

GUIDELINES FOR DESIGNING FOR LETTERPRESS  
PREPARED BY



## DESIGN GUIDELINES

*Choosing colors:* Use Pantone uncoated solid spot colors only—do not use process, RGB, CMYK, LAB, or Indexed colors. The colors in your document should correspond to the ink colors we'll use when printing. i.e. if we'll be printing in two ink colors, make sure only two spot colors are used throughout your files. While letterpress printing traditionally uses 1 or 2 spot colors; 3 or 4 spot colors make for an extravagant and lavish production. We match to Pantone Solid Uncoated spot colors. If you would like to use metallic ink, please realize that metallic colors lose their luster when letterpressed.

*Fonts:* We recommend using type no smaller than 6 point. Letterpress excels at printing type and handles most fonts very well. Sometime a script font will have very thin lines that may need a .1 stroke applied to them so that they letterpress well. Please ask if you think your font is questionable and we will advise. We would prefer that you outlined your text before you submit your final files to us.

*Images:* Vector images (from Illustrator) work very well. For raster images (from Photoshop), avoid the grayscale color mode for your images. Use a 1200 dpi bitmap instead. See the application-specific information below for more information.

*Line width:* Lines should be 0.25 point (or .003") or thicker. Don't use hairlines, please! For our work, we use a .5 point stroke for lines on response cards, etc.

*Trim size:* Show the final trim size by using a 1 point 100% CMYK black border. The document size should be set larger than the final trim size.

*Dies and scores:* Letterpress printing presses can also die-cut and score paper—even with very thick stocks.

Die cuts should be clearly indicated by a 1 point 100% magenta line; scores should be indicated by a 1 point 100% cyan line. We'd be happy to consult with you on your die pattern to make sure that it will work with our equipment.

*Bleeds:* If you're using a bleed, extend your artwork at least 1/16" past the trim. You will also need to have the stroke on your border set to overprint, which is found in the attributes palette of InDesign.

*Screens:* Letterpress excels at printing colors at 100%. If you'd like to incorporate a lighter color, we recommend using a second lighter ink color instead of a screen. Screens are more suited for offset printing, not letterpress.

*Reverse type:* Depending on the size of the reverse type, your reverses can clog up on the press. Because of this, we recommend a type size of 12 point or larger for reverse type, though this does vary depending on the typeface that you use. You may have to add a small stroke to the reverse type to compensate for letterpress ink gain. Also, if we're printing text and the solid area around your reverse type in the same color, we may need to print the solid area in a separate print run. Extra press runs do increase the cost of printing.

*Light ink on dark paper:* With letterpress, we tend to print dark ink on light paper, because that is letterpress printing's strength! Light ink on dark paper is really best suited for engraving. When a client wants to incorporate a darker color, we might suggest printing an offset flood on the back side of a light colored paper, or duplexing a dark colored paper to a light colored paper. That said, if you really want light ink on dark paper, just be prepared for paper show through. With letterpress, we use translucent inks. Printing light ink on dark paper will be like using a thin coat of white paint on a brown wall: you'll see the brown color through the paint. If using a pure white ink or metallic ink, we can run a piece through the press twice, at an

additional cost, to create a more dense color.

*Large solids (areas larger than ½" thick):* Letterpress printed solids look different from offset printed solids. The paper tends to show through large solids, creating a slightly textured look that's almost suede-like (we think this is a beautiful look by the way!). If you have a large solid and thin text in the same color, we'll need to print the solid in a separate press run, to give the text a good deep impression and proper inking. Extra press runs do increase the cost of printing. Large solid areas can cause buckling of the paper, especially if using a thinner machine-made paper stock. You'll also notice the depth of impression may appear less noticeable on really large letterpress solids—it doesn't have the contrast that line-art or type would have.

*Envelopes:* In general, letterpress prints envelopes well. If your artwork is anything other than a return address, consult with us about placement of your art on envelopes. Depending on the envelope, there may be limitations to where you can place your art. We would be happy to send you templates of our envelopes to help in your design process.

*Paper size:* If you're printing a piece larger than 9x12, please consult with us about what maximum paper size you can use for your design. Depending on the nature of the artwork and the quantity we're printing, we can recommend a format that works well for our equipment.

#### APPLICATION-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS:

*Adobe Illustrator:* Illustrator works very well for drawing artwork and setting type. Before sending your Illustrator file to us, outline the type (Type>Outline) and save the layout as a new file name (so that you can go back to edit the type if necessary later). Also, embed all linked images (an option in the Links palette). Preferred file formats: AI or EPS.

*Adobe InDesign:* InDesign works very well for typeset-

ting and layout. Please outline your text. Be sure to group all elements in your finished pieces, so that a text block or image does not move. If we are printing multiple pieces for you, use only one InDesign file and have each piece on a separate page of the file. You can gather all the files we need with the File>Package... feature. Preferred file format: INDD.

*Adobe Photoshop:* If possible, use only for imagery. Type should be designed in Illustrator or InDesign, instead of Photoshop. Bitmap images at 1200 dpi work best (you can set this in Image>Mode... menu with the 50% Threshold method.) If your image is not originally a bitmap, then before you change it from grayscale to bitmap, you may need to adjust the levels (Image. Adjustments. Levels) to make sure the grays in the image are dark enough to create a good bitmap image. Preferred file format: TIFF (with LZW compression).

If an original image is not at 1200 dpi and by increasing the file size, the resulting image is very pixelated, use the following method in Photoshop to smooth out the image.

- ~ Set image to grayscale. (Image-Image Mode)
- ~ Change the image size to 1200 dpi with 50% Threshold. Photoshop will use interpolation to increase the file size. (Image-Image Size)
- ~ Apply the Gaussian Blur filter. ( Filter-Blur-Gaussian) Set the blur to at least 1.5. You will learn how to gauge this with practice.
- ~ Set the mode back to Bitmap. (Image-Image Mode)

Evaluate your image at this point. If the image is still not smooth, you may need to reblur the image multiple times. You can also use the eraser and pen tool in bitmap mode to add or delete pixels to help smooth out an area.

#### MORE QUESTIONS?

If you require any additional information or clarification in preparing you files please let us know and our design staff will help you through the process.