

Working with Color Separations

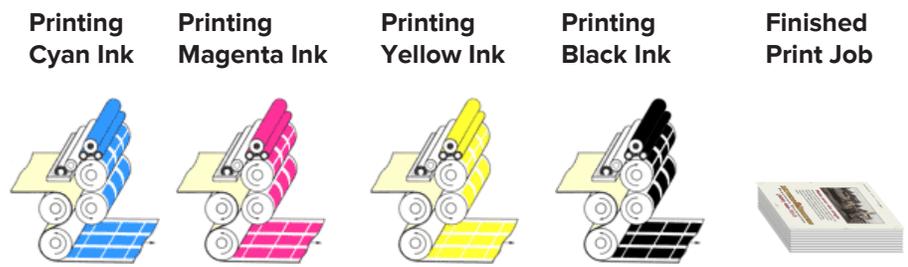
Printing Multiple Colors



About

When a project is to be printed commercially, you must know which colors of ink will be used. This job has a photo so it must be printed with the CMYK process colors. Other jobs may only need one or more specially mixed "spot" colors, usually described with a Pantone number.

Since each color is printed its own run through the press, it must have its own color separation printed onto a negative or a printing plate.



Process

The final separation negatives are created by the printer. Before delivering the job, the designer should always produce a set of positive laser proof separations to check for mistakes. The color separations are created when you print the job from the computer. The exact steps vary with every software application but there will always be some common tasks:

- o Select the printer.
- o Make sure you have the correct PPD (PostScript Printer Description) selected. It should match the printer you chose.
- o Check the page setup and document settings for paper size and orientation.
- o Turn on the colors you need to print (more on this in the PDF procedure). To be totally safe, you can turn on every color, but you will not be popular at the print desk.
- o Turn on the Registration, printer's marks, crop marks...whatever they are called in the application.
- o Set the bleed options if needed.
- o Choose the Separations or Separate option; not the Composite.
- o Print the job.

Make a Portable Document Format (PDF) color separation file

You can divert the information you would have sent to the printer in the steps above and save it as a file on the hard drive. You then open that file with Adobe Acrobat's Distiller application which creates the PDF file.

**Printing Multiple Colors
Continued...**

These are advantages of using the PDF method:

- o You can view the separations as multiple pages on the computer.
- o You can turn on every color, even the ones you didn't think you used.
This is a cheap and quick way to discover parts that got assigned to a color you did not plan to print. If all the parts are where they are supposed to be, then print only the pages you need for your proof.
- o You can select the screen or desktop printing compression option and make your file much smaller. You don't need to send a 20-megabyte file through the printer just to check for misplaced parts. When you print to the laser printer the compressed PDF will process very quickly.
- o Because the PDF can be very small, it could be sent to a client or printer as an e-mail attachment.
- o You can check your separations when there is no printer available for you computer.
- o View the PDF separations for the job from the top of the page. It is a good thing the designer printed all the colors...some graphics brought in extra colors and will need to be fixed.

Resources

Lynda.com

- o [Illustrator Package Design - Chapter 8: "Preparing your design for print" - "Checking your color separations"](#)

- o [Indesign: "Checking with Color Separations Preview"](#)