

HTT INSIGHTS

AUGUST 2026

LOCKED IN
WHY OUTLINED TYPE &
EMBEDDED FILES NEVER
GO MISSING

TRUE TO COLOR

THE SCIENCE OF
BLEEDS, SAFE ZONES
& ACCURATE INK

**THE FINAL
CHECKLIST**

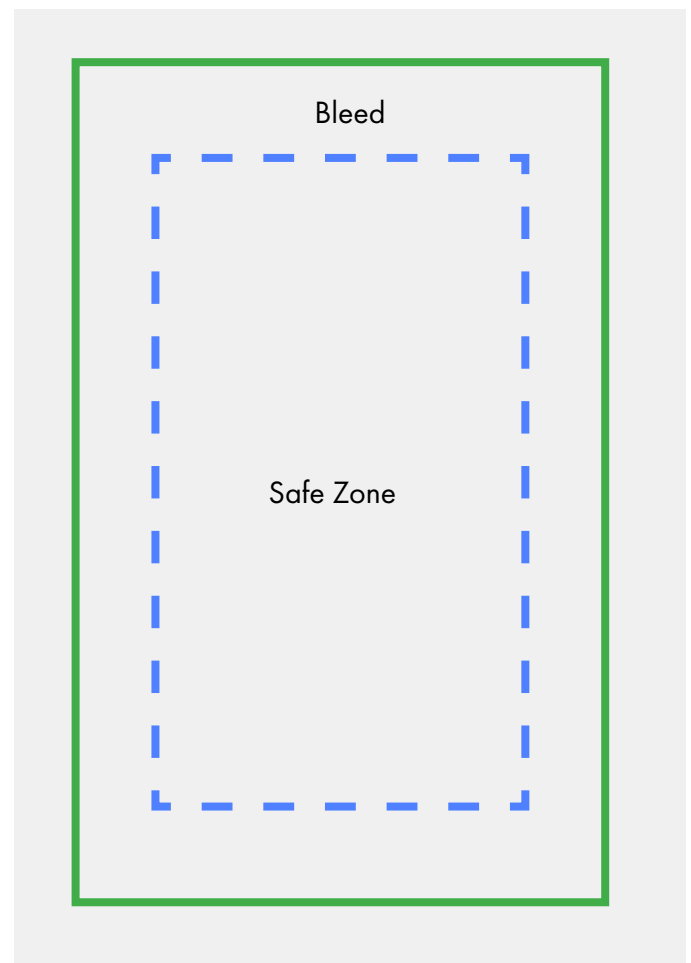
Bleeds, Safe Zones & Color Accuracy

What is the bleed area, and why must background art extend fully to its edge?

The bleed area exists to account for the minute physical shifts that happen during high-speed printing. Pushing your background colors and patterns all the way to the bleed edge ensures your final packaging doesn't come out with accidental white borders.

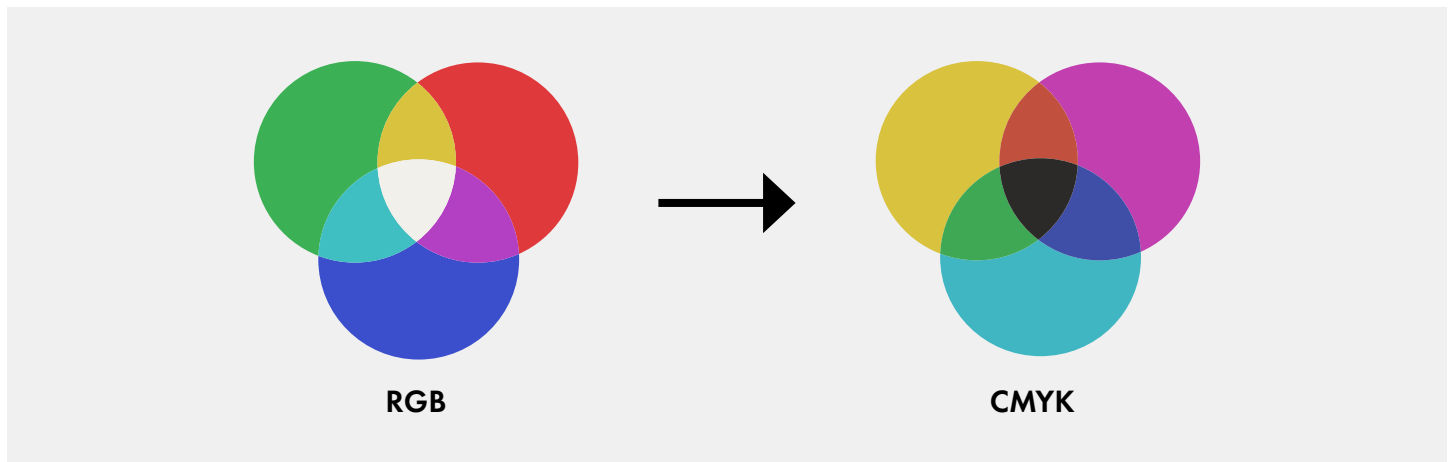
What is the safe zone?

The safe zone is the central area set inside the cut lines. Keeping your vital text, logos, and critical graphics strictly within this boundary guarantees they won't be sliced off or hidden by a fold during manufacturing.



Why is shifting from RGB to CMYK color modes absolutely mandatory?

Digital screens use Red, Green, and Blue (RGB) as their color channels, while printers use Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Key/Black (CMYK). The simplest way to understand the difference: RGB adds light from a black screen, while CMYK subtracts light from white paper using ink. If you don't convert to CMYK before printing, your vibrant screen colors will likely print muddy or dull.



How do Pantone colors guarantee brand consistency?

Pantone colors are standardized inks universally used by manufacturers and creatives. Assigning a specific Pantone ensures your brand's signature colors look exactly the same across a wide variation of materials and multiple production runs.



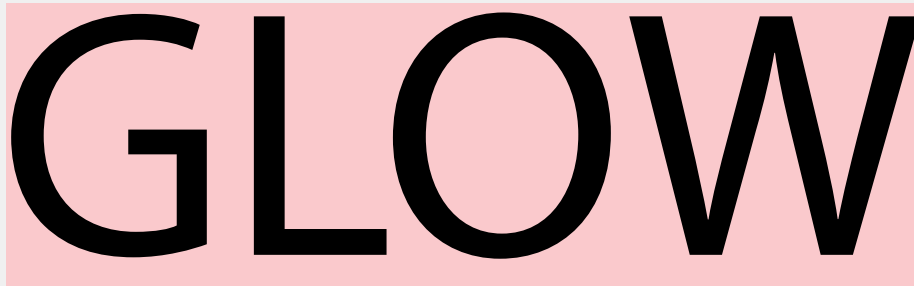
Typography and Linked Assets

Why is it an absolute necessity to outline all custom fonts before submitting a file?

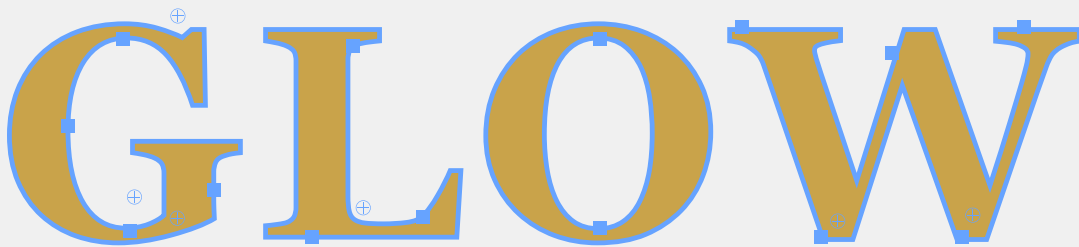
Custom fonts only exist on the specific computer where they were installed. If you send a file using a custom font to a printer who doesn't own it, Illustrator will automatically replace it with a standard, boring system font.

How does outlining prevent this text replacement?

Outlining converts all of your text into locked vector shapes. It is the best practice to make this your absolute final step before handing off the file. Once outlined, the text retains its exact shape and scalability, but it no longer acts like editable text—it becomes a graphic.



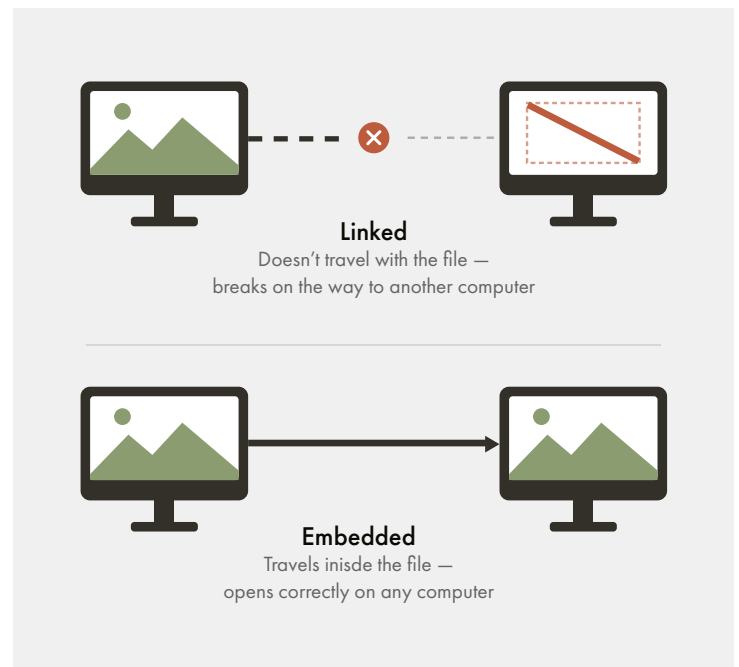
Missing Font



Outlined Font

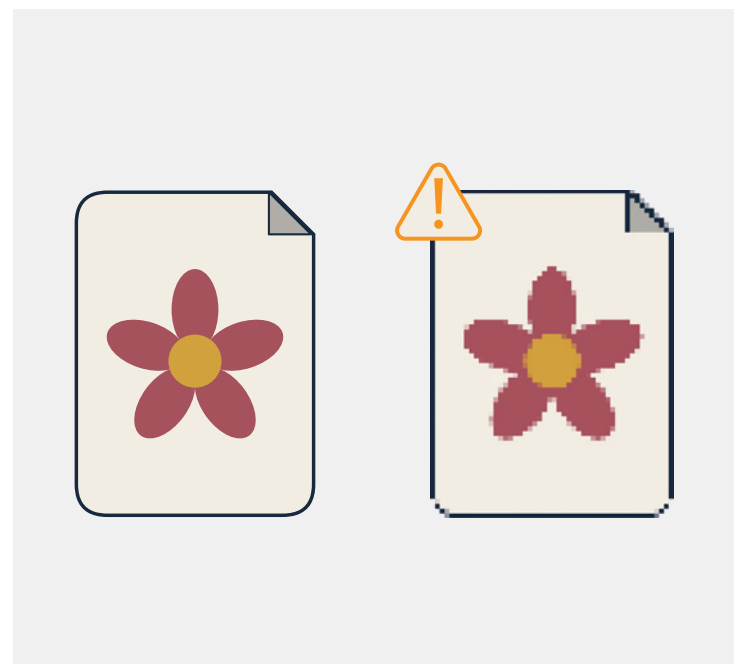
What is the critical difference between linking and embedding high-resolution images?

Linking an image only creates a digital shortcut to the original file saved on your computer. If you send that file to someone else without the original image attached, the link breaks. Embedding the image actually saves the high-resolution file directly inside the Illustrator document. While it increases the overall file size, embedding ensures your images travel safely with the file, no matter whose computer opens it.



How do missing image links stall the entire production process?

Missing links are one of the most common prepress mistakes. When it comes time to print, any unembedded image will simply vanish from the layout, stalling the entire proofing process until the original image files are tracked down and properly saved.



The Final Preflight Checklist

By making sure your file is fully print-ready, you guarantee a quicker turnaround and a flawless final package. Before submitting your final Adobe Illustrator artwork, use this quick summary checklist:

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Separate Your Layers: Ensure you have dedicated “Printable” and “Non-Printable” layers so the dieline doesn’t accidentally end up on your product.

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Outline All Text: Convert your typography to outlines to prevent custom fonts from defaulting to system fonts.

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Check Your Resolution: Ensure all graphics are cleanly vectorized, or that your raster images are high-resolution (minimum 300 DPI) to avoid blurry printing.

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Convert to CMYK: Make sure your document color mode is set to CMYK so your printed ink matches your expectations.

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Extend Your Bleeds: Push all background art and colors entirely to the bleed edge to prevent white borders.

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Embed Your Images: Double-check your links panel to ensure every raster image is fully embedded into the file.



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