

Artwork and design guidelines

How to design and deliver artworks for use by Ecobliss



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Why this guide?

As a print oriented company, Ecobliss receives a lot of artwork files delivered by designers, pre-press houses and freelance desktop publishers (further referred to as 'designer'). To ensure that what the customer expects is what is going to press, all received artworks are checked, if needed corrected, and thereafter proofed. It is often in the best interest of the designer to deliver his artworks in a format as close to the print ready files as technically possible. Failure to deliver the artworks in a well-defined standard can lead to delays in processing, extra costs or even mistakes due to lack of clarity, common design mistakes and extensive back- and forth communication between Ecobliss, the client and his designer.

The objective of this guide is to give a clear description of what is a structurally correct artwork file. Also a few tips as to make sure that your artwork will be re-produced in print as expected.

***Note :** Ecobliss is perfectly aware that there are many different artwork creation suites In this document we will focus mainly on Adobe Illustrator. This is the current industry standard, and most issues covered here will have similar solutions across different applications/suites.*

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1. Structuring your document

One of the most important parts of good desktop publishing is document structure. Setting up your layers, naming them properly and making sure that they contain what they are supposed to contain are essential as a starting point for a structured design.

Layers

Set up the following layers in your document (This is just a guideline, and it's possible that you might use a different set of layers depending on your style or needs. Try to keep the amount of layers in the document limited):

- **Diecut** : This is where the diecut lines will reside - On top, where they can be seen and locked.
- **Texts** : you might not need this. But, if you are designing a whole range of packages based on the same design, this is where you want to put the stuff that changes from card to card like barcodes and article codes.
- **Background** : Perfect for static elements and backgrounds. This is also the layer where you want to put a clipping mask, to make sure the bleeds are perfect.

2. The geometry

In normal printing (Books, magazines, stationary or flyer printing), there is a page on which the artwork is imposed, to reflect the artworks finished size and shape. In packaging, most artworks are cut to a specific shape using a diecut machine. To reflect this shape, Ecobliss will provide the designer with the final approved geometry, so he can create the artwork considering the elements in the geometry of the card.

***IMPORTANT** : make sure to use the last approved geometry for artwork creation. If you are unsure if the geometry in your possession is the most recently approved version, contact Ecobliss, and we will supply you with the last known correct version.*

Geometry rules

- **Artworks** should have a bleed of exactly 2 mm from the outer side of the die cut
- **Artwork** elements (texts, logos) should always be kept clear of cut/score lines by 2 mm
- **The geometry** should stay present in the artwork for proofing and reference, but has to exist on its own separation (spot color), and overprint the artwork. The diecut layer should never contain any artwork elements.

3. Preparing a geometry for creating artwork

This can be done later, but usually it is much easier to keep in mind the limitations of the geometry while designing instead of fixing the artworks afterwards

1. **Strip** the geometry of all unnecessary elements such as the info boxes, attachment point markers, reference outlines and such, so that only the dielines remain.
2. **Select** all the lines and give them the same color, set them to overprint and set the colour of the lines to a spot colour named "diecut".
3. **Move** the diecut to a layer of its own (preferably named "diecut").
4. **if** no artwork outline exists in the geometry, create one by doing the following : Select the outermost diecut line, and go to [menu]->[object]->[path]->[offset path]. In the offset path panel, set the distance to 2 mm and click OK.
5. **Move** this new path to your artwork/background layer, and convert it to a layer clipping path (Or clipping mask). This path will make sure that your bleeds will always be perfect.

4. Artwork Considerations

When designing, you should always keep in mind what the final purpose of your artwork is, and base some of the design decisions on the strengths and limitations of the output process. While we accept that artwork creation is a creative process, there are some basic rules that any artwork/document created for press output and diecutting should adhere to:

- **Build** artwork in CMYK and, if applicable, Pantone colours. If there are doubts about the colour usage in the artwork, please contact Ecobliss for more information.
- **Do not** use rich blacks (For example : C:40% M:40% Y:0% K:100%) for small text or small elements.
- **set** small black elements and text to overprint.
- **Do not** place white text smaller than 5 pts on a dark background consisting of three or more separations.
- **USE OVERPRINT PREVIEW!** Not using overprint preview will leave you blind for overprint settings.
- **To** avoid registration problems in the die cutting, try to keep any critical elements (texts/borders) clear from the die-lines (2mm is standard).
- **Only** leave colours in the palette that are actually used in the artwork. Spot colours that will be printed in full colour should be converted to process.
- **Fonts** : Convert them to outlines OR Supply the file as a PDF with fonts embedded OR Supply them with the artwork files.
- **Pixel** images (photoshop, jpg, tiff and such) : These should either be embedded in the file, OR supplied with the artwork. Effective Resolution should not be any lower than 225ppi.
- **If** the artwork does not bleed over the edges of the geometry, create a black outline on exactly 2 mm's from the outermost key line to represent the artwork bounds.

5. Approval

If no Forga compatible colourproof is provided (Only applicable when Print-ready PDF files are supplied), Ecobliss will create one and send it to the customer for approval. The signed proof is then sent back to Ecobliss, to serve as a Colour and Artwork guide along the production process. Extra copies for archival at the customers site can be made on request.

Creating a PDF file

Supplying a PDF file can be a huge timesaver for both designer and printer, as the files are very portable, and encapsulate anything used in the artwork (fonts, images, etc). Creating a PDF for packaging print these days consists of nothing more than saving the document as PDF from your application. There are many variables to making a correct PDF file, and so we prefer ones made with the "Packaging_Baselinev1.joboptions" by the Ghent PDF workgroup or the "PDF-X/1-A 2001" standard available in most applications. You can get these at certifiedPDF.net, or ask us to supply them to you.

For information on how to install and use joboptions, please refer to the manual of you PDF creation suite (usually acrobat).

6. Supplying in other file formats

If you are unable to supply us with a correct PDF file, by all means send over your native files, adhering to the rules set in this manual.

Currently we support the industry standard Adobe Creative Suite up to version CC 2014. Submission in other formats should be discussed beforehand.

7. Common Sense

- **While** designing, lock the diecut and guide layers.
- **Try** not to use spot colors with transparencies or special effects, as the result can be very unpredictable.
- **Keep** guides in a separate layer.
- **Designing** in RGB and then converting to CMYK will more often than not result in bad blacks. If this happens, fix it before sending the files.
- **If possible**, check your PDF files in Acrobat Pro with output preview.
- **When in doubt, Contact us!**

8. Contact information

For any information regarding artwork preparation or design, please contact a member of the Ecobliss packaging design and prepress team.

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Our website contains a wealth of information about packaging and the company.

<http://www.ecobliss.com>



