

Print-Ready Art Guidelines

The Quick Version

- Built on the die line template for your SKU
- Artwork extends 0.125" past the trim edge (bleed)
- Text and logos stay 0.125" inside the trim edge (safe area)
- Fonts are outlined (converted to shapes)
- Images are 300 DPI at final size, embedded or linked
- Color mode is CMYK, not RGB

If all six are true, you're good to submit. Details on each below.

1. Use a Die Line Template

Every SKU should be designed on top of its die line template — the exact shape, fold lines, and score lines for that carton. Don't resize or rotate it. Fold and score lines go on their own layer, set to non-printing.

2. Bleed & Safe Area

Bleed: extend any background color or image 0.125" past the trim edge, so there's no white sliver if the cut shifts slightly.

Safe area: keep text and logos 0.125" inside the trim edge, and off any fold or score line.

Color can run to the edge and slightly past it, but words and logos should stay a little inside.

3. File Format

Preferred: **PDF**. Also accepted: Adobe Illustrator (.ai) or InDesign (.indd).

Not accepted: JPEG, PNG, PowerPoint, Canva, Google Docs, Photoshop (.psd) — these don't hold up at print size or risk text set in an image-editing program.

4. Color

CMYK only. RGB files get auto-converted and colors can shift — better to convert it yourself first.

Matching an exact brand color? Call out the

Pantone (PMS) number — make sure it's the coated version, ending in **C** (e.g. PMS 186 C).

5. Fonts & Resolution

Outline all fonts before exporting (turns text into shapes, so nothing shifts on our end).

Images: 300 DPI minimum at the size they'll actually print. Vector logos and illustrations are always safe — they scale with no quality loss. Every image should be **embedded** in the file or **linked** and included alongside it — a missing linked image means we can't see what you saw when you submit.

AI-generated or AI-rendered images are fine, as long as they meet the same 300 DPI minimum at final print size — raw AI output is usually screen-resolution only, so it will likely need to be upscaled first. Any barcodes or fine text within the image should be recreated as real elements, not AI-rendered.

6. Naming & Packaging

Name your file clearly: **ProductName_SKU_v1.pdf**.

If sending an Illustrator or InDesign file, use File > Package so fonts and images travel with it automatically.

If you're using a special finish — Foil Stamp, Spot Gloss UV, Emboss, or Reticulation UV each need their own separate layer in the file, named for what it is (e.g. FOIL, SPOT_UV). This keeps the finish aligned correctly with your base design — misaligned finish layers are the #1 cause of reprint delays.