



A monthly e-Gram from Harty

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Prepare for Takeoff

Many perennial graphic production problems—missing fonts or image files, for example—have traditionally plagued designers who submit print files as native application files, such as QuarkXPress or Adobe InDesign. One solution has been to submit jobs in PDF format, but you no doubt know from experience that PDF isn't always foolproof. However, there are some simple steps you can take to ensure that the PDF files you send to us are as trouble-free as possible.

"Preflighting" is the process by which a document file is double-checked to ensure that all linked files and fonts are present, that color spaces (CMYK and RGB) are correct, graphics are at print resolution and so on.

When submitting your final files as PDFs, there are two points (at least) in the process where preflighting should take place:

- ◆ on the original application file prior to distilling or exporting the PDF
- ◆ on the final PDF immediately before you submit it

This might seem like overkill, but as it becomes easier and easier to edit PDF files, it's tempting to use Acrobat as a page layout program and add content or substantial edits after distilling. Despite these abilities, edits except for the most minor should be made in the original application file. Of course, that isn't always possible—which is why preflighting the PDF itself should be the final step before sending us the file.

You can perform preflighting manually by examining an application's list of the links and fonts used in the document, which provides information such as color space, whether a link or font is missing and so forth. Applications such as InDesign have built-in preflighting tools, which analyze page files and flag common prepress problems, often with instructions on how to fix them.

Third-party applications, such as Markzware's FlightCheck, give you even more control over what is flagged as a problem, and we can help configure a preflight program's settings so that it will catch all potential problems. Any preflight application worth its salt these days will also preflight PDF files. Enfocus Software's PitStop also features extensive PDF editing and correction features in addition to PDF preflighting functions.

Preflighting doesn't have to be a long, drawn-out undertaking, but a few simple precautions can ensure that your file is output correctly, saving you time and money.

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