Print-ready files: a 10-point checklist before you send artwork to the printer

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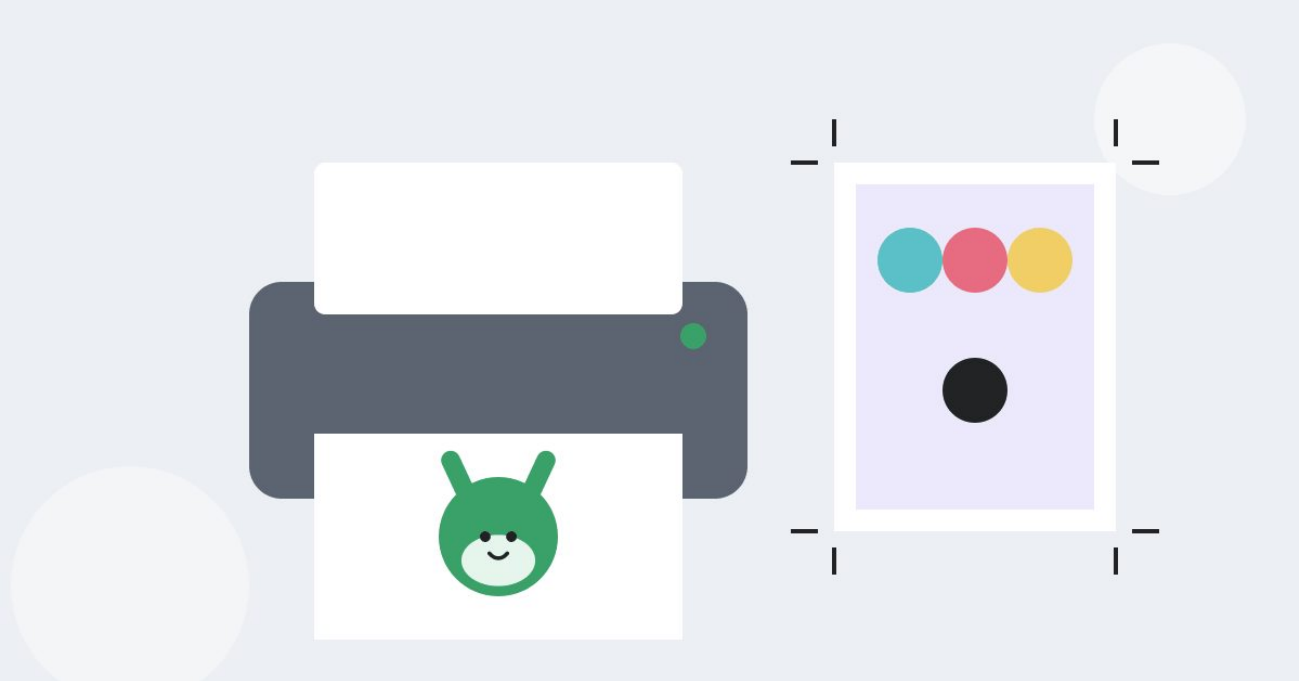

> Bleed, safe zone, CMYK, resolution, fonts and proofs — avoid reprints and wasted money with this simple checklist for cards, posters, stickers and packaging.

A design can look perfect on screen and still come out wrong on paper: white lines at the edge, text cut off, colours duller than expected. Most problems come from the file, not the printer. Check these ten points first.

The checklist

1. Correct final size: the document matches the trim size exactly (e.g. A5, 5×7 in, 85×55 mm business card).
2. Bleed: backgrounds extend 3 mm (0.125 in) beyond the edge.
3. Safe zone: text and logos stay at least 3–5 mm inside the trim line.
4. Colour mode: CMYK for most printers; ask whether they want a specific profile (e.g. FOGRA39 in Europe, GRACoL/SWOP in the US).
5. Resolution: images at 300 DPI at final size.
6. Rich black: large black areas in rich black, small text in 100% K only.
7. Fonts: embedded in the PDF or converted to outlines.
8. Spot colours and finishes: foil, varnish or white ink on separate, clearly named layers.

9. Cut lines: for stickers and die-cut shapes, a vector cut path on its own layer.
10. Export as PDF/X: PDF/X-1a or PDF/X-4 is the safest format for print shops.

Always ask for a proof

A digital proof catches typos and layout problems; a physical proof shows real colours. For large runs, a printed proof is worth the small cost.

When you order artwork from us

Tell us where it will be printed and the size. We deliver files prepared for that use — so you can send them straight to the printer.