

## What is bleed?

In printing, a page is said to “bleed” when part of the design, or the page background, needs to be printed right up to the edge of the sheet. In these cases the artwork needs to be adjusted to extend over the edge of the finished page. The jobs in the example below show when bleed is required. If your job has a white margin on all edges, then bleed is not required.

## Why do we need bleed?

Printing presses, whether conventional or digital, can't print right to the edge of a sheet of paper. So, if we need to print up to the edge of a sheet, we must use oversized paper and then trim to size. Neither printing nor cutting is a totally exact process, so the bleed is used to allow for the small errors which may occur. It ensures that there are no slivers of white visible once the sheet has been trimmed.



## How much bleed?

Printing processes vary in their accuracy, so it is a good idea to make a greater allowance than is normally necessary. Typically we use 3mm bleed on each side of a job. This means that any element on a page which is intended to print to the edge – graphics, picture, background colour, or whatever – must continue 3mm over the edge of the page. This additional information will be trimmed off when the job is finished.

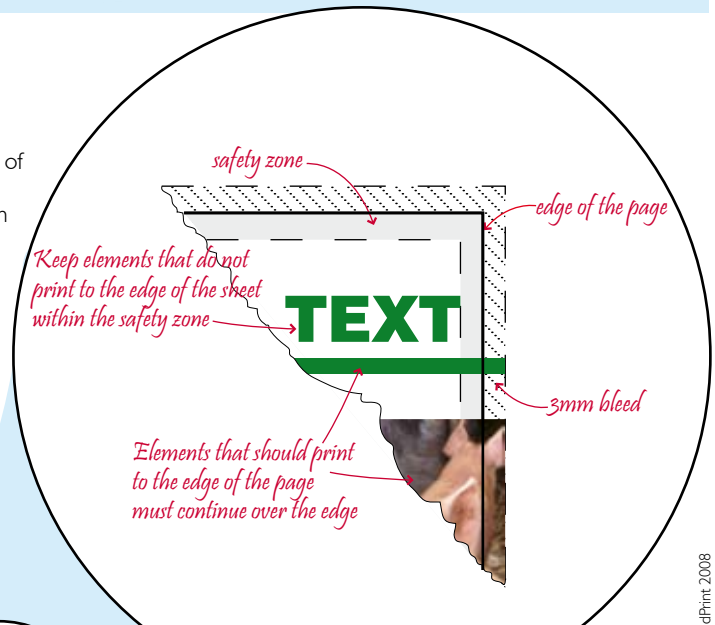
In addition to the bleed outside the edge of a page, it is usual to allow a “safety zone” inside the page boundary. Any important elements, such as text or graphics, which are intended to be contained on the page and not bleed off should be kept inside this zone. The size of this zone will vary according to the printing process, but should be a minimum of 3mm. If you can allow a larger safety zone, say 5mm, it often gives a better visual appearance.

It is also necessary to be aware that some machines have unprintable areas at the edge of the sheet. This is particularly important when designing jobs that do not have bleed and will be printed, usually digitally, on “cut-size” sheets, i.e. normal A4 or A3 paper. Here it is usually necessary to extend the safety zone, or margin, to 6mm or more. We can provide more precise information depending on the job to be printed.

## How do I provide bleed?

This depends on the software being used to create the artwork. We'll be happy to provide specific advice for your job. Generally speaking, when using page layout software (Adobe InDesign, Quark XPress, Microsoft Publisher, etc.) set the document size to be the size of your finished job and simply extend the elements that bleed over the edge of the page. When exporting/saving as PDF, make sure that the PDF page size is bigger than the job's finished page size.

If creating artwork in an image editing program, e.g. Adobe Photoshop, set the image size initially to be big enough to include



the bleed. For example, if creating an A6 postcard which has a finished size of 148 x 105mm, make your image 154 x 111mm to allow 3mm all round. It is then a very good idea to set ruler guides to mark the bleed area and safety zone to remind you not to put important information in positions where it is liable to be trimmed off.