

Graphic Preparation Guidelines for Illustrators and Artists

FORMAT

Unless special arrangements have been made in advance, all graphics/artwork must be supplied as an electronic file, and if there is text in it, that text must be live and editable. If you are concerned that a file supplied in an editable vector format could fail to accurately represent the desired final product (due to font replacement or missing content, for example), you may supply an additional raster artwork file for the relevant graphic. In that scenario, please make certain that the editable version is clearly labeled as the preferred version and the raster file is identified as “for reference.”

Vector Artwork

For graphics that include fine details or that might require future editing, a vector-based format is preferred. We can accept .ai and .eps files as well as many other vector formats. If your preferred format is obscure, please confirm that it can be accepted. In general, we can also accept robust .pdf files so long as vector functionality is maintained and all fonts are embedded (or easily replicated). Please retain full text functionality (do not convert to curves) and put text on a separate layer when feasible.

Raster Artwork

Pixel-based artwork must be at least 300 dpi resolution at the desired final size (1,200 dpi for bitmaps). We prefer .tif and .psd files but can also accept .jpeg, .png, and many other common formats. If supplying a .jpeg file, do not use compression. We can accept .psd files with layers but prefer that the layers be both simple to understand and clearly labeled.

Hybrid

If you are supplying a file that includes both vector and raster content, the raster content must still achieve 300 dpi resolution at the desired size. Where feasible, please move the different types of content onto separate, labeled layers.

SIZE

Below are some rough guidelines for the space an artwork might occupy in some common trim sizes. The widths indicated should be treated as more significant than the depths, given that other content is more likely to appear above or below a graphic than it is beside a graphic. These values represent an upright/portrait orientation. They can be inverted for a broadside/landscape orientation, but please bear in mind that the available depth will be reduced, given that the artwork will have to share the space with a caption or similar content.

- For a 6" × 9" trim size book, reasonable artboard dimensions might be 4.75" × 6.5".
- For a 7" × 10" trim size book, reasonable artboard dimensions might be 5.5" × 7.5".
- For an 8" × 10.5" trim size book, reasonable artboard dimensions might be 6" × 8".

GRAYSCALE REPRODUCTION

Unless you have been instructed otherwise, please assume that all artwork will be printed in black and white (grayscale). If graphics must be converted from color to grayscale, please bear in mind that visual contrast may be lost and it may be necessary to simplify or reconceive the graphic.

Although many shades of gray may be used for artistic effect, it is unwise to exceed four shades of gray (plus solid black and solid white) when creating specific visual contrast. In a pie chart with five slices, for example, at least one must be solid black or solid white.

In general, gray values should be between 15% black and 50% black. Values that exceed these thresholds risk becoming indistinguishable from solid white or solid black.

STYLE

In general, what reproduces best are line drawings with minimal use of solid black or gray. These graphics tend to continue to do their communicative work despite changes in size or print quality where more ornate or stylized graphics may not.

Raster Effects

Raster-based effects like gradients and drop shadows should be used sparingly or avoided altogether where possible. If such effects do appear, they should not span the majority of the graphic.

Pattern Fills

Please avoid pattern fills unless they are relevant to the communicative content of the graphic.

Stroke Weights and Fine Details

Vector artwork should not include stroke weights less than 0.25 point and are best supplied with a minimum stroke weight of 0.5 point. Any stroke with a weight less than 1 point should be solid black (100%), not a shade of gray. Any stroke thinner than 0.25 point or any vector element with a similar width is at risk of disappearing on the printed page.

Parallels

It is generally preferable to keep similar representations within several graphics at about the same size. That is, if a number of graphics include representations of isolated faces, it is usually best to set each face at about the same size.

General Considerations

While the specific communicative needs of a graphic must take precedence, it is best to keep some generic considerations in mind: The graphics that reproduce best are usually line drawings with few large areas of solid black/dark gray. These graphics usually prioritize illustrative value over graphic interest and continue to communicate even when resized or (reasonably) cropped.

TEXT

In general, it is best to use only a single font size for all text and indicate emphasis with bold or italic weights or all caps styling. If you do use different font sizes to indicate emphasis or hierarchy, please be consistent so that the final product uses the minimum number of font sizes (not one for each discrete piece of text).

Whenever possible, use a single consistent typeface for an entire graphic. It is advisable to use a conventionally available sans serif font like Arial. Copyright and use restrictions on font software or coherence with an overall book design may require that fonts be replaced throughout all graphics, so avoid specialized typefaces. If you are using a specialized typeface to achieve specific ends—to control the appearance of specific letters in text intended for use in early reading education, for example—please include a brief explanatory note or discuss the issue with your editor.

While it is acceptable to use white text on a dark gray or black background, it is not recommended. Such styling should generally be reserved for large text that must be differentiated from black (or dark) text.

ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE

When preparing artwork, please bear in mind accessibility for persons with different abilities. Do not rasterize text or convert text to curves unless absolutely necessary. Make certain that all text appears at an adequate font size for optimal readability. Employ sufficient contrast to differentiate different pieces of content. In particular, make certain that any text is distinct from the background against which it appears; a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 is desirable (a ratio of 3:1 is acceptable for large text).