layer with the art. Creating an annotation layer assures these important instructions will not be lost as the file moves through the production chain.



4.3: Working in Layers: Use layers for variations in designs, such as special price banners, line extensions, etc. This makes certain that the underlying graphics are identical in content, placement and prepress execution.

4.4 Auto-Traced / Revectorized Art



Much of the fine-tuning of designs to achieve printability, die matching, and cross matching occurs during the prepress stage of production. To eliminate repeating these changes on each new revision of a base design, it is recommended to send all changes made during the prepress phase back to the designer and/or consumer product company to be incorporated into the base design.

Some high-end systems can now convert completed files back to Mac format as Illustrator or FreeHand files. Such files should be used with extreme caution. Auto-tracing features ask a program to make decisions about placing nodes or points. These automatic choices are not the most efficient choices and produce complex files with too many nodes that can slow or stop file processing. In addition, the files are so large they require large amounts of RAM to open.

4.4: Auto-Traced or Re vectorized Art: Auto-tracing features ask a program to make decisions about placing nodes or points. These automatic choices are not the most efficient choices, producing complex files with too many nodes that can slow or stop file processing.

Revectorized Files

Files that were created on a Mac, converted to a high-end system, and then converted back to a Mac are called “revectorized.” If possible, these files should not be used. If these files are used, they should be simplified as much as possible. When a RIP converted the file to raster, the RIP decided which pixels to turn on, using the PostScript information sent by the application. Now another program has processed it, making more decisions about where to place nodes, making this a third-generation image. Some change is inevitable; in the best case, it may be in the range of 0.001” (0.025 mm). For best results, use this image for position and move or adjust the original art to fit. Recreate the art whenever possible; that is, redraw the elements in the program to create new elements that are native to the program. This solves the file size issue and produces elements that are easily incorporated into future designs and changes.

4.5 Blends, Vignettes, Gradations

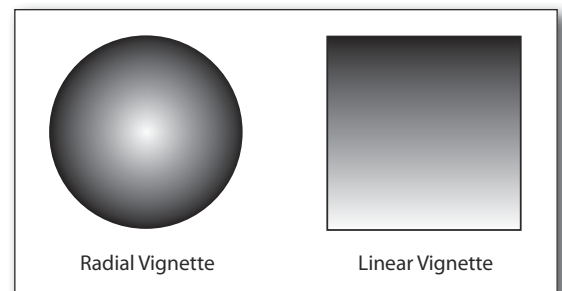
The terms blend, vignette, gradation, fade-away, fountain, and graduated tint are used interchangeably. FIRST uses the term vignette for clarity.

Building A Vignette

There are several approaches to building a smooth vignette as well as multiple problems in creating vignettes. Some of the approaches concern the way they print, others concern the way they are specified in software programs. Vignettes are subject to unpleasant banding (steps where tints do not transition smoothly) or dropping off (leaving a hard edge). Improvements in software have resulted in improved quality vignettes. Although the algorithms used to create vignettes have improved, they still require skill and careful planning. A thorough understanding of current software applications and the printers’ capabilities are required to create a printable vignette. Generally, the prepress provider is best equipped to create the vignette contained in the final production file.

Some of the primary considerations when building a vignette include:

- **Blending One Spot Color Into Another:** When blending one spot color into another spot color, two final files should be produced: a file for creating a comprehensive proof (color comp) and a file for production. The production file must contain two separate vignettes, one for each color. Mark up a proof with instructions for how the vignette is to be created in addition to including instructions on the annotation layer. For example, “100% to 20% yellow overprinting 40% to 80% navy.” There is no easy way to create one file that shows this effect and prints the correct tints except with process colors. Another solution is to substitute process colors for custom colors; for example, the magenta channel might print as red, the cyan as reflex blue, the yellow as gold and the black as green, etc.
- **Blending A Spot Color into White:** When creating a vignette of a spot color fading to white, specify the minimum dot percentage of the spot color on the lighter end of the vignette. One technique is to use the same spot color for both ends of the vignette. One end should be set to the full tint value while the other end should be set to the printer’s minimum dot size in the same color.
- **Trapping Vignettes:** Vignettes are difficult to trap. The lighter color should trap into the darker color, but that relationship changes in a vignette. When placing type or graphics over a vignette, be aware that when the necessary trapping is applied, undesirable results may occur.
- **RIPping Vignettes:** Designs that use multiple vignettes will take longer to process. To facilitate processing, consider using a raster program for the continuous tone image – the part of the design that looks like a picture. Use vector files for type and other elements that need hard, clear edges or very fine detail. Some processors will RIP vignettes from drawing programs to a continuous tone and add noise to prevent banding. This allows the prepress provider to separate the art, but requires more time to RIP.



S. Gilbert

4.5a: Radial & Linear Vignettes: A holding line around a vignette protects the smallest highlight dots and helps to prevent hard edges and dirty print.

Factors Influencing Banding

Many factors that influence banding in a vignette relate to the construction of the vignette. There is a mathematical relationship between the length, range, and the number of steps in a vignette. The length refers to the physical length of the vignette and the range refers to the difference in color across or down the vignette. For example, a vignette of 30% to 50% has a range of 20%.

- The longer the vignette, the more likely it is to show banding.
- The shorter the range of the vignette, the more likely it is to show banding.
- The fewer steps used, the greater the potential for banding.
- Banding is more visible with darker inks.
- Lower screen rulings are less likely to show banding.

Higher output resolutions may also help reduce banding that may appear on some low-resolution printers and computer monitors. Professional film and direct-to-plate output devices usually run at a resolution of least at 1,200 dpi, which also helps minimize banding. If objectionable banding is observed when creating the file, make a notation on the annotation layer of the file, transferring the final inspection responsibility to the party outputting the file.

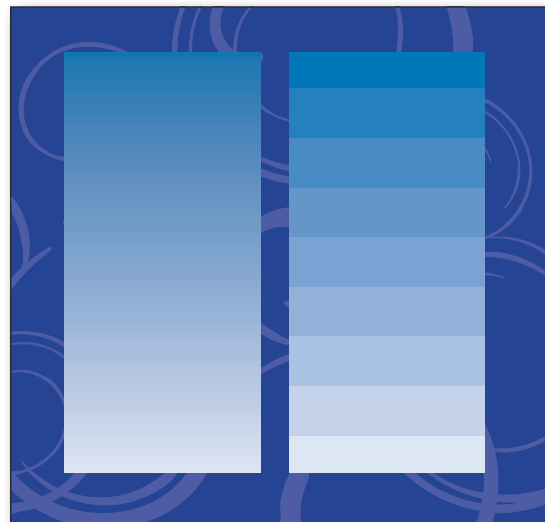
Factors Influencing Hard Edges & Dirty Print

To avoid hard edges and dirty print, it is important to maintain the printer's minimum dot and not fade to zero. The printer specifies the minimum dot used along the edge of any vignette. The lightest area of the vignette should adjoin a holding line or the edge of a graphic window; this will ensure that hard edges or dirty print do not appear across the vignette when the dot fades to the printer's minimum. When vignettes are made of more than one color, all colors must stop at the same place in order to prevent rainbowing and dirty print throughout the vignette.

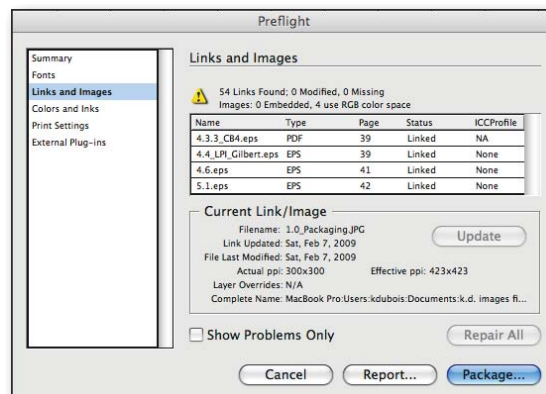
4.6 Imported Images – Follow the Links

File names are a critical reference link between the document and the image file. After placing an image, do not rename the files. All images placed in the document must travel with the document for output. Most layout programs treat imported images as electronic "pickups" and refer back (by following the link) to the image file at output. Always make certain that all links are updated properly before sending files. If an imported image is modified, always update it in the final document to make sure that it has not shifted position.

FIRST recommends working with the appropriate packaging application. Problems, such as nested files, can be encountered when working outside of those applications. In many programs, it is an option to embed the placed image data with the EPS file. This is not recommended because some editing may be required downstream. Sending the native application files enables future changes.



4.5b: Building a Vignette: There are several approaches to building a smooth vignette as well as multiple problems in creating vignettes.



4.6: Imported Images: After placing an image, do not rename the files. File names are a critical reference link between the document and the image file.

4.7 Electronic Whiteout

Do not cover up unwanted elements with a white box. The RIP will still process unwanted elements. Files that are designed in drawing programs can use masking, clipping, or compound paths instead.

4.8 Image Capture Quality – Scanning Considerations

Optimizing scanner variables when capturing the original image is critical to achieving the desired printed result.

Scan Resolution

All scanners capture RGB data. Although some scanners can use hardware and/or software to translate the scanned data to CMYK, FIRST recommends capturing and supplying the image in the original RGB format to protect against data loss. Entry-level scanners generally are not adequate for production scans. Such devices use interpolation to achieve production resolution or size, and real detail cannot be interpolated.

Image Sharpness/Resolution

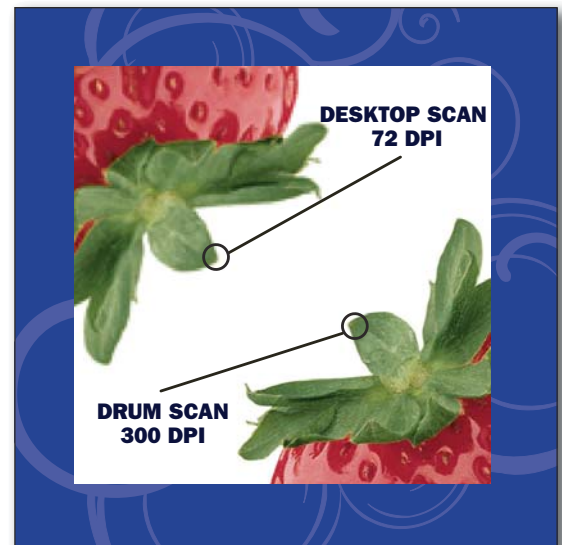
The most important scanning factor is optical resolution. A scan at 100% scale should have a minimum sampling of 1.5X - 2X over the final halftone line screen. Fine detail images may be sampled at up to 3 times the output line screen. For example, an image that will print with a 200-line screen may need a scan resolution of 300 to 600 pixels per inch, depending on the detail required in the image. If the image is enlarged, it will lower the effective resolution. The objective is to scan images at a high enough resolution to capture enough data to achieve the desired detail at the reproduction size.

Image Enlargement

Enlarging a scanned image will reduce the effective resolution of the image, and can compromise the image appearance. If possible, scan the original at the correct size and resolution; if rescanning is not possible, some enlargement may be acceptable depending on the scanned resolution. Adobe Photoshop is able to enlarge images using interpolation – a mathematical process of creating new pixels. Depending on the image, some interpolation may be tolerable. Whenever possible, it is always preferable to rescan the original image at the desired resolution.

Line Art

Theoretically, line art should be scanned at the same resolution as the output device. However, minimal improvement is visually apparent on most line art subjects scanned above 1,000 pixels per inch. Scaling will degrade quality; the best solution is to redraw line art in an illustration program. This also makes the file size smaller.



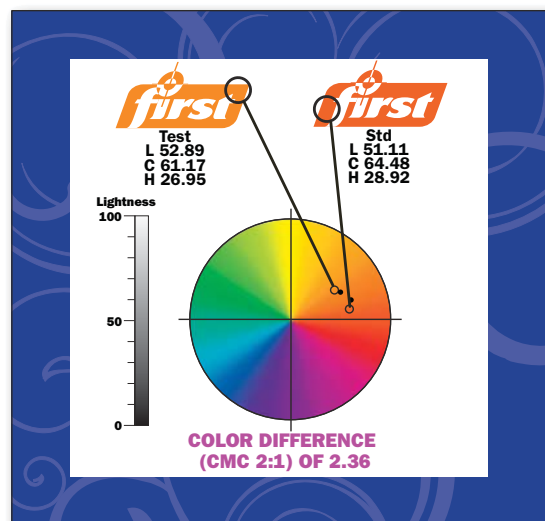
4.8: Scan Resolution: FIRST recommends images remain in RGB format for delivery to prepress.

4.9 Scaling & Resizing

It is best to place images at the desired reproduction size and resolution or larger. If upscaling is required, it should be done in Adobe Photoshop and not in the artwork layout. When upscaling an image, be careful to ensure the image resolution does not fall below the calculated resolution value – typically twice the halftone frequency.

4.10 Color Space

Images in a design file (whether captured or created) should remain in their native RGB color space for conversion in prepress to the color space described by the printer profile. Moving the image to any color space other than that of the final printer will result in unnecessary loss of color and detail accuracy.



4.10: Color Management System: Color Management Systems (CMS) translate from one gamut to another, allowing the proof to more accurately mimic the printing process.

5.0 FILE FORMATS AND USAGE

Before using a new version of software, check with all companies downstream that will have to open and work with the electronic file to ensure compatibility. In newer versions, it is possible to save documents in older formats.

5.1 Specified Formats

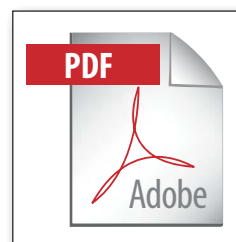
The primary specified formats for vector images are: .ai (Illustrator native), .fh (Freehand native) and .eps. For continuous tone (raster) images the primary specified formats are: .psd (Photoshop native) or .tif. Refer to Design Section 5.2 for delivery of images via PDF.

There are numerous types of electronic file formats that can be generated from drawing, photo editing, and page layout programs that should not be used. BMP, PICT and JPEG files generally lack detail due to the way their data is compressed. If other file formats must be used, it is imperative that all parties agree which file formats are to be created, exchanged, and archived throughout the project. The prepress provider is in the best position to describe the advantages and disadvantages of each format for a specific purpose.

5.2 Portable Document Format (PDF)

PDF is an imaging file format used to transport graphically rich content. It is commonly used in computer-to-plate and digital proofing technologies. The “creator” of the file (designer, ad agency, prepress provider) must produce a file that meets the minimum imaging requirements of the “receiver” (prepress provider, printer). PDF/X is a PDF file with restrictions intended to facilitate the transfer of files from “creator” to “receiver” as outlined in ISO 15930-1:2001.

ISO 15930-1:2001 (*Graphic Technology – Prepress Digital Data Exchange – Use of PDF Part 1: Complete exchange using CMYK data PDF/X-1 and*



5.2: Portable Document Format PDF is used to transport graphically rich content. It is typically used in computer-to-plate technologies.

PDF/X-1a) is both an application standard and a file format standard. It defines a set of conditions to govern the creation, viewing and imaging of PDF/X-1 files. Content and structure of PDF/X-1 files are limited to ensure imaging integrity. The objective is to create a “blind exchange” of graphically rich content ready for imaging. The Ghent PDF Workgroup (GWG) is an international group comprised of graphic arts users, associations and developers whose goal is to establish and disseminate process specifications for best practices in graphic arts workflows. The function of the Ghent workgroup specifications is to establish a minimum threshold. If a file fails to meet these minimum specifications, a warning flag will appear. Even if a file conforms to Ghent specifications, flexographic segment specific capabilities must also be considered.

While the GWG Packaging Specification is largely PDF/X compliant, there are deviations from this rule for applications that are packaging specific.

5.3 Clip Art

Clip art may come in the form of low-resolution PICTs, better-performing TIFFs, or as well-built object-oriented EPS images. Be sure to ask about the file format of the clip art being used to confirm the appropriate level of quality. If the image is a scan, identify the scanning resolution. If it was scanned at 72 pixels per inch, the clip art piece will be suitable only for display on a monitor and printing to a low-resolution printer.

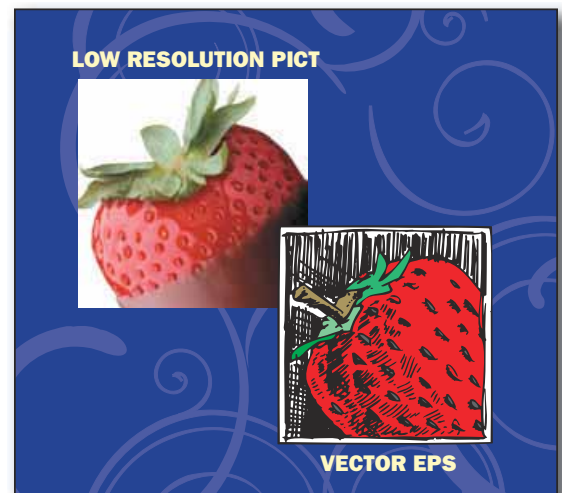
The selected image may be one of several on a clip art page. Remember that masking out all the other images does not remove the images; they will all be processed. Save individual images under a new name and import the single image into the document.

5.4 FPO Continuous Tone Images

Whenever possible, a FPO (for position only) CT image should be created from actual high-resolution data with correct cropping and rotation. Otherwise, the high-resolution image will need to be manually placed. The letters “FPO” must be placed into the live image area because the file will go through many channels before being output and if not properly identified as a “for position only” image, it may not be replaced.

5.5 Special Effects

When editing low-resolution raster files to produce special effects, document the steps used. The effects of most functions change with a change in resolution. It would be difficult to reproduce the same result with the high-resolution image without the documented information. Even with instructions, it is difficult to recreate several complicated special effects. The “action” sets within Adobe’s Creative Suite allow the creator of the low-resolution file to record each edit step, in sequence, used to create the file. The “action” set can then be saved and shared with the user that will be creating the high-resolution original.



5.3: Clip Art: Clip art may come in the form of low-resolution PICTs, better-performing TIFFs, or as well-built EPS images.



5.4: Creating and Identifying FPO Images: If an image is not properly identified as a “for position only” image, it will not be replaced.

5.6 Image Substitution – Automatic Image Replacement

Using Low-Resolution Files For Automatic Image Replacement

A low-to-medium resolution file may be provided to the designer for automatic image replacement. These files contain links to full-resolution files on the prepress provider's system. It is important not to rename the file; the file name is the link back to the high-resolution image.

This method allows the designer to move, crop, or resize (within limitations) the APR/OPI image as if it were the live high-resolution image. It places the control of exact positioning in the hands of the designer. Resizing of low-resolution images must be employed with extreme caution. The high-resolution file will be scaled by the same factor. Enlarging the file will reduce its effective resolution significantly and reproduce an image that will not be pleasing due to loss of detail.

Specific recommendations on working with images for automatic placement may vary based on the workflow of the individual designer and prepress provider. The designer and prepress provider should agree on the procedures for using automatic image replacement.

5.7 File Transfer Recommendations

The receiver of any digital file should be contacted to determine the preferred transfer media. File Transfer Protocol (FTP) is a common method of file transfer, which may be available on the prepress or print providers' web site. Removable media such as CD or DVD may also be used to transfer files. The following is a partial list of viable sources of electronic transfer of digital data:

- ISDN lines
- T-1 lines
- E-mail
- FTP
- PDN
- Disk
- Private network

A hard copy proof must accompany every digital file, even if the hard copy proof is delivered the following day. Regardless of the file transfer method, all jobs processed should be accompanied by:

- A list of file names relevant to the job,
- Files organized by directories/folders,
- All high-resolution images embedded or linked in the job folder,
- All supporting profile files (source and destination),
- A hard copy reflecting all files included, and
- Screen and printer fonts (when applicable).

5.8 Program Applications

Operating System: PC or Mac

The packaging industry commonly uses the Macintosh platform for graphics production, though there are PC/Windows versions of many popular applications available.

Program Applications

Applications used in package design are divided into three categories:

- *Drawing Programs:* Adobe Illustrator, Adobe FreeHand, Corel Draw – which create vector files.
- *Photo Editing Programs:* Adobe Photoshop, Apple Aperture, Fractal Design Painter – which create raster files.
- *Page Layout Programs:* Adobe InDesign, QuarkXPress.

1. Drawing Programs: Drawing programs create files that contain objects and, therefore, are referred to as “vector” (mathematical coordinate) files. A line is created by identifying two points and providing the instructions to connect the points with a line of particular weight and color. Shapes have more points and indicate a fill color. There is no resolution to these graphics, thereby allowing an element to be scaled up or down with no loss of detail. Furthermore, they are inherently accurate and are best for graphics with a fixed set of colors (line copy). Most drawing programs also include the ability to create gradients, vignettes, and blends.

6.0 PREFLIGHT OF FINAL DESIGN PRIOR TO RELEASE

Preflight is required by FIRST. The process entails documenting, collecting and testing files prior to release to another vendor in the production process. The preflight requirement was designed to ensure all components of a design have been supplied and received as intended. The designer should keep an electronic back-up of all released files for safety.

6.1 Documenting the Design

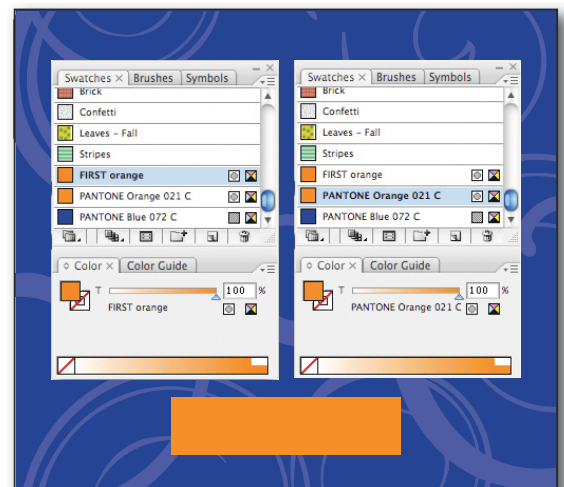
Revised Art

Revised files should be renamed with a revision number or date. Do not rely on the operating system modified date because each time the file is opened the date changes. Keep the old file name the same except for the revision number or date.

Images With Custom Colors

The custom colors used in a placed image must have the same name as the corresponding custom colors in the final design file. This applies to images pasted in as well. Otherwise, the two colors will not output as one color separation. Many programs will now import colors from placed images into their palettes, but the artwork must then be edited in the file to use these same colors.

TIP: For the placed raster file to output with the line art in the composite file, custom colors must be edited to the corresponding CMYK inks.



6.1: Images with custom colors: Custom colors used in a placed image must have the same name as the corresponding custom colors in the final design file.

Design Report

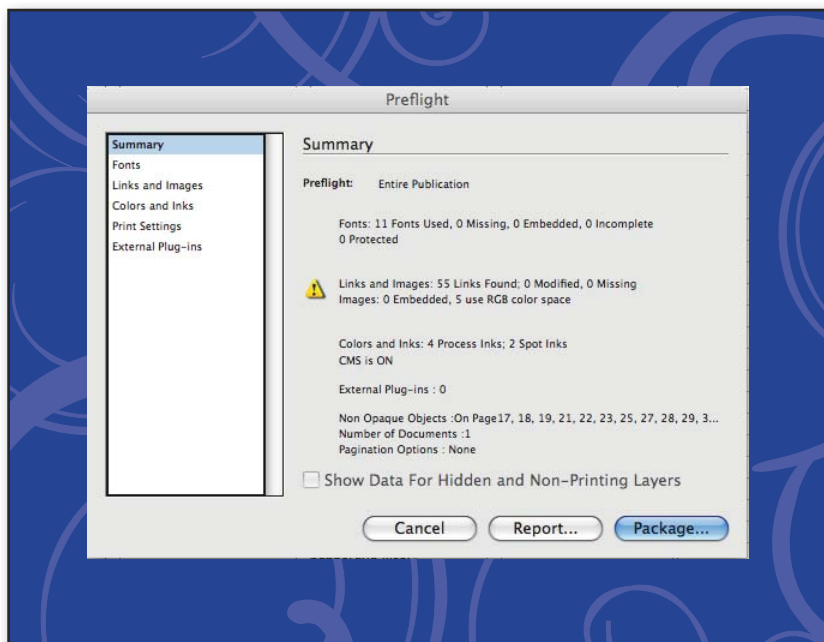
The final design may seem very simple to the designer, but it can be difficult to decipher when someone in the production process starts to work with it. To make the design flow smoothly through production, details must be provided on how it was developed and the expected end result. Some programs have report features to list details about a file, others use comment layers within the file itself. The following list identifies what information should be included in the design report:

- Final file name(s)
- All placed full resolution and FPO images
- Mechanical name (die drawing used to build the design) including the date and source of the template
- Application/version of files
- Fonts used
- Colors used (CMYK, PMS, Custom)
- Common and/or base layers.
- Instructions for vignettes or effects

6.2 Release to Prepress

Files to be released to prepress must be supplied in their entirety including all supporting files (linked/embedded high resolution images, fonts, etc.). The most reliable way to verify all necessary supporting files have been supplied is to:

- Copy the files to another computer, or copy files to a different directory or volume on the local machine.
- Open document with all supplied fonts loaded, and all supplied images linked.
- Output full color, full size proof (tile if necessary).
 - Another option is to convert all type to outlines and print a PDF document, which is essentially the same as creating a PDF from a distilled postscript file.



6.2: Release to Prepress: Supply files to be released in their entirety including all supporting files.

- Verify all content against the approved comps.

Materials To Be Sent With the Job:

- Final files, including all supporting high-resolution images, fonts and mechanicals (templates). When sending multiple designs, file-manage each design folder to house the relevant working design file and all applicable supports.
- Full color, full size, hardcopy proof or a PDF printed out of native application (which is essentially the same as creating a PDF from a distilled postscript file).
- Documentation described in Design Section 6.1 “Design Report”.
- A printout of the disk directory if supplying files via disk.

Verify the file transfer method with the recipient. Many different options are available. Additionally, if using data compression (.sea, .zip), check with the prepress vendor to determine compatibility.

For more information on FIRST 4.0, please contact the Flexographic Technical Association at (www.flexography.org)