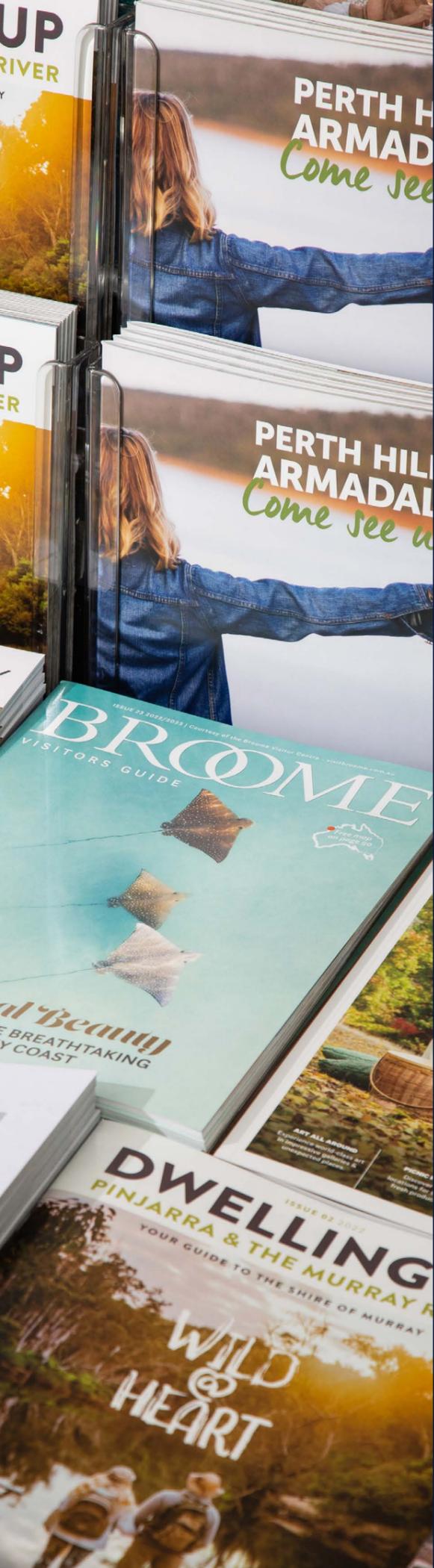


VANGUARD
MEDIA GROUP

YOUR 2025
GUIDE TO
PREPRESS
PERFECTION



PRINTING: WHY DOES IT SOMETIMES GO SO WRONG?

More often than not, the root of printing issues lies in the planning stage. Problems like missing font versions, incorrect image colour spaces, or layouts unsuited to the chosen binding method can all lead to disappointing results. As much as we hate to admit it... the issue often starts with you. But don't stress - we're here to help!

Guiding customers through the complexities of Prepress is a personal mission and it's a commitment shared by the entire team at Vanguard. That's exactly why we've created this guide: to help you adopt best practices that will make your experience with our Prepress department, and the entire production process, smooth and stress-free.

Get it right in Prepress, and your project is well on its way to a successful journey through our Press and Postpress stages. That means:

- Staying within budget and saving money
- Hitting deadlines and saving time
- Reducing environmental impact
- And taking some pressure off yourself

So, dive on in! You'll be tapping into over 40 years of Vanguard experience. And you'll see how mastering Prepress can lead to flawless results - every single time.

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PLANNING

LIKE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SAID, “BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL.” AND LIKE OUR PREPRESS STAFF SOMETIMES SAY WHEN HAVING TO FIX BADLY PREPARED ART, “AT THIS RATE I’LL BE HERE UNTIL THREE IN THE MORNING.”

A little planning and preparation at the start will give your project its best chance of being completed efficiently, within budget and with pleasing quality.

So first, to ensure your project is on the right track from the start, ask yourself some questions:

1. What do I want to create and how do I achieve this?
2. How will my design work best and how do I need to set up my layout for the chosen binding method?
3. How is the stock I am printing on going to affect my images?
4. Can I afford to annoy Prepress staff by making them work until three in the morning to fix my oversights?

Quick Note on Supplying Artwork

To help us deliver your job smoothly and accurately, we kindly ask that you send artwork only once it’s fully complete; including all final text, images, and ads.

Sending unfinished files (even with the best intentions!) can lead to delays, increase the chance of errors, and often doesn’t speed things up overall.

We’re always here to help, so if you’re unsure whether your file is ready or have any questions, just ask. We’re always happy to guide you!

PREPARATION

START PREPRESS RIGHT: GET THE BASICS SET FROM THE BEGINNING

To ensure a smooth prepress process, start by setting your document to the correct size. **Some design programs default to US Letter, so double-check this early on** - it can save you from having to redo all your artwork later.

Next, set your bleed. Most artwork needs a 3mm bleed on all sides, but for perfect bound covers, we ask for 5mm.

Also, make sure your document is set to use CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black) instead of RGB. **RGB is for screens, not print and when it’s converted to CMYK, colours can shift and lose vibrancy.** By working in CMYK from the start, you’ll get a much more accurate idea of how your final printed piece will look.

CREATING PRINT-READY ARTWORK: KEY TIPS

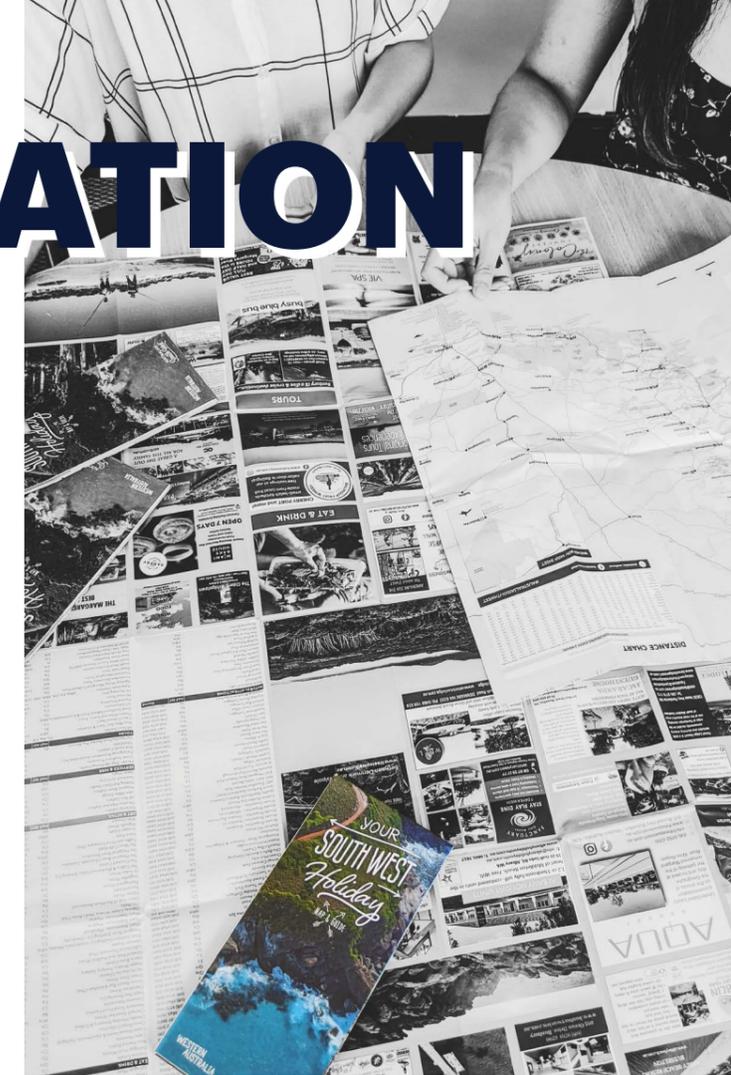
Keep your ink coverage below 320%. Too much ink takes longer to dry, which can cause smudging or pages sticking together. **Never use registration black (100% of all CMYK colours)** it adds up to 400% ink, which is far too much.

Rich blacks are okay, but avoid using them behind small white text. It’s harder for printers to align perfectly, which can make the white text look fuzzy or blurry.

When using photos or images, aim for a resolution of at least 225ppi, ideally 300ppi. Anything lower may look blurry or pixelated in print.

Since photos and scans are usually in RGB, remember to convert them to CMYK for accurate colour printing.

Finally, keep all text and important elements at least 3mm from the edge of the page. This avoids anything getting cut off during trimming.



SAVING YOUR ARTWORK AS A PRINT-READY PDF

When exporting your artwork to PDF, make sure all fonts are embedded or the text is converted to outlines. If fonts aren’t embedded, they may not print correctly unless we have the exact font. Outlining text solves this, but it makes editing harder and can slightly thicken the text.

Even if you’ve added bleed to your design, some programs require you to manually select “include bleed” when exporting. If not selected, your PDF might export without it. Please also include crop marks on all projects to help ensure bleeds are trimmed inline.

For magazines, or books, save your PDF as single pages (not spreads). We’ll handle page layout and single pages make the process smoother.

Lastly, please order your pages from first to last. This helps prevent any pages being printed out of sequence.

BINDING OPTIONS

PERFECT BOUND JOBS: WHAT TO KNOW

Page content near the spine: Each page loses about 4mm into the spine, so the visible area is slightly narrower. Because spine visibility can vary (depending on glue and how far a book is opened), images or text across a spread may not line up perfectly. For best results, avoid placing anything important across the centre of two pages.

Cover spine: You'll need to include a spine on your cover. If you're unsure of the spine width, just ask your Vanguard representative.

Glue area: Leave a 5mm ink-free area on each side of the spine (inside the cover) to allow space for glue. The first and last pages of the document also need a 5mm ink-free margin on the spine edge.

Margin for readability: Keep all text and important elements at least 15mm away from the spine edge so they remain easy to read.

SETTING UP WIRO BOUND JOBS

Wiro bound artwork must be set up as single pages, not spreads. Each page is trimmed on all four sides, so bleed is needed on every edge. This isn't possible if the layout is done as spreads.

Also, remember to adjust your margins: left and right pages need different inner margins to make space for the wire binding.

Please note that no critical artwork should be within 20mm of the binding edge/spine of the book.



SADDLE STITCHING: THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Saddle stitch binding is flexible and easy to design for, but there are a few small things to watch out for.

Creep: As pages are folded together, the inner pages stick out slightly more — this is called creep. Don't worry, Vanguard will check if your job needs creep adjustment. Just be careful not to place page numbers or important elements closer than 3mm to the edge, as this method isn't perfectly precise.

Borders: Avoid using even borders on every page, as slight shifts during printing and binding can make them look uneven.

Fold-outs: If you're including a fold-out page, make sure those pages are made narrower so they fold and trim correctly.



EXAMPLE 1

LEFT SIDE OF IMAGE MOVED 7MM LEFT
RIGHT SIDE OF IMAGE MOVED 7MM RIGHT



EXAMPLE 2 - NO ALLOWANCE ADDED

FOLDING YOUR PROJECT

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU FOLD

You don't need to be an origami expert to get folding right, just a bit of planning can help you avoid problems.

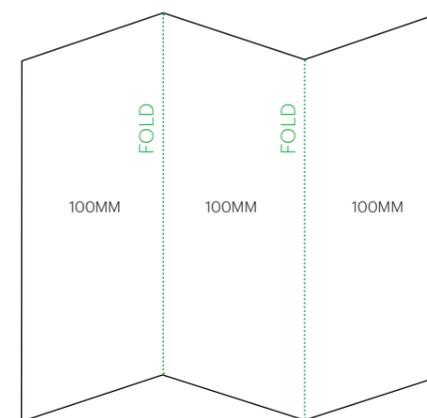
ROLL FOLD

In a roll fold, each panel must get slightly smaller than the one before it so they fold neatly inside each other. Reduce each panel by about 2mm.

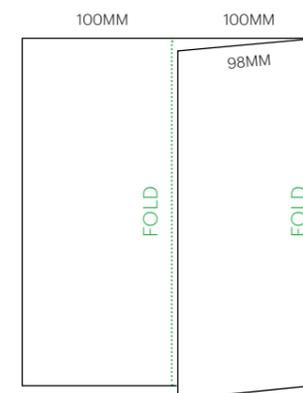
Try not to use too many folds, or your piece may become bulky. Heavier paper might need even more allowance — ask us if you're unsure.

CONCERTINA (ACCORDION) Z FOLD

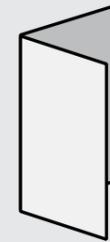
Concertina folds don't need panels to be different sizes, but they have their own challenges. If the piece is supposed to stand up, you'll need a sturdy paper stock. If it's being mailed, it can be tricky to insert into envelopes automatically (go for a DLX envelope)



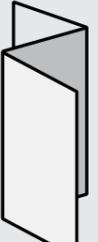
Z FOLD
ALL PANELS
MEASUREMENTS
ARE THE SAME SIZE



ROLL FOLD
SHORTEST PANE
MEASURES 2MM
LESS THAN THE
OTHER PANELS



4 PAGE
Half Fold



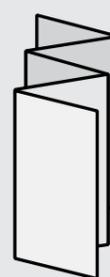
6 PAGE
Z Fold



6 PAGE
Roll Fold



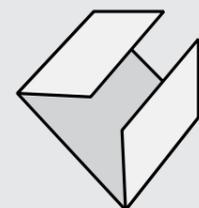
8 PAGE
Roll Fold



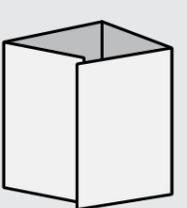
10 PAGE
Concertina
Fold



8 PAGE
Concertina
Fold



6 PAGE
Single Gate Fold



8 PAGE
Double Gate
Fold

IMAGE RESOLUTION

GREAT PRINTING STARTS WITH GREAT ARTWORK

The final quality of your printed job depends on the quality of the artwork you supply. A “she’ll be right” attitude won’t cut it — good results come from good preparation!

First of all, use the right software.

If you can, always stick to professional design programs when possible. Use Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress for page layouts. Use Adobe Illustrator for logos and vector graphics - not for full layouts. Use Photoshop or Lightroom to edit and resize images.

Avoid using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Publisher, or CorelDraw as these are not programs designed for print ready artwork.

If you opt to use Canva, please **see our complete Canva guide on page 18-21.**

IMAGE PREP TIPS

Rotate and resize images in Photoshop before placing them into your layout.

Aim to place images at or near 100% size in your layout as this helps with speed and quality.

Low-resolution images will look pixelated. But images that are too high-res can slow things down or even cause issues.

IMAGE RESOLUTION GUIDE

For colour or greyscale images: resolution should be twice the screen ruling. For example, at 175 lines per inch, use 350ppi.

Effective resolution matters: if a 300ppi image is scaled up to 200%, its effective resolution drops to 150ppi.

Line art or bitmaps should be at least 600ppi.

Best practice: place images at 80%–120% of their original size for best results.

PPI VS DPI

PPI (pixels per inch) refers to image resolution. DPI (dots per inch) refers to the resolution of the print device — our platesetter runs at 2540dpi.

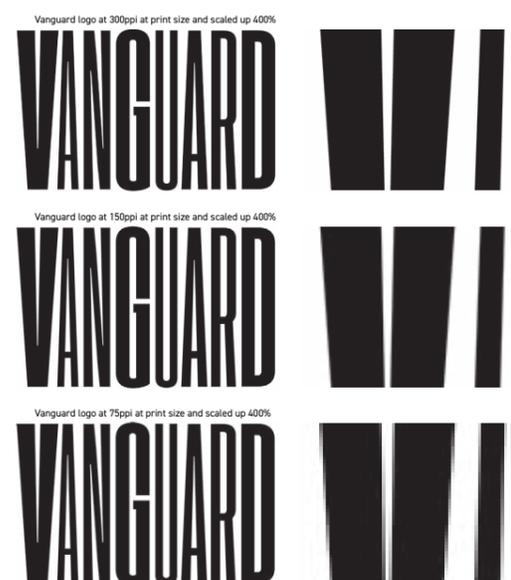


HIGH RESOLUTION (300 DPI)



LOW RESOLUTION (72 DPI)

Image quality - PPI (Pixels Per Inch)



COLOUR

USE CMYK FOR PREDICTABLE PRINTING RESULTS

For the best results in offset printing, use CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Black) images & colour profiles. This is the colour model used by our printing presses. If your images are in RGB (Red, Green, Blue), they'll need to be converted to CMYK. It's best to do this conversion early on to avoid surprises later.

Since RGB has a wider colour range than CMYK, some colours won't print the same.

Converting to CMYK early lets you spot any colour shifts before you see the proof or final print.

There is a number of good ready made profiles around to be used for colour conversion. **Here at Vanguard we suggest using Coated Fogra39**, this profile is located within your Adobe Creative Suite software.

MANAGING COLOURS IN YOUR PRINT JOB

What colours will your job use? Are you printing with spot (PMS) colours, CMYK, or a mix of both?

To stay in control of your print job, make sure you only use the correct colours. **If you're using CMYK, convert any spot colours to CMYK in your document.** Watch out for differences in how spot colours break down in different software versions - even the same program can give different results. Colour libraries change over time, which can affect how colours appear.

Always delete unused colours from your file.

To check if everything looks correct, you can view the separations:

In InDesign, press Shift + F6 (or go to Window>Output>Separations Preview).

In Acrobat Pro, go to Advanced>Print Production>Output Preview.

HOW TO EVALUATE COLOUR ACCURATELY

Don't rely on how colours look on your computer screen unless it's professionally calibrated. Even with calibration, your screen shows colours using RGB light (which is different from the CMYK pigments used in printing).

The best way to check colour accuracy is by using exact CMYK values or by reviewing a colour-calibrated proof.

Our printed proofs are carefully adjusted to match our printing process, offering the most accurate colour preview.

TOTAL INK LIMITS & BLACKS

To avoid printing issues, keep your total ink coverage within these limits:

330% for coated stock

300% for uncoated stock

(This total is the combined percentages of CMYK values.)

Going over these limits can cause slow drying, smudging, and delays — not ideal for quality or delivery.

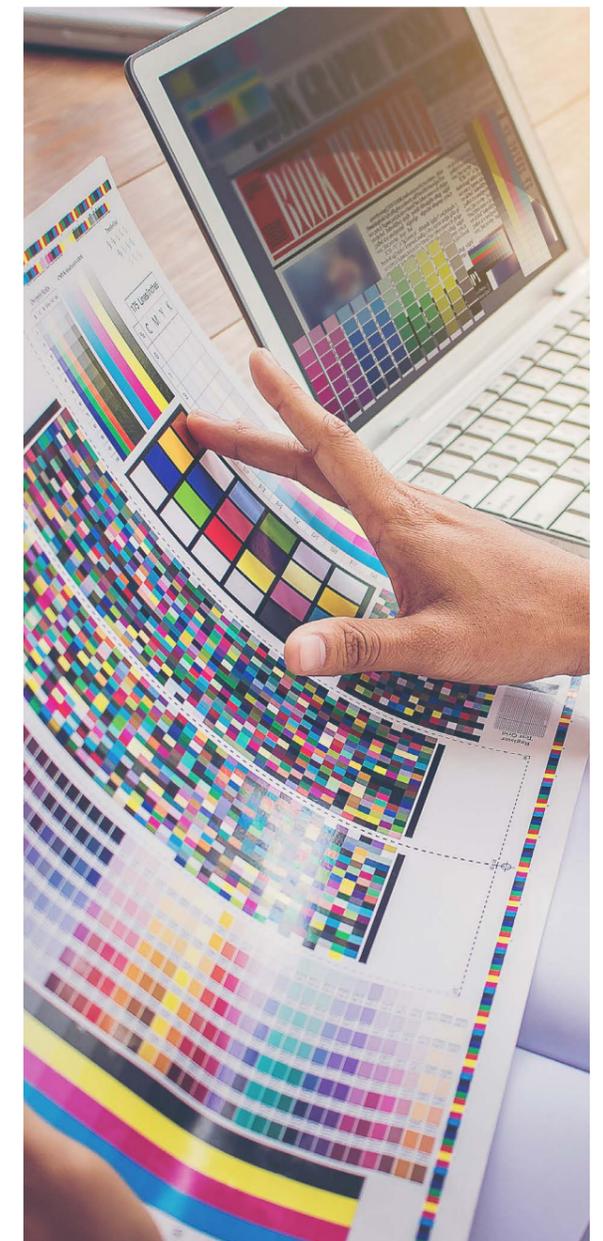
For large black areas, use Rich Black so it doesn't look dull. Here are two good Rich Black mixes:

100% Black + 40% Cyan or for a more neutral tone: 100% Black, 30% Cyan, 25% Magenta, 25% Yellow

Important: Avoid using Registration black as it will convert to plain black in our system and may cause issues.

Blacks and ink coverage

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| 100% Black | 100% ink coverage |
| Acceptable and desired for any black text. White text on it will be clear and sharp. No concerns for ink coverage. | |
| 100% Cyan and 100% Black | 200% ink coverage |
| 100% Magenta and 100% Black | 200% ink coverage |
| 100% Yellow and 100% Black | 200% ink coverage |
| The three above are acceptable. Shouldn't be an issue for printers to register white text on it. No concerns for ink coverage. | |
| 100% Cyan, 100% Magenta and 100% Black | 300% ink coverage |
| 100% Cyan, 100% Yellow and 100% Black | 300% ink coverage |
| 100% Magenta, 100% Yellow and 100% Black | 300% ink coverage |
| The three above are acceptable. May present an issue for printers to register white text on it and it may appear a bit fuzzy, especially if the white text is small and thin. Most stocks will handle 300% ink coverage, but it may present issues for very light stocks. | |
| 50% Cyan, 50% Magenta, 50% Yellow and 100% Black | 250% ink coverage |
| Acceptable so long as there isn't any white text on it. The four colours will make properly registering white text difficult. No concerns for ink coverage. | |
| 80% Cyan, 80% Magenta, 80% Yellow and 80% Black | 320% ink coverage |
| Acceptable so long as there isn't any white text on it. The four colours will make properly registering white text difficult. High ink coverage. Many stocks can handle 320%, but it's best not to push past this. | |
| 100% Cyan, 100% Magenta, 100% Yellow and 100% Black | 400% ink coverage |
| Not acceptable. Too much ink coverage will cause problems while printing. | |



WHAT IS...

INTERLOCKING VS GLUED

An interlocking folder is created to slot together with tabs, the glued version requires manual glueing to “stick” together parts of the folder. An interlocking folder is the most common type of presentation folder as it is a quicker, cheaper process and they are delivered flat, easy for storing.

DIELINE

A dieline is the blueprint for a layout created by a die cutter, a graphic designer, or a printer. It is highly essential in the die-cutting process, as this will be the main template for the artwork. It displays the fold line, the cut line, and the bleed line.

DIGITAL VS OFFSET

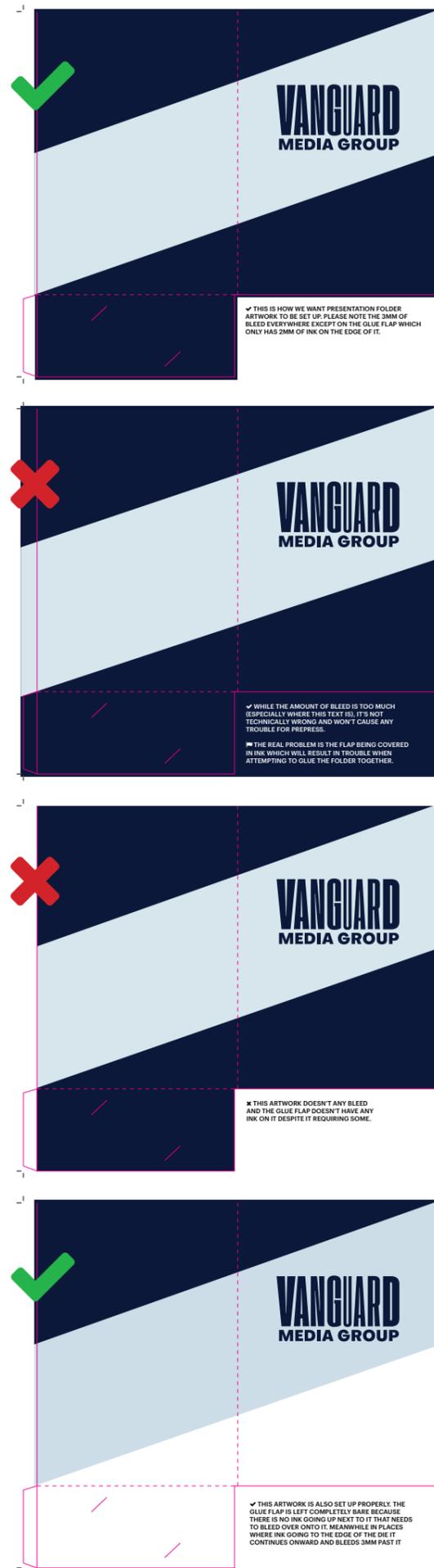
Digital printing shines when lower quantities are needed. Offset printing cannot accommodate this need as offset is more involved and therefore has a higher minimum starting cost. Offset is great for large quantity runs where higher volumes mean a lower unit rate.

A GUSSET (SPINE)?

A gusset creates two folds instead of a single fold in a presentation folder. A gusset is applied to a presentation folder’s flaps, which increases the pocket size. As a result more space is available to insert your documents.

PICK A DIELINE OR CREATE YOUR OWN!

Creating your own dieline is a great choice! This process does have a cost involved to produce the physical die cutting board, which is then stored at Vanguard for future use.



DIELINES, LAMINATION & VARNISHES

JOBS WITH DIELINES OR VARNISHES

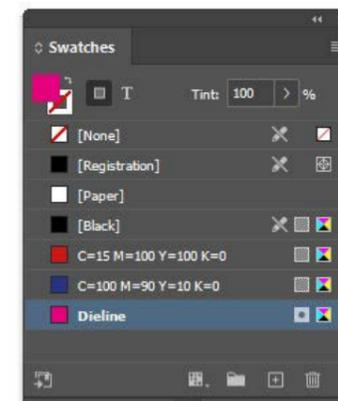
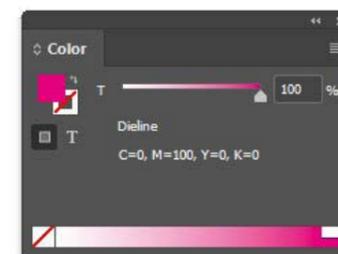
If your job includes a diecut (forme cut), make sure the cutting shape is on its own separate layer in your design file. Clearly label this layer as “Die,” “Dieline,” or “Diecut.” The same goes for varnishes, put them on their own layer and label them with the type (e.g. Gloss Varnish, Matt Varnish, or Spot UV).

Create the **diecut as a separate spot colour named “Die,” “Dieline,” or “Diecut,”** and make sure it is set to overprint. This prevents the die line from punching a hole in the artwork when printed.

If your software doesn’t support spot colours, you can use Registration Black for the dieline — but only use it for the die, nowhere else in your artwork. This makes it clear what is meant to be printed and what is not.

For presentation folders, the die is usually the trim box, so your **artwork should include at least 3mm of bleed beyond the die line.** The only exception is glue flaps, which are the areas used for assembly. Not all folders have glue flaps — if you’re unsure, ask your Vanguard representative.

If your design includes ink up to the edge of a glue flap, make sure it bleeds into the flap by 2mm to avoid white edges showing in the finished product.



HOW LAMINATION AFFECTS COLOUR IN PRINT

Lamination is a protective film applied over printed materials to increase durability and enhance the visual finish. However, it also affects how colours appear, particularly in terms of hue, vibrancy, and contrast. Here’s how:

GLOSS LAMINATION

Affect on Colour: Gloss lamination intensifies colours, making them appear more saturated, vibrant, and richer.

How: The shiny surface reflects more light, which enhances contrast and gives colours a bolder appearance.

Resulting Shift: Whites appear brighter, blacks look deeper, and overall colours may appear slightly warmer or more vivid than the original print.

MATT LAMINATION

Affect on Colour: Matt lamination softens colours, giving them a more muted or toned-down look.

How: The non-reflective surface diffuses light, reducing contrast and vibrancy.

Resulting Shift: Colours may appear slightly duller or cooler, and blacks can take on a greyish tone. This finish offers a more subtle, elegant aesthetic but does alter the perceived intensity of the original colours.

WHY THIS HAPPENS

Lamination doesn’t change the ink itself; it changes how light interacts with the surface. Since our eyes perceive colour based on how light reflects off a surface, different lamination finishes will result in slightly different colour outcomes.

If accurate colour is critical, we recommend testing with a sample or proof to see how your chosen lamination will affect the final result.

ERROR DETECTION

PREFLIGHT YOUR JOB

Before sending your artwork to print, it's **important to preflight your file** in InDesign. This helps catch common issues like missing images, fonts, or overset text (where some text is hidden because it doesn't fit in the text box).

HOW TO PREFLIGHT

Look for the preflight indicator in the bottom left corner of your InDesign window (next to the page numbers).



- A green circle means all good!
- A red warning means something needs fixing, click it to see what's wrong and which page it's on.

COMMON ISSUES INCLUDE:

- Missing fonts: Go to Type > Find Font to replace them.
- Overset text: Expand the text frame so all your text is visible.
- Missing images: These need to be relinked. Click Relink and browse for the correct file.

When everything is green and error-free, you're ready to package the file for print.

Tip: If an image is in RGB colour space and you're printing digitally, it's usually not a problem. It's just a warning. If left as RGB, Vanguard will convert it to CMYK during printing.

WHY PACKAGING MATTERS

Unlike Word or PowerPoint, **InDesign doesn't embed images, it just links to them.** So, when you send us your file, you also need to send the fonts and images you used. Packaging makes this easy. How to Package: Go to File > Package

WHAT DOES PACKAGING YOUR FILE DO?

- Makes a copy of your InDesign file
- Gather all the fonts and linked images
- Save everything in one folder, ready to send

NOTE: A missing image is a serious issue. It must be relinked, or it won't print. Click Relink to fix it!

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If your file hasn't been saved yet, InDesign will ask you to save it - click Save.

You'll see a Printing Instructions box, add your name, contact, and any job notes here if needed.

Then choose where to save the folder. You can rename it if you'd like.

Make sure you tick:

- ✓ Copy fonts
- ✓ Copy linked graphics
- ✓ Include IDML (if sending to someone with an older version of InDesign)

This creates a folder that includes:

- A copy of your InDesign file
- A .IDML file (for compatibility)
- A Fonts folder
- A Links folder

FINAL CHECKS

The Package Summary shows details like fonts, image links, and colour settings.

Any issues (like images in RGB instead of CMYK) will be flagged with a warning icon.

Click 'Links and Images', and tick 'Show Problems Only' to quickly spot and fix anything that needs attention.

Once all issues are resolved, compress the packaged folder and send it to us - we're good to go!



EXPORTING & SUPPLYING FILES

Both InDesign and QuarkXPress have built-in tools to help you collect everything needed for printing. InDesign uses “Package” and Quark uses “Collect for Output.” We strongly recommend using these tools to gather all linked images and fonts before sending us your files.

Missing files or fonts will delay your job.

Also, make sure you send the correct version of each font. Fonts with the same name from different sources aren't always the same and can cause text to reflow or shift slightly — which may not be obvious until it's too late.

SUPPLYING PDFS

If you're sending a press-ready PDF, please follow these guidelines:

- Export as single pages, not spreads
- Include at least 3mm bleed on all sides
- Add crop marks, offset by 3mm
- Ensure all fonts are embedded
- The file should be in CMYK (plus spot colours if used)
- Use high-resolution images

If any changes are needed after submission, you must send us a new corrected PDF.

HARD COPY PROOFS

If possible, include a printed laser copy of your job (ideally at 100% size).

If you're sending files electronically, also send a viewing PDF as a reference — it can help us spot any issues and ensure everything prints correctly.

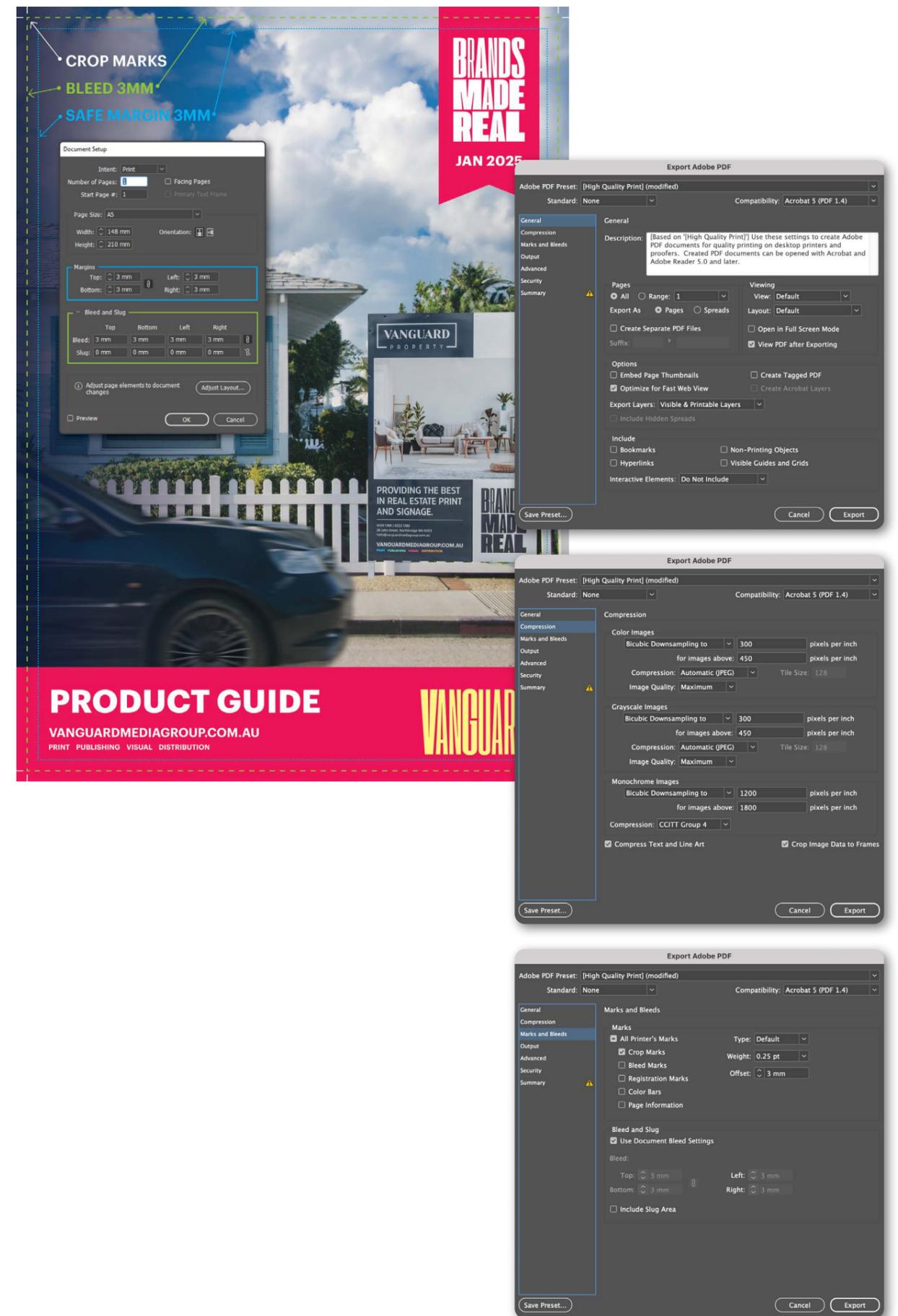
HOW TO SEND FILES

You can send your files via:

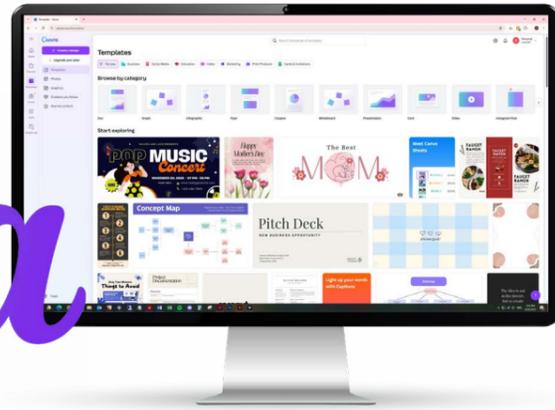
Our Website:
vanguardmediagroup.com.au/File_Upload

Email or file transfer services
 (e.g. WeTransfer, Dropbox)

Or drop them off in person via USB drive or a hard drive, we always enjoy saying hello!



Canva



How to Supply Print-Ready Files from Canva!

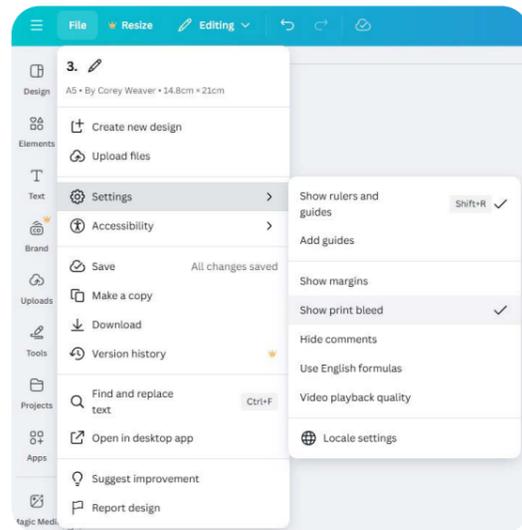
To ensure the best possible print result, please follow these steps when exporting your artwork from Canva.

STEP 1: CORRECT ARTBOARD SIZE

Set your document size to the final print dimensions (e.g., A4, DL, A5, etc.).

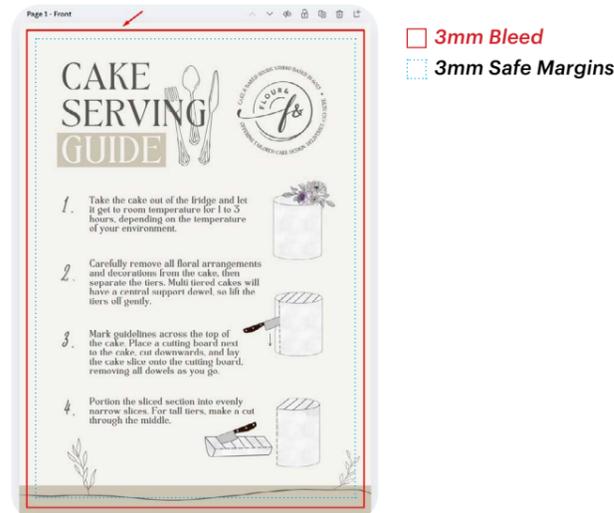
Under File, Settings, turn on "Show print bleed"

To avoid white borders after trimming, ensure all artwork bleeds out to the edge of your page.



STEP 2: KEEP TEXT AND CRITICAL CONTENT SAFE!

Keep all text and logos at least **3mm inside the edge of your document**. This is called the safe zone and ensures nothing important gets trimmed off.



STEP 3: CHECK IMAGE QUALITY

All images should be high resolution, ideally at 300 DPI or have a file size of 1mb or higher.

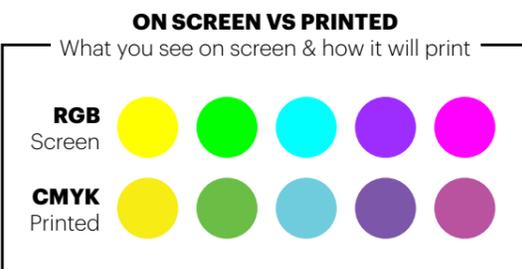
Avoid using low-res or blurry images, as these won't print clearly.

STEP 4: USE CMYK COLOUR MODE (IF AVAILABLE)

Canva works primarily in RGB, but can print in CMYK if you have Canva Pro.

Expect some colour shifts, bright colours especially may appear duller in print!

We recommend you print a test proof if colour accuracy is critical.



STEP 5: EXPORT AS PRINT-READY PDF

1. Click Share (top right)
2. Select Download
3. Choose PDF Print from the File Type menu
4. Tick Crop marks and bleed
5. Set Colour Profile to CMYK if available (Pro users only)
6. Click Download



HIGH RESOLUTION (300 DPI)

STEP 6: DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR PRINT READY PDF

- Make sure all text is visible and spelled correct
- All images look crisp
- Colours look correct
- Bleed and crop marks are included
- No strange spacing or alignment issues



LOW RESOLUTION (72 DPI)

STEP 7: SEND TO US

The final PDF file (with crop marks and bleed)

A low-res version or screen preview (optional but helpful for checking)

LOGOS & VECTORS

Logos and other vector graphics should be provided as EPS, AI, vector PDF, or SVG files. PNG and JPEG formats are not scalable and may appear blurry when printed, this is especially noticeable for larger work.

AVOID:

- Supplying JPG, PNG or Word files for print
- Forgetting bleed and crop marks
- Using low-res images or screenshots
- Sending multiple versions without clear instructions

If you need help or have questions, we're happy to walk you through the process, just reach out!

**VANGUARD
MEDIA GROUP**

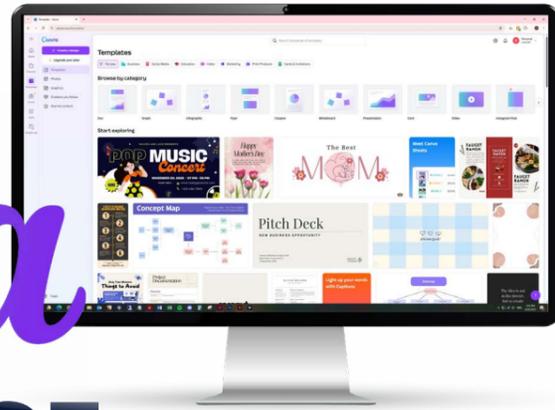
EPS / AI / VECTOR PDF / SVG

**VANGUARD
MEDIA GROUP**

PNG / JPEG

Canva

FOR SIGNAGE



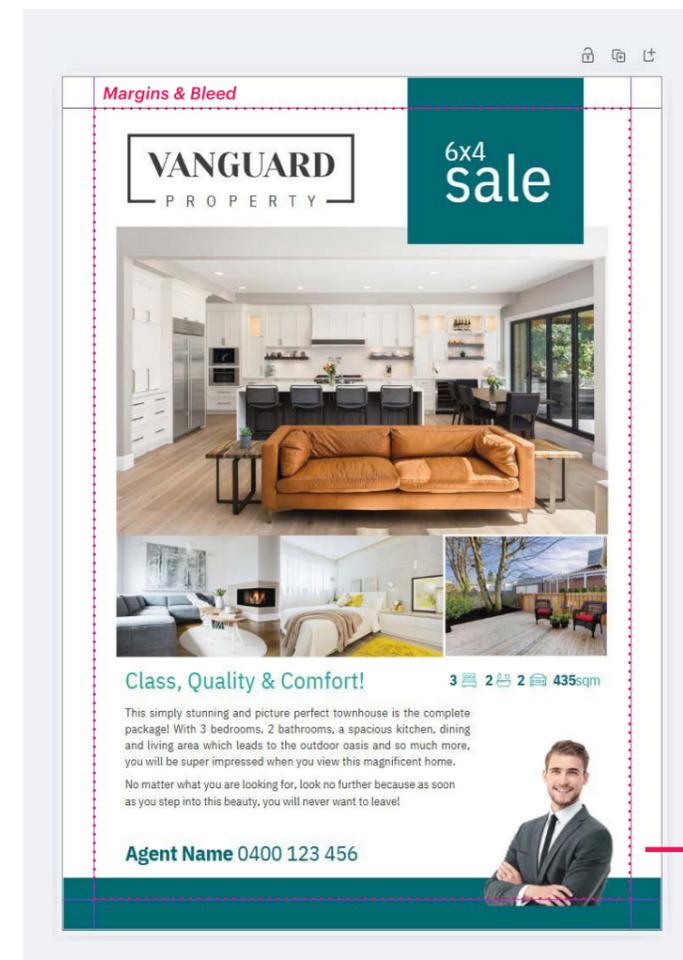
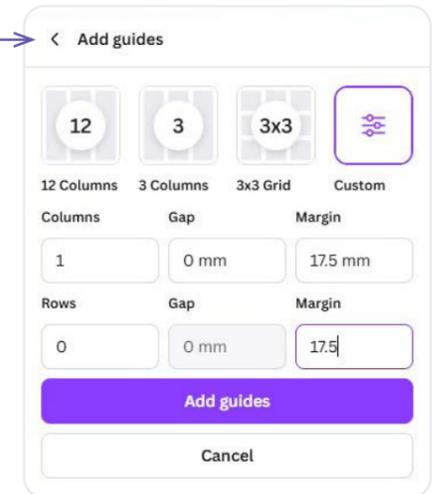
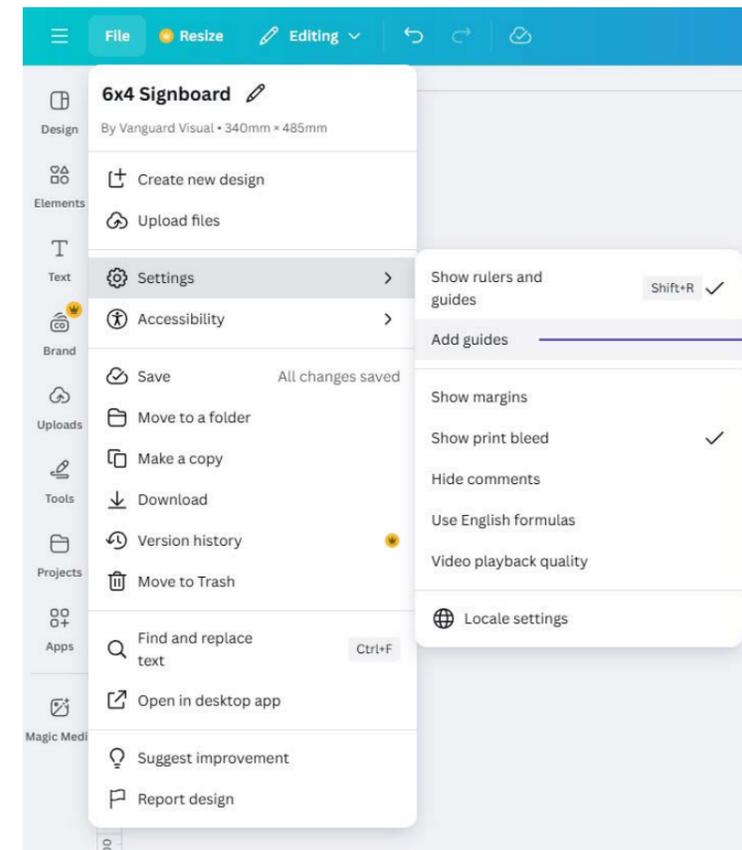
When designing signage in Canva, we recommend scaling your artwork down to 25% of the actual size. Canva has limitations when it comes to custom bleed settings, and our signage requires a 70mm bleed. To help you get the best results, we've put together a guide to ensure the artwork you submit meets our requirements and is print-ready. **Ensure when you set up your document its in MM and not PIXELS.**



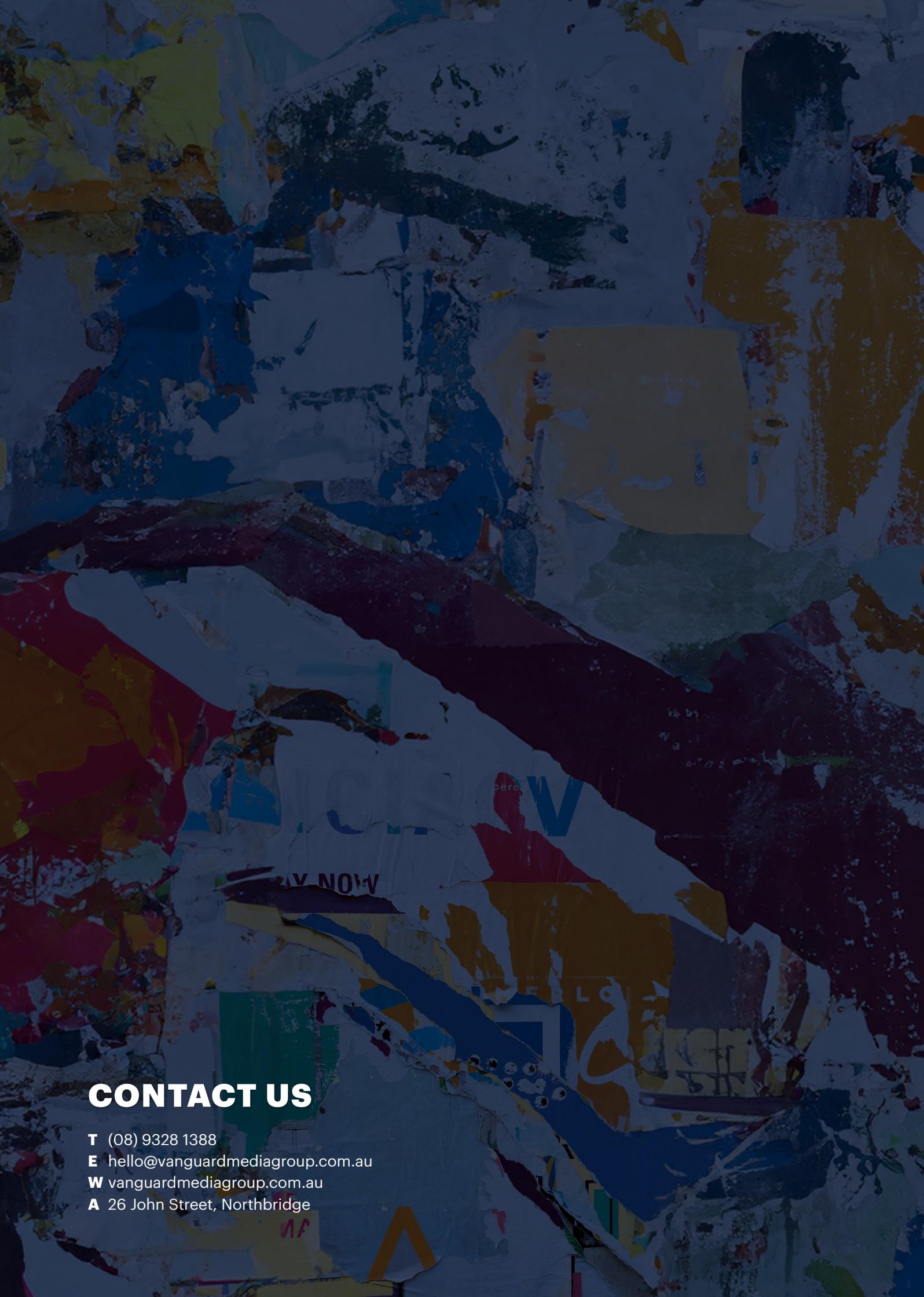
| TYPE | SIZE | 25% + BLEED |
|--------|---------------|----------------|
| 4x3 ft | 1220 x 900mm | 340 x 260mm |
| 6x2 ft | 1800 x 610mm | 485 x 187.50mm |
| 6x3 ft | 1800 x 900mm | 485 x 260mm |
| 6x4 ft | 1800 x 1220mm | 485 x 340mm |
| 8x4 ft | 2400 x 1220mm | 635 x 340mm |
| 6x8 ft | 1800 x 2400mm | 485 x 635mm |

When you're ready to download your file, please ensure the following settings are used:

1. Select PDF Print as the file type.
2. Set the Colour Profile to CMYK if you have Canva Pro.
3. Do not select crop marks or bleed – the bleed has already been built into the artboard, and enabling these options will place them incorrectly. Our printer will handle scaling and manually add crop marks as needed.
4. Include **"25%" & "Canva" in the file name** to indicate the artwork is scaled down.



The bleed on a sign will wrap around the edge like above



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