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Figuring Out Folds

The tri-fold brochure and other folded pieces contain several traps for the unwary. This article will guide you around common folding pitfalls and toward the gold at the end of the rainbow: tri-fold brochures that look and fold perfectly.



Setting Up a Tri-fold Brochure

Set up all folding documents (Z-folds, gatefolds, C-folds and so on) as two pages, the exact width and height of the unfolded document. The most common size for a tri-fold brochure is letter, so let's use it for our example. In your layout software, create a new letter-sized document with landscape orientation. On the pasteboard, put the text "front" next to the first page and "back" next to the second page.

Creating the Panels

Now fold a piece of paper into a tri-fold brochure and mark the front. Notice that on the front page, the front panel is on the right. Also note that the right and middle panel are the same width, while the left panel is shorter. Turn the brochure around and you see that on the back page, the left and middle panels are the same width and the right one is shorter. Make page guides that reflect this.

There are two ways to do so: one is to have us make a folding dummy, and then you can measure each side and set up your page guides based on the dummy. This will always work perfectly. The other way is to make both of the wider panels 3.7 inches wide and the narrow one 3.6 inches wide, which works well in most cases.

If you use our rule of thumb, on the "front" page, the left panel would be 3.6 inches wide, and the middle and right ones would each be 3.7 inches wide. On the "back" page, the left and middle panels would be 3.7 inches wide and the right panel would be 3.6 inches wide. Once you have set up the panels, give each one the same margin. This centers your text within each panel.

To make a tri-fold brochure, or any folding document, fold properly, remember that the inside panel is affected by how heavy the stock is. If you're running on 100# cover, you need at least .0625 of an inch and maybe as much as .125.

And of course, should you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us. We're here to assist you with any of your communication needs.

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