CREATING PRINT-READY PDFS WITH ADOBE INDESIGN

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 InDesign 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 document for print, it is best if the document is in single pages. Facing pages can cause problems with bleeds on the inside edges of the spread especially. In the File/Document Setup make sure the Facing Pages option is not selected.

Note: For spreads with complex crossover images, in-dividual 2-page spreads can be created in a non-facing pages document to aid in design.
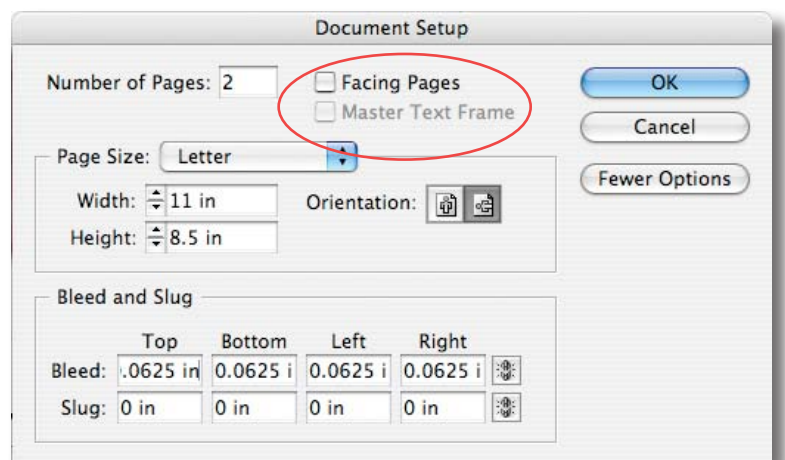

Fig. 1 - Document Pages

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.

To define the document bleed area go to File/Document Setup, click on the More Options button and input a 0.0625 (1/16) inch bleed on all four sides. A red bleed guide will appear outside the trim edges on the document. Make sure that all art which needs to bleed extends to that guide.
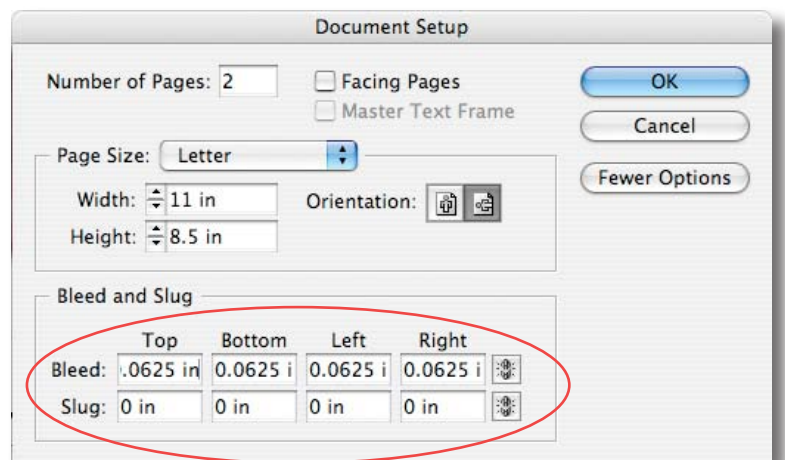

Fig. 2 - Document Bleeds

Document Color

One popular feature of Adobe InDesign is transparency. From dropshadows to 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 left of the **Swatches** palette.
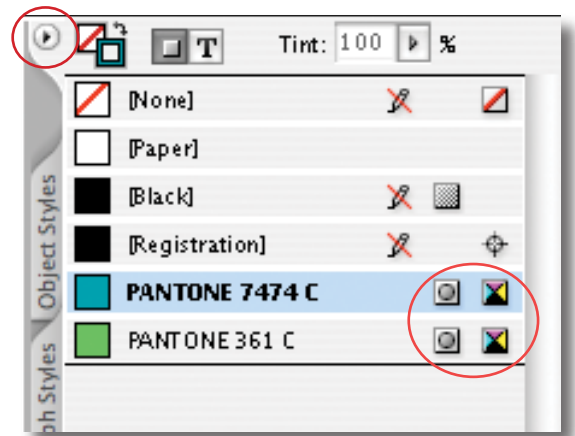
Select **CMYK** from the **Colour Mode** pull down menu.

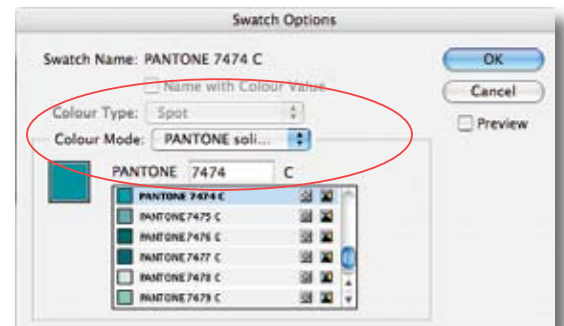Select **Process** from the **Colour Type** pull down menu.

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

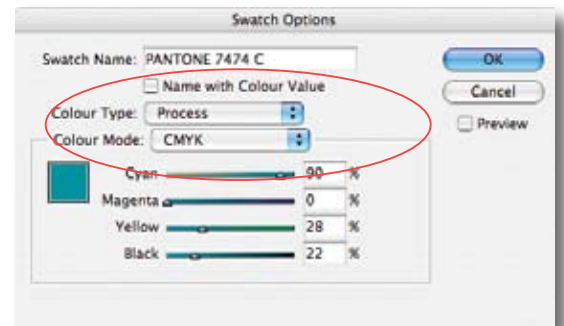Repeat this process for all spot colors in the document.

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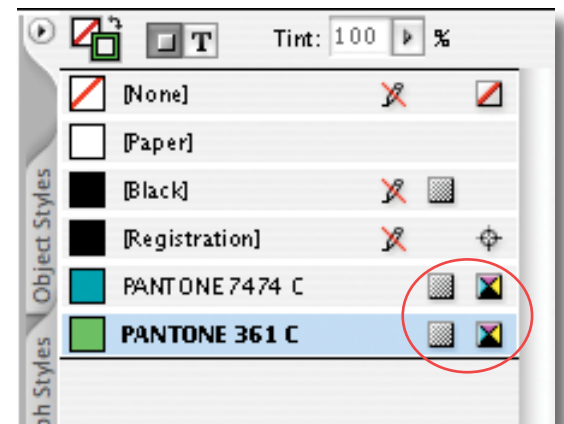

Spot Color Swatches

Pantone Spot Color Swatch Options
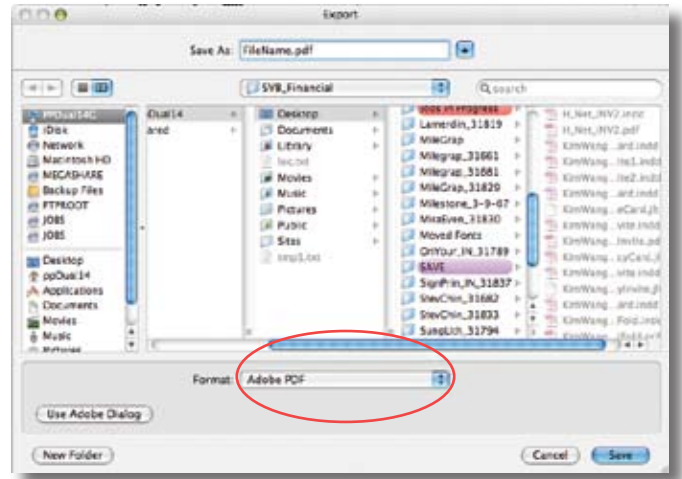

Process Color Swatch Options

Process Color Swatches

Exporting PDFs

Saving PDF

To begin creating a PDF go to **File/Export**. In the **Export** 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.
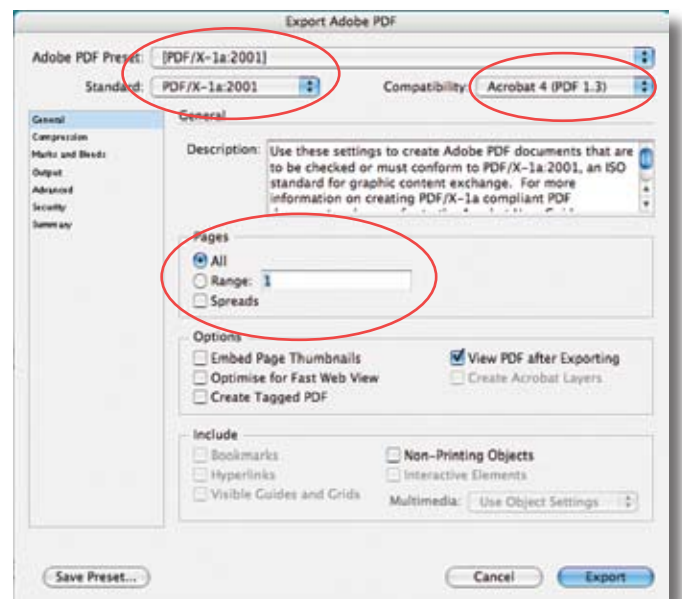
GENERAL

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.

Set the **Pages** range you require and make sure that the **Spreads** option is *not* checked.

COMPRESSION

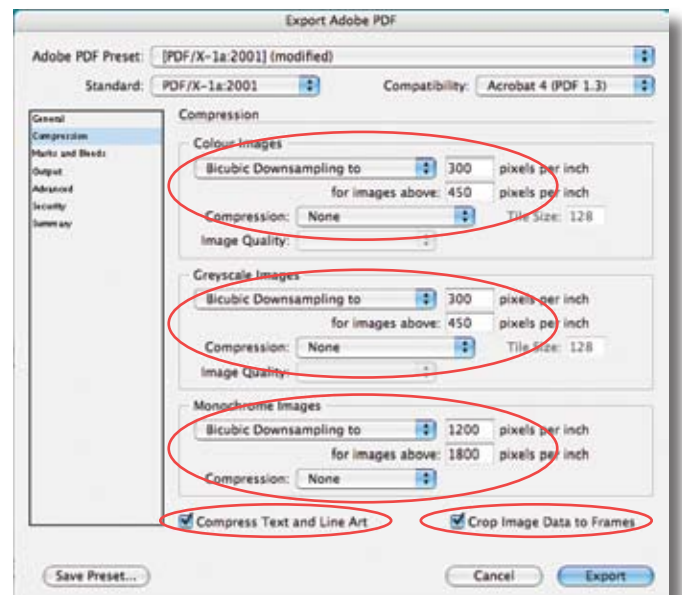Select the **Compression** category from the left column.

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
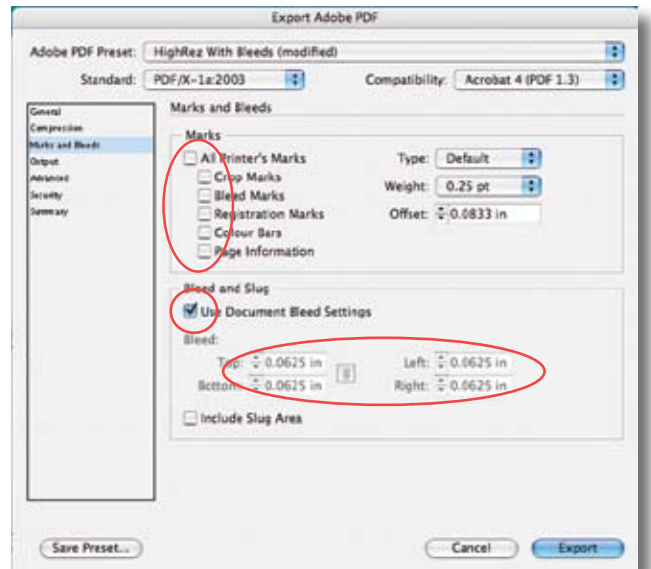

PDF Options - Compression

MARKS AND BLEEDS

Select the **Marks and Bleeds** category from the left column.

Make sure that none of the **Printer Marks** are selected in the **Marks** section.

Select the Use **Document Bleed Setting** in the **Bleed and Slug** section. If you have set the **Document Bleeds** in the **File/ Document Setup** menu, the bleed values will automatically be changed. If not, 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**.
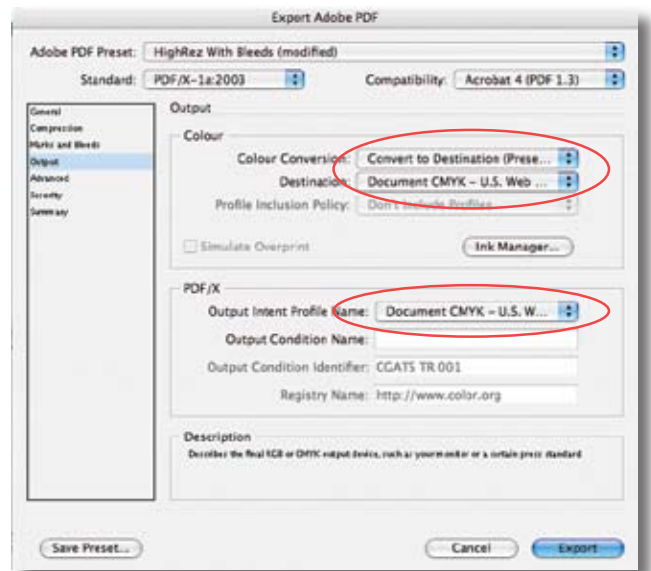
Do not select the **Include Slug Area** option.

PDF Options - Marks and Bleeds

OUTPUT

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

Set the **Colour 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.
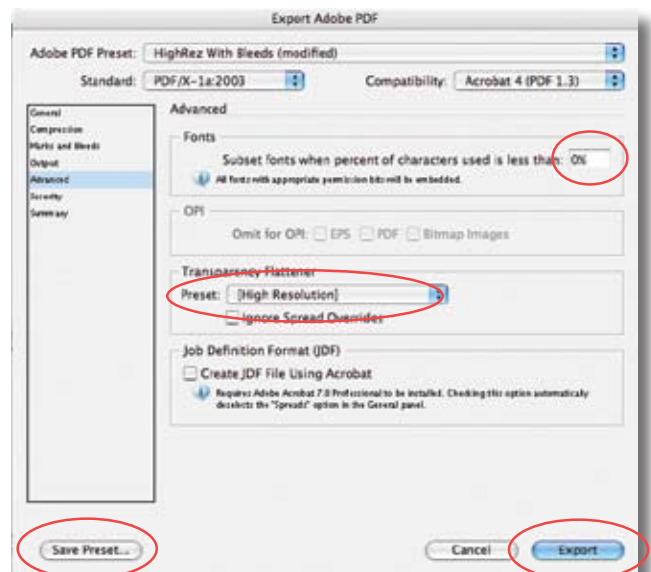
Select the **High Resolution** preset in the **Transparency Flattener** section.

PDF Options - Output

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 - Advanced