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# **Designing for Specialty Printing**

## **SIX QUICK TIPS**

BY

**ESTD FRESH IMPRESSION LETTERPRESS STUDIO 2009**

# Table of Contents

Preface

6 Tips for Specialty Printing

I. Paper, Paper, PAPER! .....	4
II. Vector Preferred.....	5
III. Convert to Outlines .....	6
IV. Assign Spot Colors .....	7
V. Clean Type: Line Widths, Bowls, & Counters .....	8
VI. Less is More .....	10
Super Secret Offer .....	11

DESIGN WEEK TALLAHASSEE



## Preface

Hey there! It is an honor for FRESH IMPRESSION LETTERPRESS STUDIO to sponsor an event such as Design Week Tallahassee. We know that Covid-19 has changed all the amazing plans that were made, but I personally couldn't be happier to see everyone adapting to the situation and continuing to move forward. The show must go on! As they say...

In light of these changes, we were given an opportunity to put together 6 quick tips for specialty printing, just for you. Let's hope you find them useful, and that they help you conquer a few creatures of habit!

P.S. There is also a super secret passphrase at the end of this document. It will give you access to an exclusive discount for Design Week Tallahassee viewers for the next 60 days on any print order for yourself or client work.



Shout-out to Pen and Tool for the absurdly awesome artwork for Design Week Tallahassee  
Pen and Tool @penandtool - Go follow!

# **1. Paper, Paper, PAPER!**

SO, let's talk about paper for a minute. Did you know that it doesn't have to be white? There is an amazing amount of unexplored paper colors and textures out there just waiting to be discovered by you.

In fact, with specialty printing, it's best to work with colored paper rather than trying to print a solid color on white. It's not that solid areas can't be printed and printed well, but in doing so the area printed will lose its texture and compress the paper. Which creates an entirely different hand feel than the paper tooth had to begin with. In some cases, this is not preferred.

A much more desirable and higher quality end product can be made by using colored papers rather than color floods.

Embrace and cherish the tooth of the paper.

*Paper Tooth: The texture (craters) of the surface of the paper.*

## **2. Vector Preferred**

When sending your artwork to a specialty printer, a vector file is always desired. It's going to give you that buttery smooth edge on type with sharp defined corners.

However, if raster artwork is required due to the nature of the artwork, it's best to have produced this image as an 800dpi or higher bitmap that is embedded in the art file with colors assigned.

In other cases, your printer will RIP your artwork down for you, but with specialty printing, the quality desired might not be attained from a 300dpi JPG.

Lastly, you should layer your artwork for the different colors and name the layers. Like, seriously.

*No, yeah, like really seriously: Layer your artwork and name it appropriately.*

## **3. Convert to Outlines**

Even the pros forget sometimes! It's cool. Just remember to convert all of your font to outlines before sending the file to your specialty printer.

Otherwise, you'll likely be bouncing artwork files back and forth with your printer a few times.

In Illustrator:

*Select the Type Object > Type > Create Outlines*

## **4. Assign Spot Colors**

Specialty printing will be using the Pantone Solid Uncoated or Coated color book most of the time. Be sure to assign these color swatches to your artwork.

In Illustrator:

***Swatches Panel Menu > Open Swatch Library > Color Books > Pantone Solid Uncoated***

*Don't forget to put these on separate layers!*

## 5. Clean Type

### LINE WIDTHS, BOWLS, COUNTERS

There are some limitations with image transfer when utilizing specialty printing. This typically refers to the plating of the image.

#### LETTERPRESS

For letterpress ink printing, you'll want to keep your stand alone lines at 0.6pt or higher. A stand alone line would be a line that does not have anything else near it. The lines of your type should be 0.35pt or thicker. This does not apply to points on serifs, which can hold down to 0.25pt, and are typically not an issue. If you have a very thin slab serif, you might want to check the thickness of serifs. Your type can be as small as 4pt if it meets the line thickness requirements. However, sometimes there might be a font with very thin stems, ascenders, and descenders at a larger 12-16pt scale. This might create stand alone lines, so be sure to check their thickness as well.

## 5. Clean Type (cont.)

### LINE WIDTHS, BOWLS, COUNTERS

#### FOIL STAMPING

For foil stamping, it depends somewhat on the paper type.

Matte papers can help keep smaller type cleaner, whereas soft touch papers might start filling in the bowls and counters. All of which greatly depends on the design of the font.

If you're using a smaller size (5-6pt), keep in mind that normal or light weight fonts with more open bowls and counters have a better chance of staying clean than heavier weighted fonts.

Our recommendations for minimum font size and line width:

*Letterpress Ink: 6pt font / 0.6pt stand-alone line*

*Foil Stamping: 5pt font / 0.25pt stand-alone line*

*Embossing: 12pt font / 2pt stand-alone line*

## **6. Less is More**

Remember, with specialty printing the printing method is part of the design. It is bringing to the piece a unique highlight, shadow, texture, or even shiny bits. So let it breathe.

Understand how the paper is being shaped and manipulated with these effects. As strong as these machines are, there are limitations to the tonnage they can produce. Allow the artwork to have enough negative space so that the bevels have room to expand and maximize the depth and manipulation of the paper's surface.

*Hey, thanks for sticking through to the end. I hope you enjoyed these 6 tips! Happy designing!*

## **Super Secret Offer**

As a viewer of Design Week Tallahassee, we'd like to extend a special discount to you. This will be a 10% discount on any print order for yourself or client work. This discount will expire on October 23rd at 5:00pm. Be sure to use the following passphrase when placing an order to receive your discount.

Passphrase:

**"CREATURES OF DESIGN. TYPEHIGH OR DIE."**



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