White ink: A Designer's Guide

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What is white ink printing?

We know that setting up your files for printing finishes like white ink can be daunting, but our step-by-step guide will walk you through how to set up your files for white ink printing, using professional software such as Adobe InDesign and Illustrator.

White ink printing deposits a layer of opaque white ink onto dark or coloured stocks. Unlike standard CMYK printing, which can't print white onto a coloured surface, white ink is applied as its own dedicated layer, giving bold, high-contrast results with excellent coverage.

In this guide, we'll take you step by step through preparing your artwork for white ink printing in Adobe Illustrator and InDesign, including how to set up the white ink layer correctly for production.

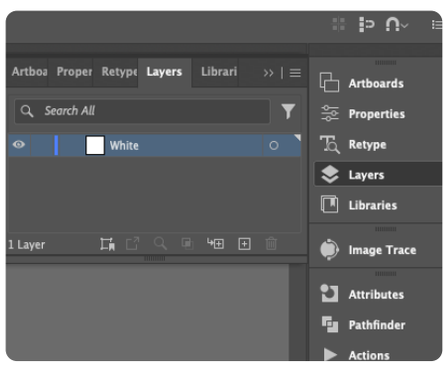
Printing White Ink

Step 1 - Create a white ink layer

In Adobe InDesign or Illustrator, rename "Layer 1" to "White".

IMPORTANT! The software we use to print is case-sensitive,

so make sure the "W" is capitalised.



Step 2 - Create a new swatch

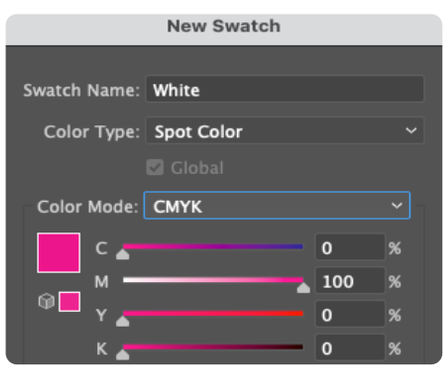
If you're using InDesign, start by clicking on "Window", then "Colour", then "Swatches".

In Illustrator, click "Window", then "Swatches". Delete the default "White" swatch from the swatch palette.

Click in the upper-right corner of the swatch palette and select "New Swatch".

We'll need you to do the following:

- Change the swatch name to "White".
- Change the colour type to "Spot".
- Make sure the colour mode is CMYK.
- Make the colour 100% magenta.



Step 3 - Start designing

Design your artwork. Make sure you are using the "White" colour swatch you created.

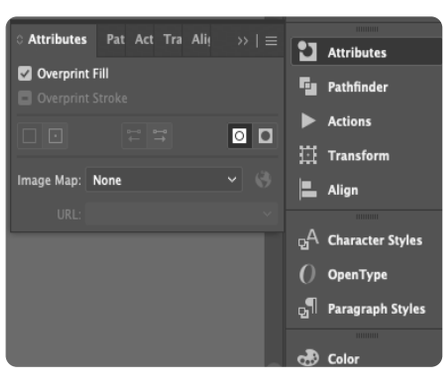
Or click on all of the elements in your design once complete and then apply or fill with the "White" swatch.

Step 4 - Set to overprint

In InDesign, click "Window", then "Output", then "Attributes". Please select the artwork on your white layer and tick the box "Overprint Fill".

In Illustrator, click "Window", then "Attributes". Select the artwork on your white layer and tick the box "Overprint Fill".

If you've used strokes in your artwork, make sure you also tick "Overprint Stroke" to ensure that no areas of your artwork are missed. Just follow the steps above and tick the box "Overprint Stroke".



Final Checks

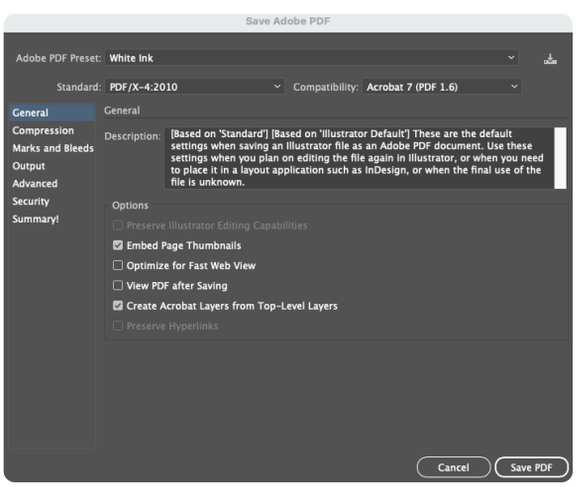
We're almost there - just a few checks to ensure your artwork prints the way you expect it to and there are no issues:

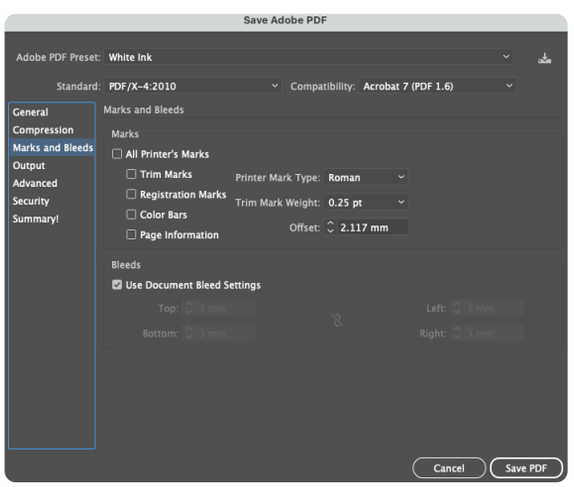
- Use a minimum font size of 8 pt for white ink text.
- Ensure all fonts are outlined - Shift + Ctrl + O (Windows) or Shift + Cmd + O (Mac).
- Make sure the colour mode is CMYK.

We recommend using sans serif fonts for all text as these provide the best clarity and definition.

Saving Your Artwork

- Save your file as a PDF using the PDF preset PDF/X-4:2010 (or latest).
- Change the compatibility to Acrobat 7 (PDF 1.6).
- Under "General/Options" tick "Create Acrobat Layers from Top-Level Layers".
- Then select "Marks and Bleeds" and tick "Use Document Bleed Settings".





STILL NOT SURE?

Need a hand? If you have any questions about white ink printing or the artwork requirements, our Customer Services team is happy to help. Give us a call on: 0800 840 1430, Monday to Friday, 8:30am-5:30pm, or email theteam@printed.com.