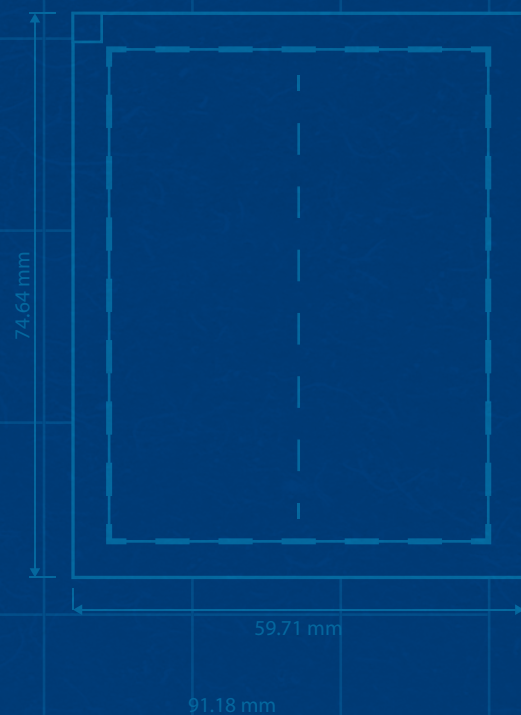
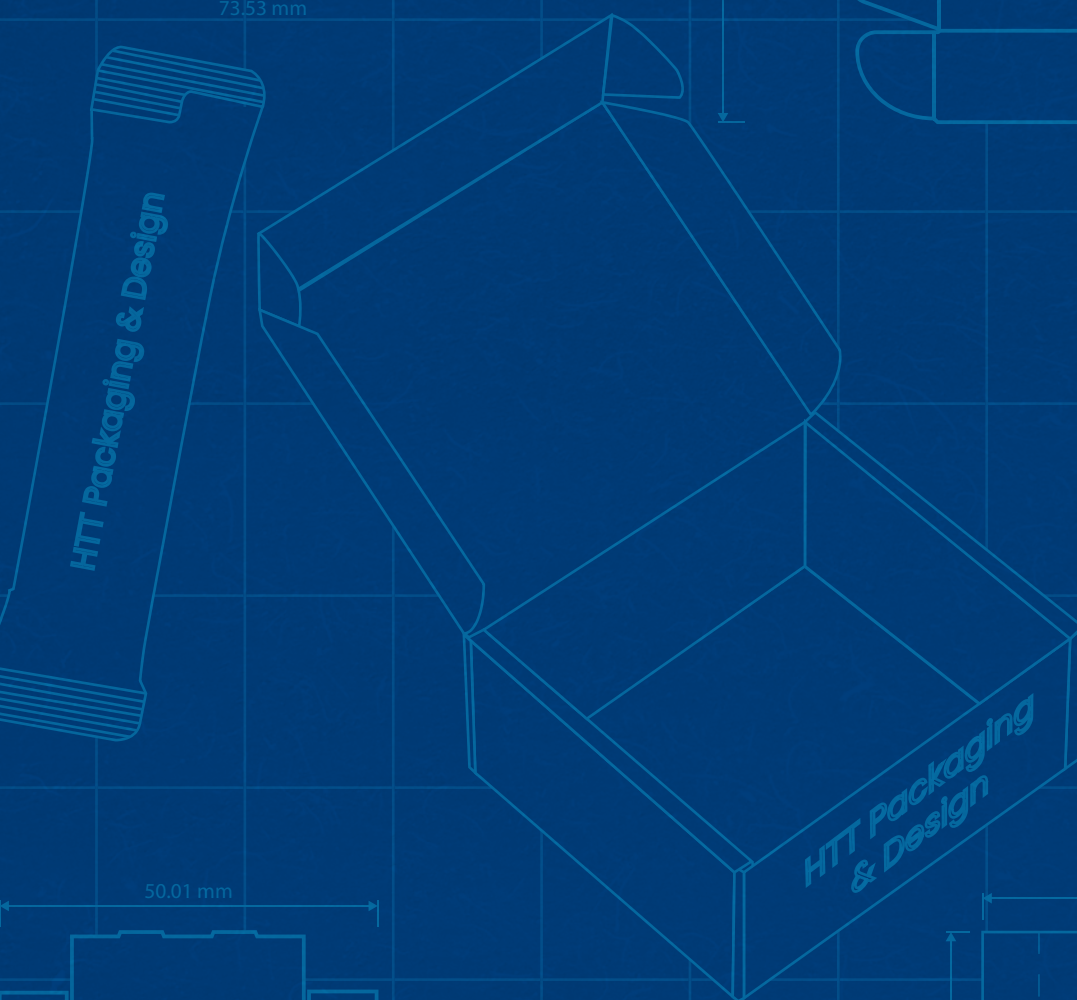


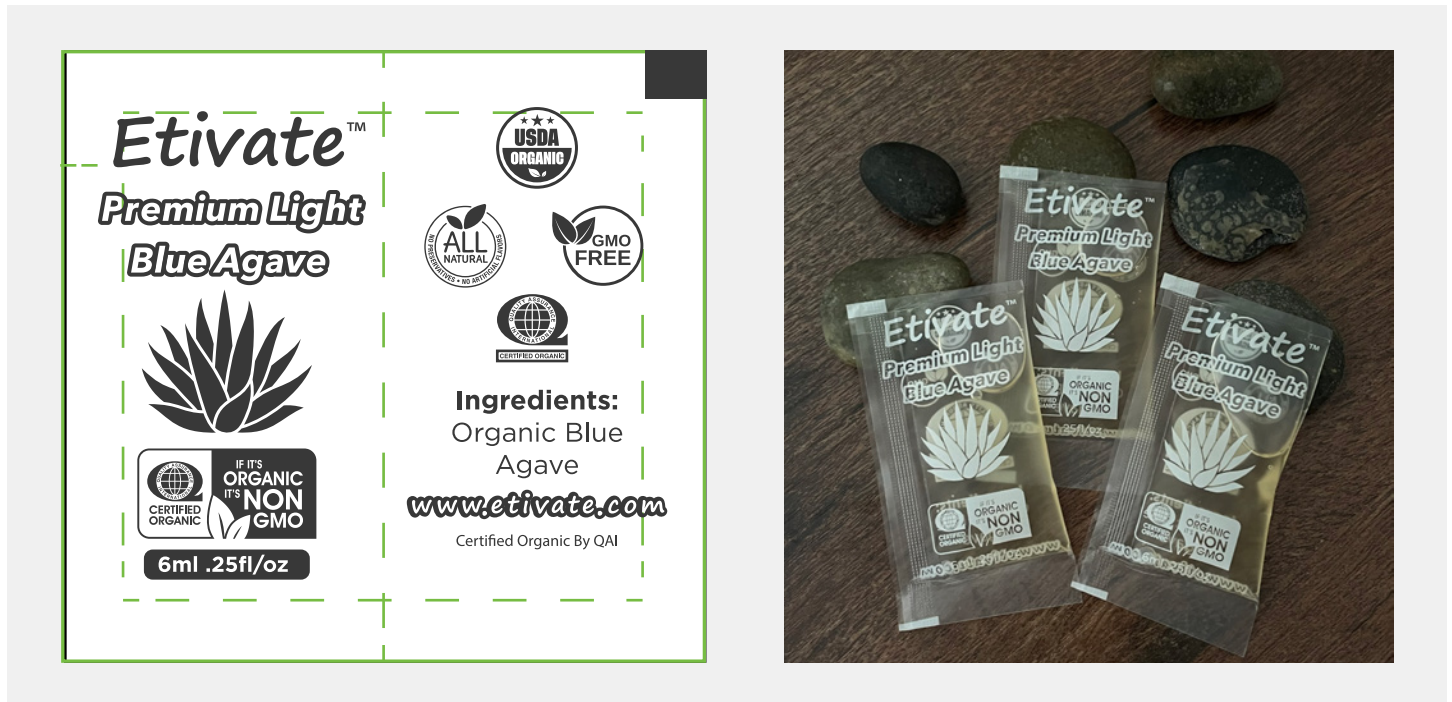
PREPPING YOUR ARTWORK



A QUICK GUIDE ON GETTING YOUR
ARTWORK PRINT READY

Decoding the Dieline

What is a dieline, and why does everything start there?



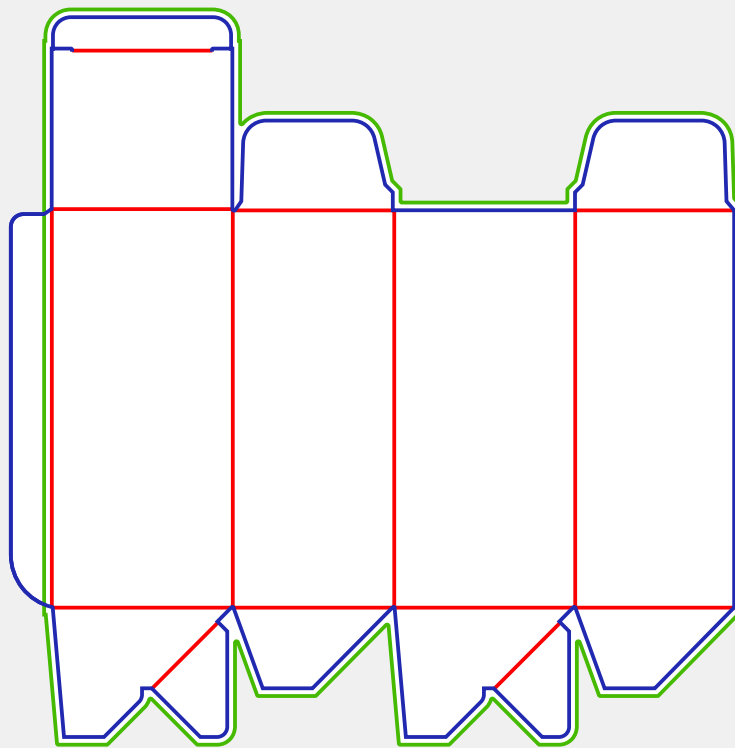
A dieline is the unfolded, 2D flat-pattern of your packaging — the blueprint for how artwork prints and folds. Without one, there’s no way to know your product’s exact dimensions or how the design will look once it’s made.

Why does a smooth transition from screen to print matter?

Prepress errors can derail your production timeline. Missing a deadline for a holiday or seasonal launch means losing out on timely relevance and revenue.

Bleeds, Safe Zones & Color Accuracy

What do cut, score, and bleed lines each do?



Cut lines: the exact boundary where the packaging gets sliced.

Score lines: where it creases and folds.

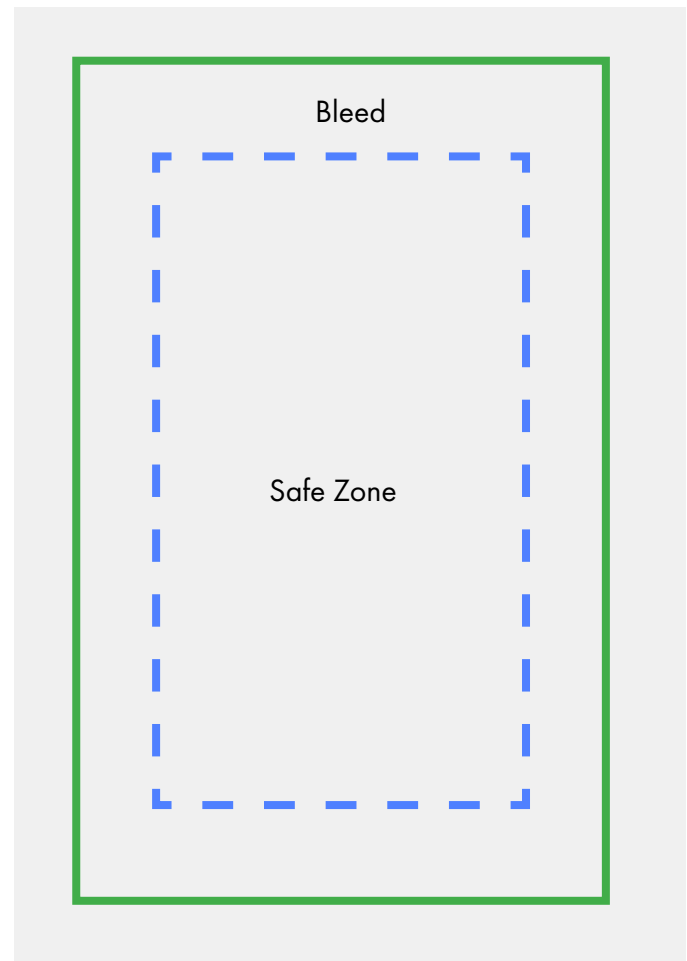
Bleed lines: just outside the cut line, absorbing any slight shift in production so you don't end up with white edges.

What is the bleed area, and why does background art need to reach it?

The bleed area accounts for the minute shifts that happen during high-speed printing. Pushing your background colors and patterns all the way to the edge keeps your final packaging from showing accidental white borders.

What is the safe zone?

The safe zone is the area inside the cut lines. Keep your text, logos, and other critical graphics inside this boundary so nothing gets sliced off or lost in a fold during manufacturing.



Automatic bleed is a safety net — not a substitute for building it yourself.

Can printers automatically add bleed for you?

Some print services and prepress software will auto-generate bleed if a file is missing it, usually by duplicating the pixels at the edge. Newer AI-powered tools do this more naturally, extending the background to match instead of just repeating pixels. It's a useful safety net, but not a substitute for building bleed in yourself — automatic extension doesn't check for text or logos sitting too close to the edge, and it works best on simple backgrounds, not detailed artwork.

Why do you need to convert RGB to CMYK before printing?

Screens use red, green, and blue light to create color; printers use cyan, magenta, yellow, and black ink instead. Screens add light to black — printers subtract light from white paper. Skip the conversion and vibrant on-screen colors can print muddy or dull.



How do Pantone colors keep your brand consistent?

Pantone colors are standardized inks used across the industry. Assigning a Pantone to your brand colors keeps them looking the same across materials and separate production runs.



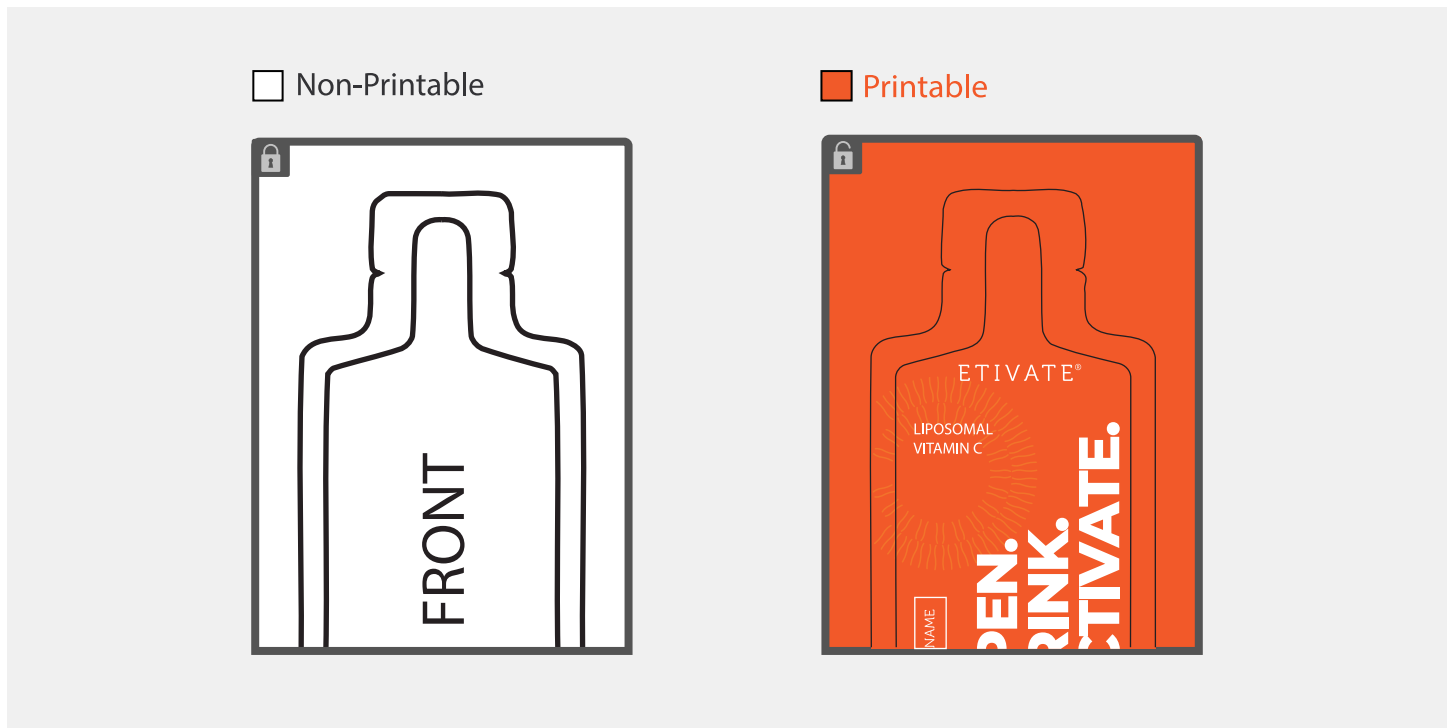
Mastering File Prep

Why does the dieline need its own locked layer?

Dielines carry notes, callouts, and measurements you don't want printed on the final product. Keeping the dieline on a separate, locked layer lets the printer tell the instructional guide apart from the actual artwork.

How do you prevent the dieline from accidentally being printed?

Use two dedicated layers — one named “Printable,” one named “Non-Printable.” That’s the surest way to make sure only your design reaches the press.

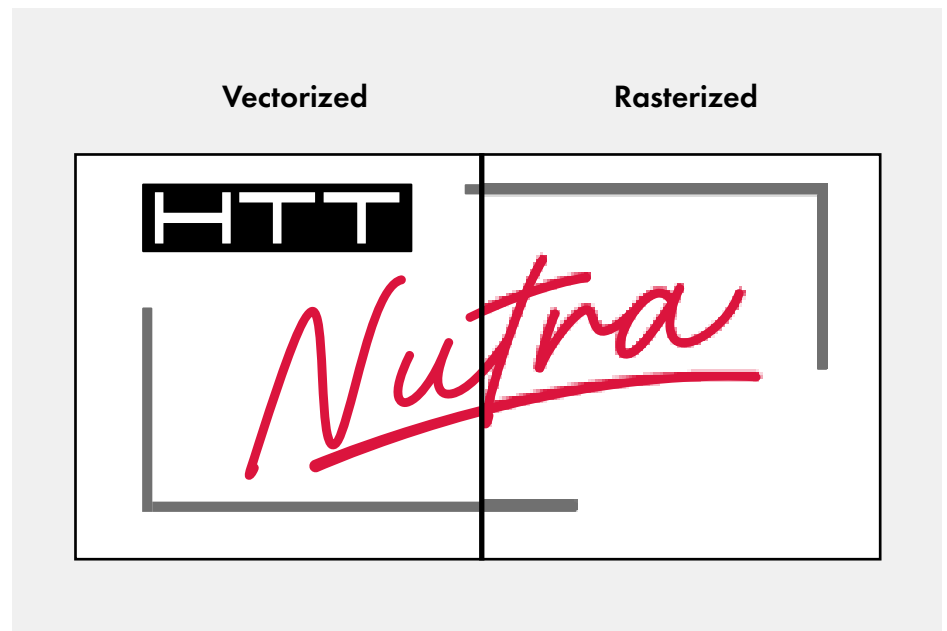


How does setting expectations prevent costly delays?

Your time is money. A drawn-out prepress process means fixing errors instead of manufacturing your product — preparing the file right the first time keeps you moving straight into production.

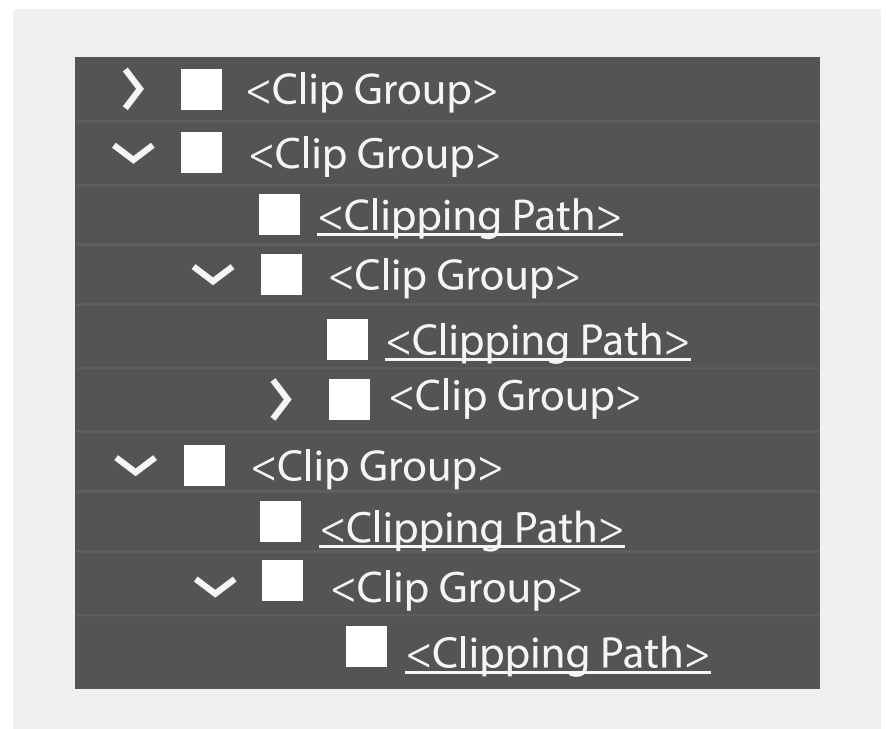
Why use vector graphics instead of raster images?

Vector graphics use math to draw paths and shapes, so they scale to any size without losing quality. Raster images are a fixed grid of pixels — scale one up or down and you get blurring or pixelation.



What goes wrong when files come from other programs?

Translating a design from another program into Illustrator can wipe out layer organization and flatten vector graphics into uneditable pixels or messy clipping masks.



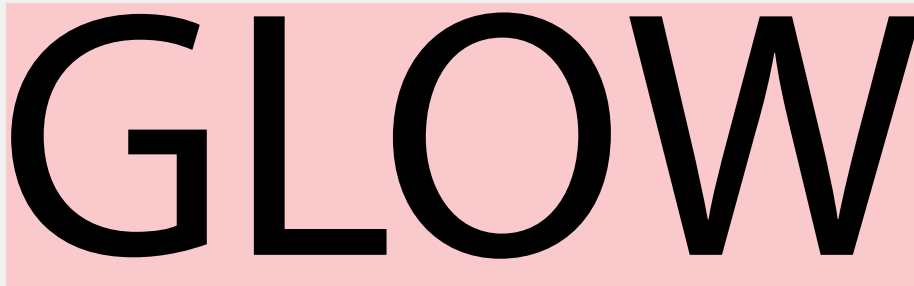
Typography and Linked Assets

Why do custom fonts need to be outlined before you submit a file?

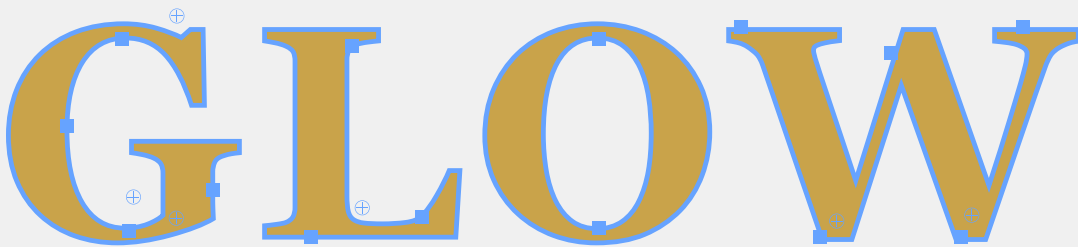
Custom fonts only exist on the computer where they're installed. Send a file with a custom font to a printer who doesn't have it, and Illustrator swaps in a plain system font instead.

How does outlining prevent that font swap?

Outlining converts your text into locked vector shapes. It keeps the exact look and stays scalable, but it's no longer editable text — make it your last step before handing off the file.



Missing Font

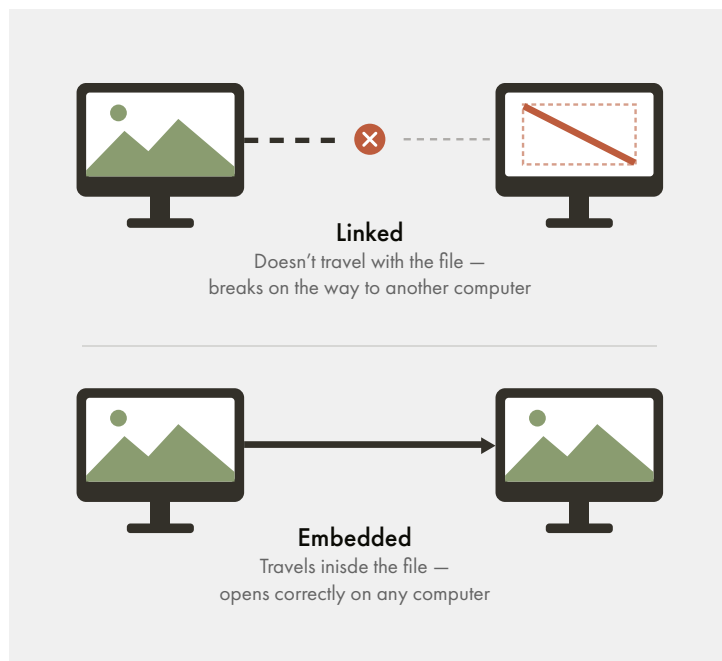


Outlined Font

Linking vs. Embedding

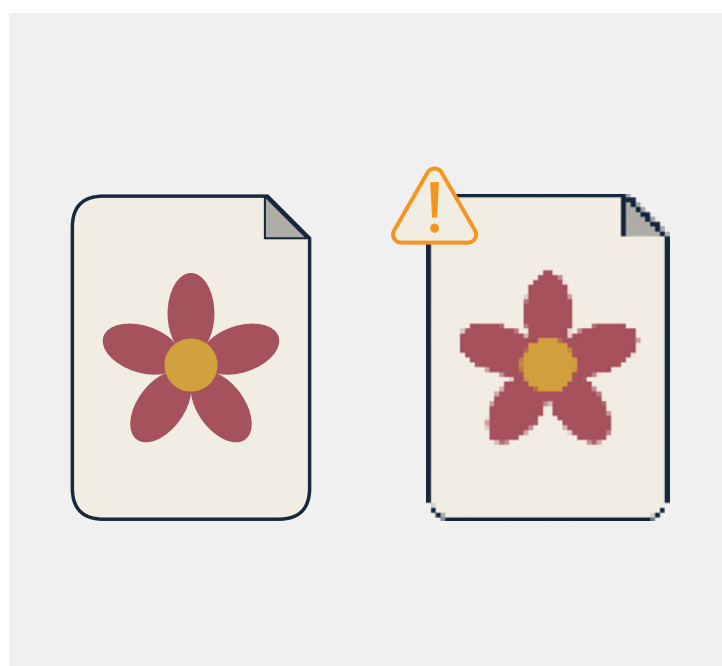
What's the difference between linking and embedding images?

A linked image is just a shortcut to the file on your computer — send the document without that file and the link breaks. An embedded image is saved directly inside the document, so it travels safely no matter whose computer opens it.



How do missing image links stall production?

Missing links are one of the most common prepress mistakes. When it's time to print, any unembedded image simply vanishes from the layout — stalling the whole proofing process until someone tracks down the original file.



The Final Preflight Checklist

A print-ready file means a quicker turnaround and a flawless final package. Before submitting your final Illustrator artwork, run through this checklist:

☐

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

☐

Outline All Text: convert typography to outlines so custom fonts don’t default to system fonts.

☐

Check Your Resolution: vectorize what you can; raster images should be at least 300 DPI.

☐

Convert to CMYK: set your document’s color mode to CMYK so printed ink matches what you expect.

☐

Extend Your Bleeds: push background art and colors all the way to the bleed edge.

☐

Embed Your Images: check your links panel to confirm every raster image is embedded.



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