

# Learning the ropes to digital & variable data printing is easy, just follow these 10 steps.

## Step 1: File Formats

As a best practice, save images in an uncompressed TIFF or EPS format. Some digital presses can work with GIFs or JPEGs, but try to avoid them if at all possible. Image resolutions reproduce well at 300dpi on a digital press.

## Step 2: Proofing

It is important to proof early and often; unlike litho printing, digital proofs are inexpensive. With digital proofing, there are no costly press setups or paper make-readies. You see exactly how your job will look when printed because the same paper and machine are used for both proofing and printing.

## Step 3: Solids

Digital printing doesn't always hold large solids well. Solid areas of a few inches are usually fine. To prevent solids from banding, use Photoshop and apply the "Add Noise" filter, or add a slight background pattern.

## Step 4: Gradients

Reproducing gradients, also referred to as blends and vignettes, can be a challenge with any printing job. Shorter blends compress gradients, creating serious banding. You can try using tint values with a wide range, such as 15%-85%, or you may be able to reduce the banding with Photoshop's "Add Noise" filter.

## Step 5: Rich Black

Black bars and small black solids can look less dense when printed digitally. If you want a rich black, add screens of 60% cyan, 20% magenta and 20% yellow under your black solids. Using this technique, your black will also appear shinier. Make sure rich black isn't used for small type, due to registration issues.

## Step 6: Type

Using the same version of type for the entire job minimizes reflow problems. Always send Fruitridge all of the fonts used in your project. Type reflow issues can be avoided by sending in a PDF file with your type embedded.

For clean, legible type, 6pt is the smallest you should use. When reversing type out of a solid, use 9pt or higher. Stay away from type with very thin strokes, such as Didot; they will not reproduce well.

## Step 7: Color

Digital printing requires RGB conversion to CMYK. This can be more complicated than choosing MODE>CMYK, because RGB has a wider color space than CMYK.

Images with saturated color may appear washed out when converted to CMYK. To prevent this, ask for Fruitridge's color management profile for Photoshop CMYK conversions (it's free) that can be loaded onto your computer for optimum color.

Because most digital presses are four color process, PMS colors need to convert to CMYK screen builds. Pantone color books are handy tools, and now show PMS conversions to CMYK to digital.

## Step 8: Page Layout, Bleeds & Crossovers

Provide us with single pages and we will impose them. Make sure you include bleeds of 1/8 inch and allow 2-3mm of play in your design for backup (what's being printed on the back) and for crossovers.

The best place for a crossover is obviously when both the right and left sides are printed on the same sheet. Use type or other design elements for crossovers that don't need the precise lineup that thick borders require page to page.

## Step 9: Paper

Not all papers perform well digitally. Ask us for recommendations, or look for paper specifically made for digital.

Gloss stocks won't necessarily result in a glossy look. Often, dull or matte sheets are more compatible with toner-based presses. Heavily textured paper is never a good choice.

## Step 10: The List

Nothing is ever more important than your list. The list accounts for 60% of the success rate of any direct mail.

Clean and review:

- old data
- duplicates
- grammar
- defined fields
- field export order
- add names of image files to an image filename field in each record.

The printed list of field names that you give Fruitridge with the job, must exactly match the field names used in the variable data program.