

CREATING PRINT-READY PDFs WITH ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR

PDF is fast becoming the preferred file format in the printing industry. If created properly, a PDF is all a printer will need in order to produce a high quality hassle-free reproduction. A poorly created PDF can lead to production delays and over all poor quality printing.

This document contains instructions on how to create high quality worry-free PDFs from your Adobe Illustrator layout.

Document Layout Setup

Good PDFs start with good layouts. Attention to a few details in the structure of the layout can make a world of difference.

Document Setup

When setting up a page layout in Adobe Illustrator, it is best to use the document artboard to define the final trim size size of the printed piece. Illustrator uses the artboard as the basis for creating PDFs and will allow space beyond the page to be designated as bleed area.

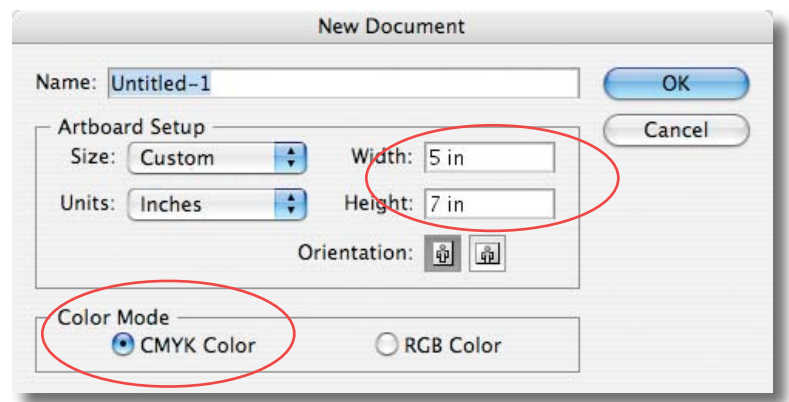
Multiple pages may be created on separate layers and saved as individual PDFs.

Be sure to set the document Color Mode to CMYK

Document Bleeds

PDF documents for print should always contain a defined bleed area. This area allows space for art at the edges of the page to BLEED off the edge ensuring full coverage when trimmed. Documents which do not have art to the edge should still have a bleed area for consistency.

Always be sure that all art, including placed images, which prints to the edge of the page extends past the page border by at least 1/16" (0.0625").



Create Artboard to final trim size - CMYK Color Mode

Document Color

One popular feature of Adobe Illustrator is transparency. From dropshadows to feather and overlay effects, transparency enhance eyecatching graphics. Unfortunately, transparency does not always work as intended, especially when combined with spot colors. In order to avoid complications, spot colors should be flattened prior to creating PDFs.

Spot Color Conversion

Go to **Windows/Swatches** to open the **Swatches** palette.

Spot color swatches are indicated with the **Spot Color** icon as in the **Spot Color Swatches** example.

Select a spot color swatch and select **Swatch Options** from the pull down menu at the top right of the **Swatches** palette.

Select **CMYK** from the **Color Mode** pull down menu.

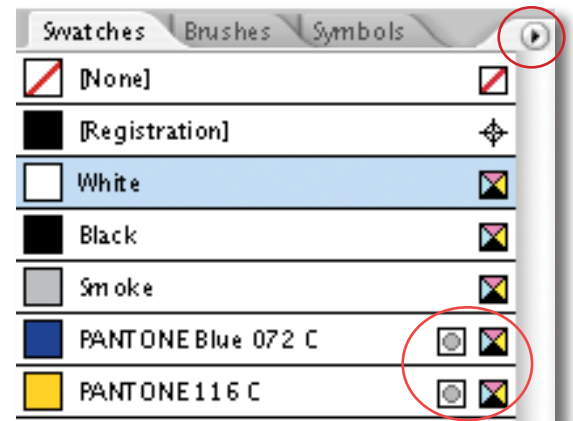
Select **Process** from the **Color Type** pull down menu.

Select the **Global** option.

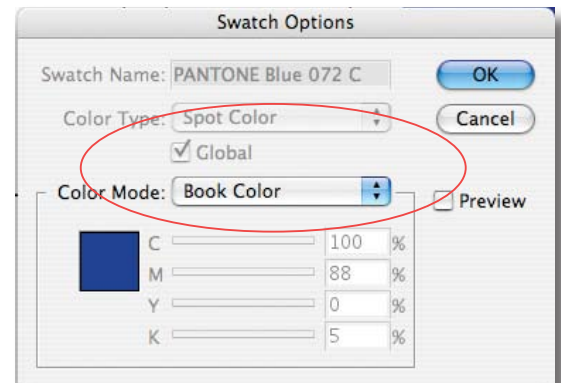
Click **OK** to apply the changes and exit the **Swatch Options** dialogue window.

Repeat this process for all spot colors in the document.

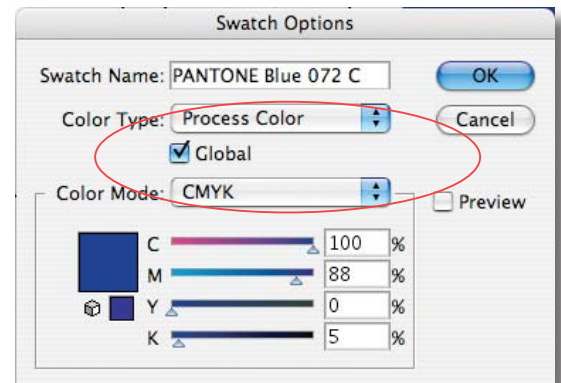
The **Spot Color Icon** will now be greyed-out as in the **Process Color Swatches** example.



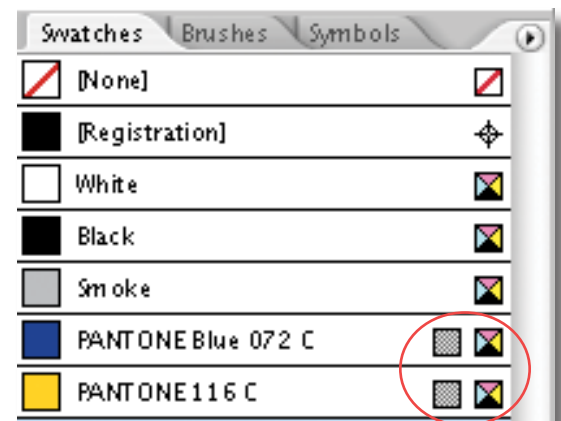
Spot Color Swatches



Pantone Spot Color Swatch Options



Process Color Swatch Options



Process Color Swatches

Saving As PDFs

Saving PDF

To begin creating a PDF go to **File/Save As**. In the **Save As** dialogue screen, select **Adobe PDF** from the **Format** menu at the bottom. Use the navigation portion to select where you want to save the PDF and click the **Save** button.

Adobe PDF Settings

The settings in the **Export Adobe PDF** dialogue screen control the quality of the final PDF. In the column on the left there are 7 categories which bring up controls for various aspects of the PDF. Access these categories in order to avoid changing parameters by mistake.

GENERAL

Select the **General** category from the left column.

Select **PDF/X-1a:2001** from the **Adobe PDF Preset** pull down menu.

Select **Acrobat 4 (PDF 1.3)** from the **Compatibility** pull down menu.

COMPRESSION

Select the **Compression** category from the left column.

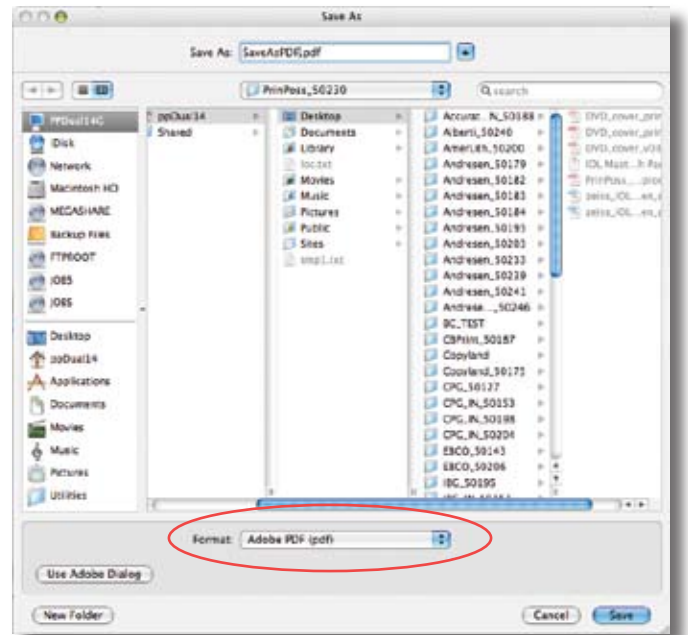
Select **Bicubic Downsampling** under the **Color Images**, **Greyscale Images** and **Monochrome Images** sections.

Set the **pixels per inch** to **300** for images above **450** in the **Color Images** and **Greyscale Images** sections.

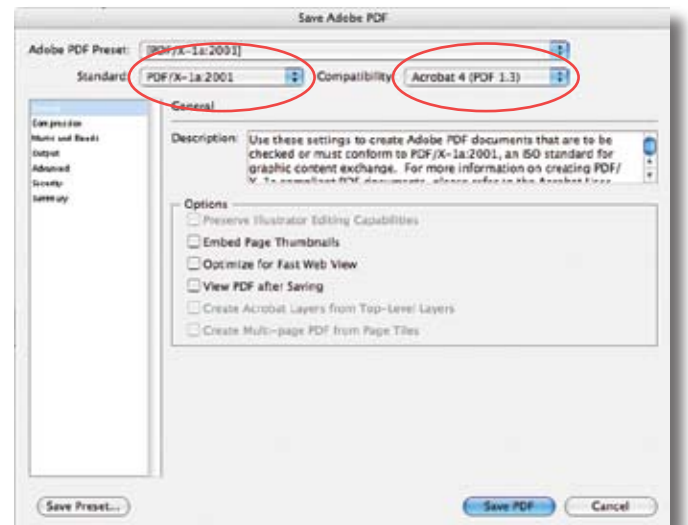
Set the **pixels per inch** to **1200** for images above **1800** in the **Monochrome Images** section.

Compression should be set to **None** in all sections.

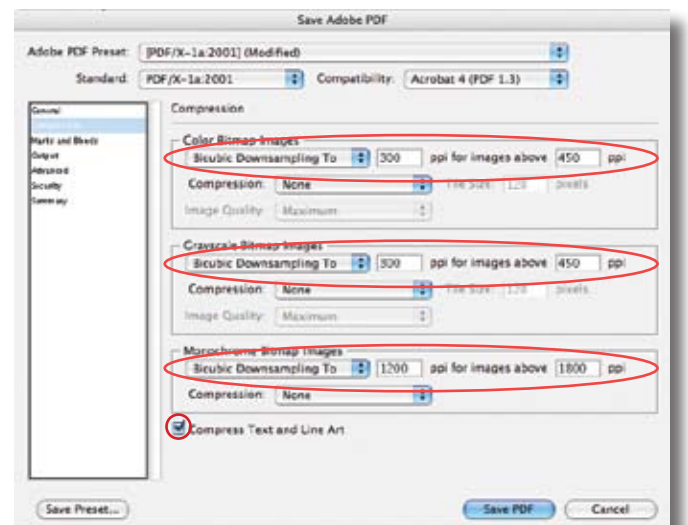
Select **Compress Text and Line Art**.



Saving the PDF



PDF Options - General



PDF Options - Compression

MARKS AND BLEEDS

Enter **0.0625"** (1/16") in the **Top, Bottom, Left** and **Right** value boxes. Note: if your document is setup for facing pages, **Left** and **Right** will be replaced with **Inside** and **Outside**.

OUTPUT

Select the **Output** category from the left column.

Set the **Color Conversion** option to **Convert to Destination (Preserve Numbers)** and the **Destination** to **Document CMYK - U.S. Web Coated (SWOP) v2** in the **Colour** section.

Set the **Output Intent Profile Name** to **Document CMYK - U.S. Web Coated (SWOP) v2** in the **PDF/X** section.

ADVANCED

Select the **Advanced** category from the left column.

Set the **Subset Fonts** percentage to **0%** in the **Fonts** section. This will embed the entire font set in the PDF, and will enable minor edits to be made to the text without having to resend the PDF to the printer.

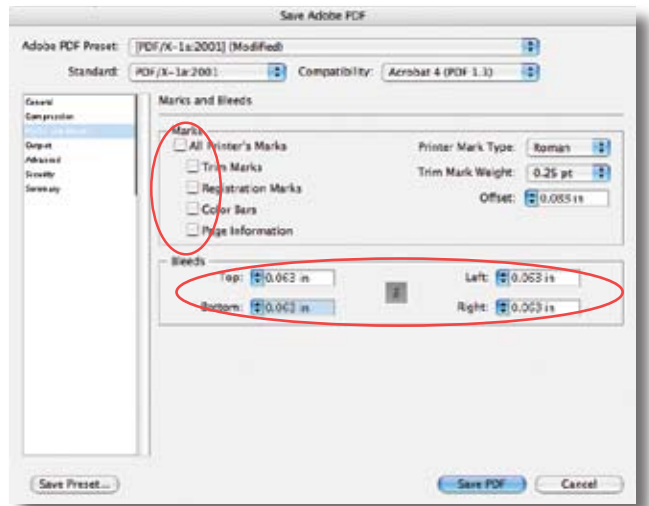
Select the **High Resolution** preset in the **Overprint and Transparency Flattener** section.

SECURITY

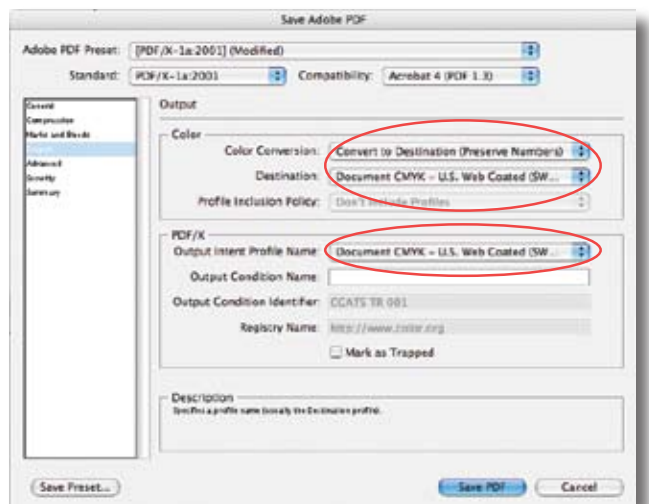
Do **NOT** set any form of security on the PDF.

To save all of these settings for later use, click **Save Preset**. Click **Export** to finish creating your PDF.

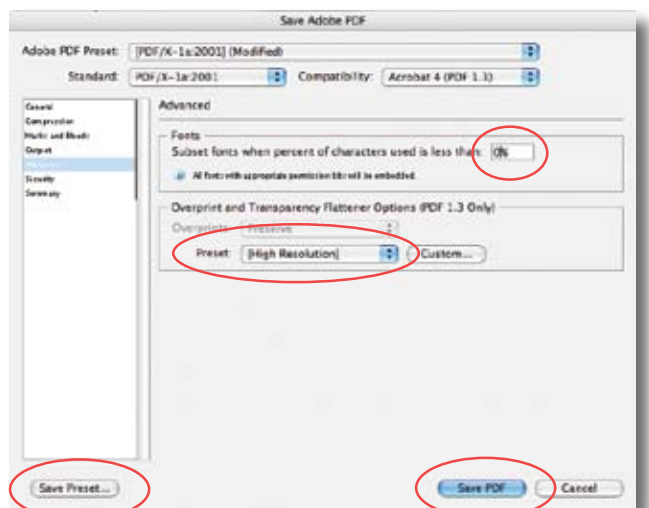
Preview your PDF in Adobe Acrobat to verify that it is correct.



PDF Options - Marks and Bleeds



PDF Options - Output



PDF Options - Advanced