

Bleed, trim and safe area

Measured examples for common print formats

This guide helps you prepare a clearer brief and a more reliable production file. Use the agreed job specification for final dimensions, finishing and colour targets.

The three boundaries

The bleed edge is the outermost printed area. The trim edge is the intended finished edge. The safe boundary sits inside trim and protects type and logos from normal finishing variation. Background photos and colour blocks continue to the bleed edge; important content stays well inside the safe boundary.

A4 worked example

Finished A4 is 210 × 297 mm. With 3 mm bleed on all four sides, the full artwork extent is 216 × 303 mm. A 3 mm inside safe margin leaves a simple content area of 204 × 291 mm, but a real layout often needs more breathing room. The PDF trim box should still describe the finished 210 × 297 mm page.

A5 worked example

Finished A5 is 148 × 210 mm. A common 3 mm bleed produces 154 × 216 mm artwork. A 5 mm inside text margin gives a 138 × 200 mm working area. Do not reduce the finished size by the bleed amount; bleed is added outside it.

Business-card worked example

For a 85 × 55 mm card, 3 mm bleed produces 91 × 61 mm artwork. Keep essential type well inside the 85 × 55 mm trim. Check whether the chosen card, shaped corner or finish has additional restrictions.

Special cases

A folded panel may need a reduced width on the inside. A roll-up banner hides material in its cassette. Eyelets and hems consume space on banners. Bound documents need a wider inside margin and a spine calculation. Ask for the specific template when these finishing steps are involved.

Final check

Turn on bleed preview, then trim preview. Inspect all four edges, not only the top. Confirm that no important detail straddles the trim or finishing zone. Export with document bleed included and reopen the PDF to inspect the actual page boxes.

Need a specification for your job?

Tell us the finished size, quantity, use and deadline. Call 01925 632717 or visit theprintcentrewarrington.co.uk/contact.