WHAT IS BLEED?

A design destined for print requires setting up to certain specifications to ensure that the work is printed correctly by industrial lithographic or digital print firms. This often starts with the initial document upon which the design is to be created by adding the correct bleed area and crop marks.

So... what is bleed?

Bleed is the area of artwork that is extended beyond the actual dimensions of the document. It is used to avoid strips of white paper showing on the edges of your print should the batch be misaligned when cut to size.

Any objects in your artwork that touch the edges of the document require bleed, for instance a background colour or image should spread to cover the entire bleed area as should any objects that creep in from the side of the page.

In the UK at least, bleed of 3mm is commonly required. This 3mm accounts for each of the four sides of the page, therefore you should add 6mm to the width and height of the document, for example:

A4 Paper = 210mm x 297mm
210mm + 6mm = 216mm
297mm + 6mm = 303mm
Total Document Size = 216mm x 303mm

In addition to bleed, you should also add a margin to the edges of the document to avoid having your objects look as if they are about to fall of the page or even worse actually get cropped off when the document is trimmed! The amount of margin is personal preference, but 3mm is a minimum.

Crop marks

For the majority of jobs you send to the printer you need to place crop marks on your document. How far the crop marks should be from the document border is something you should discuss with your printer. For most jobs 3 to 6 mm is fine.

In normal usage you won't see the cropmarks untill you open the exported file, pdf for example.

Adobe InDesign bleed settings

Bleed settings in InDesign are right there in the new file dialog... but hidden! You need to hit the 'more options' button before they become visible. If you already have a document open you can find them in the file > document setup dialog.

Bleed settings in Photoshop

There are no bleed settings availlable in Photoshop when you make a new document. In other words: bleed is not a native element in Photoshop images.

However, it is possible to create bleed your self by adding the bleed size to the document size. For instance if your final image would be 200mm x 200mm you would add 3mm to all document sizes, making the image 206mm x 206mm.

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