

FILE PREP GUIDELINES

**PROFESSIONAL
DESIGNERS** PAGE 2

**NON-PROFESSIONAL
DESIGNERS** PAGE 6

FILE PREP GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL DESIGNERS

ACCEPTED FILE TYPES

Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop or print-quality high resolution PDFs.

Packaged native files are preferred: (.indd, .ai, .eps, .psd, .tiff). High-resolution PDFs (.pdf) are also acceptable (with ¼" bleed and crop marks, all fonts outlined or packaged, and all image links included, or embedded).

For PDF files exported or saved from non-professional design programs like MS Publisher and Powerpoint, please see "File Prep Guidelines for Non-professional Designers".

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Confirm or determine whether the sign panel(s) will be mounted with a frame or frameless. This will determine the visible portion of the sign.

Framed Panels:

Frame will cover about 5% the panel perimeter. Overlooking potential frame coverage can result in frame encroachment or "crowding".

Frameless Panels:

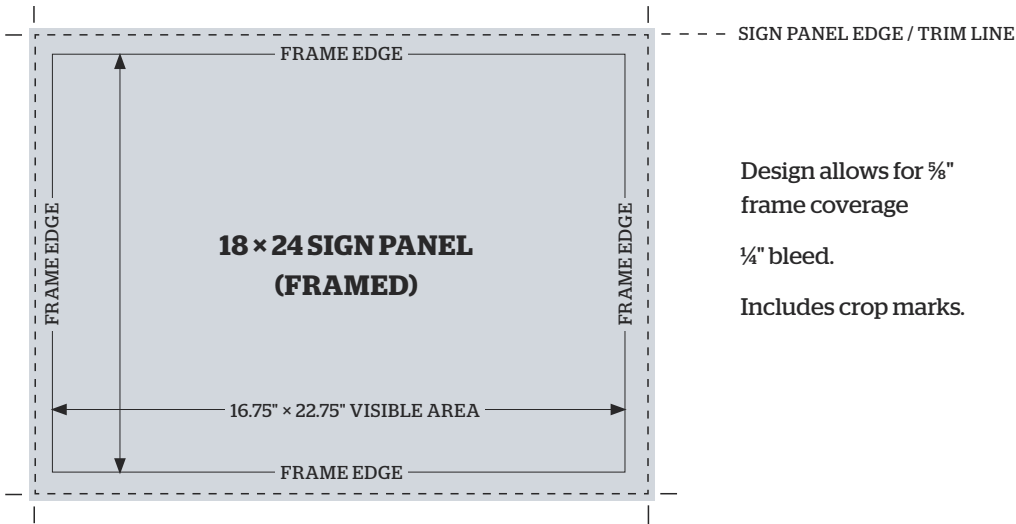
For panels that will NOT be framed, it's suggested that graphic elements (text, photos, drop shadows, or any other critical elements) should be a minimum of ½" from the panel edge, unless intended to bleed off the panel edge.

FILE PREP REQUIREMENTS

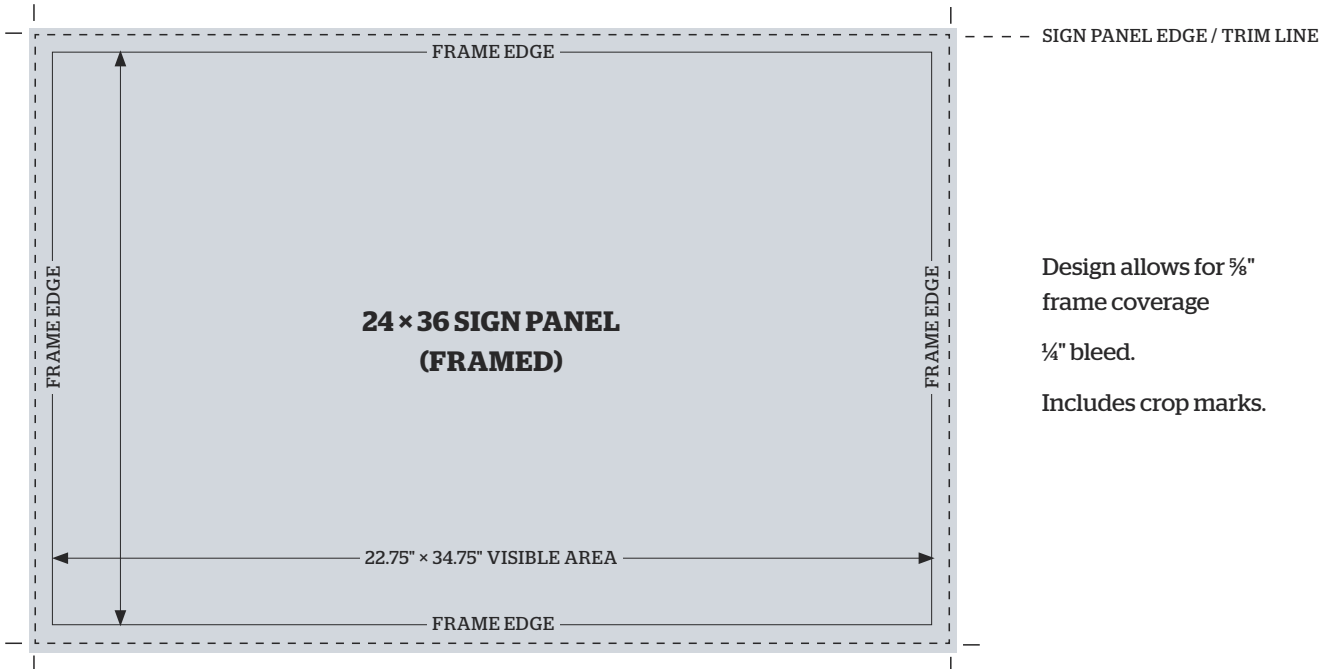
- If created in InDesign, Illustrator or Photoshop, provide native files and high resolution PDF.
- Sign design allows for frame coverage of 5% of the sign panel perimeter (applies to framed panels only).
- Artboard set up to 100% scale.
- ¼ inch bleed.
- Crop marks.
- CMYK color-mode.
- Fonts: submit all fonts in a font folder, or convert all text to "outlines" (preferred).
- Images at a minimum of 150 dpi, and embedded or included outside of the design file in a separate file folder.
- Submit individual files for each unique sign panel design. (No multi-page PDFs).

FRAMED SIGN PANEL

Template available at vackersign.com/resources.



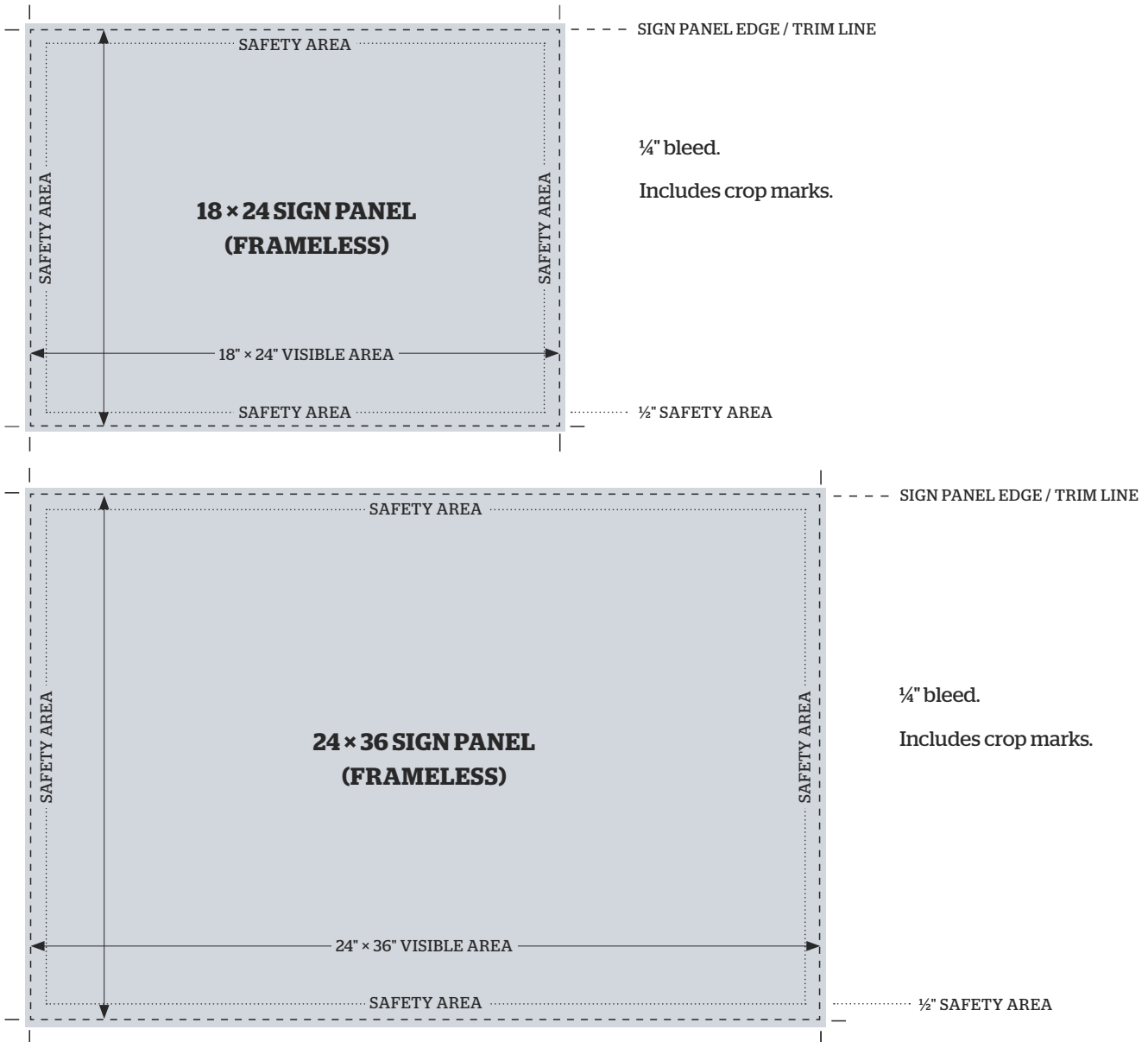
Design allows for $\frac{5}{8}$ "
frame coverage
 $\frac{1}{4}$ " bleed.
Includes crop marks.



Design allows for $\frac{5}{8}$ "
frame coverage
 $\frac{1}{4}$ " bleed.
Includes crop marks.

FRAMELESS SIGN PANEL

Template available at vackersign.com/resources.



BEFORE YOU SEND US FILES

File should be final.

Design should be final, fully proofed, spell checked and approved by all project stakeholders. Submitted files that have not been carefully proofed can cause significant delays in the production process and increase costs.

HOW TO SEND US FILES

Create a folder and name it with your agency or project name:

Be sure to include: All production files, links, and fonts (if your text has not been converted to outlines—outlined text preferred).

Zip/Stuff the folder into a compressed archive.

Upload to Vackersign at hightail.com/u/vackersign.

FILE PREP GUIDELINES FOR NON-PROFESSIONAL DESIGNERS

**YOU CAN DO IT!
THE FOLLOWING
INFORMATION
WILL HELP.**

ACCEPTED FILE TYPES

Not every file type or format works for printed projects.

Accepted file formats include Adobe InDesign (.indd), Illustrator (.ai, .eps), and Photoshop (.psd, .tiff). Packaged, **native working files are preferred**. **High-resolution PDFs (.pdf) are also acceptable** (with ¼" bleed, crop marks, all fonts outlined or packaged, and all linked images included, or embedded).

How do I know if my PDF is high resolution?

A hi-res PDF is one where all of the images and other assets (like illustrations or logos) are high enough quality to be printed. The information below will help you ensure that your PDF is hi-resolution.

Publisher, Powerpoint and other non-professional design programs.

PDF files exported or saved from non-professional design programs like MS Publisher and Powerpoint are not suitable for commercial printing without your additional attention. To ensure that your PDF is set up and saved/exported correctly please review the following information carefully.

ARTBOARD SET-UP

Artboard set-up at 100% of the finished sign panel size.

Most programs allow you to set the size of your artboard when you start a new project. Look for keywords like "custom size" and "dimensions". If you have already begun designing your sign panel in a file size that doesn't match the dimensions of the finished product, we recommend starting a new file at the proper dimensions and copying and pasting your elements into the correctly-sized file.

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

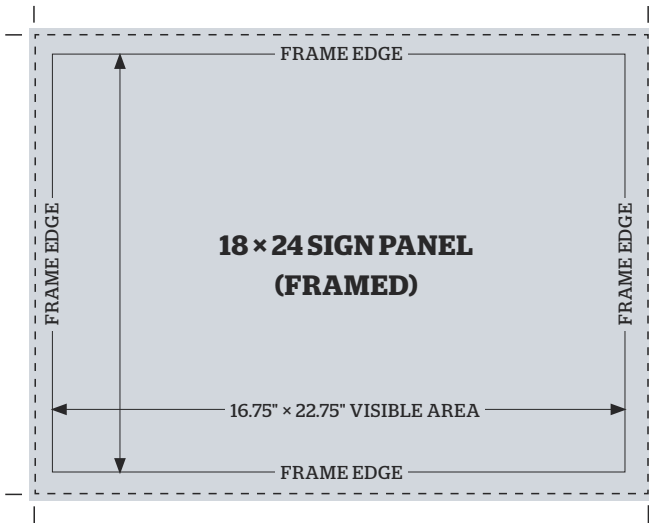
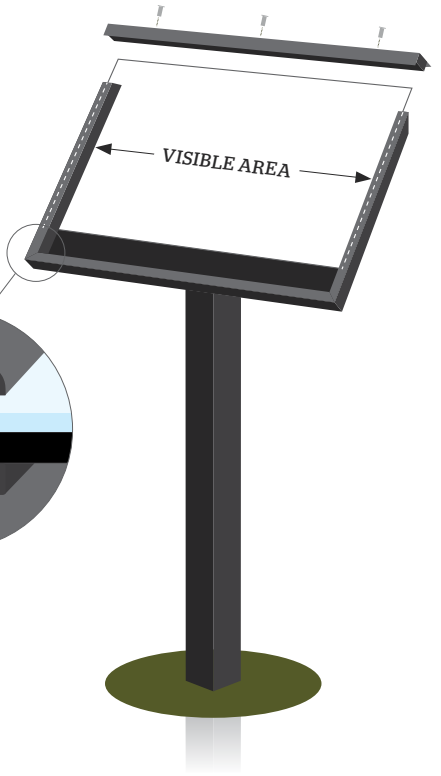
Confirm or determine whether the sign panel(s) will be mounted with a frame or frameless. This will determine the visible portion of the sign.

**FRAMED AND FRAMELESS
PANELS NEED TO BE
DESIGNED ACCORDINGLY.**

FRAMED PANELS

If your panel(s) is going to be framed, remember that the frame will cover about $\frac{5}{8}$ " of the panel perimeter. Consider what will be visible once your sign is inserted into the frame and design accordingly. Overlooking potential frame coverage can result in the frame covering or "crowding" your artwork when your sign is placed in the frame.

Templates are available at vackersign.com/resources.

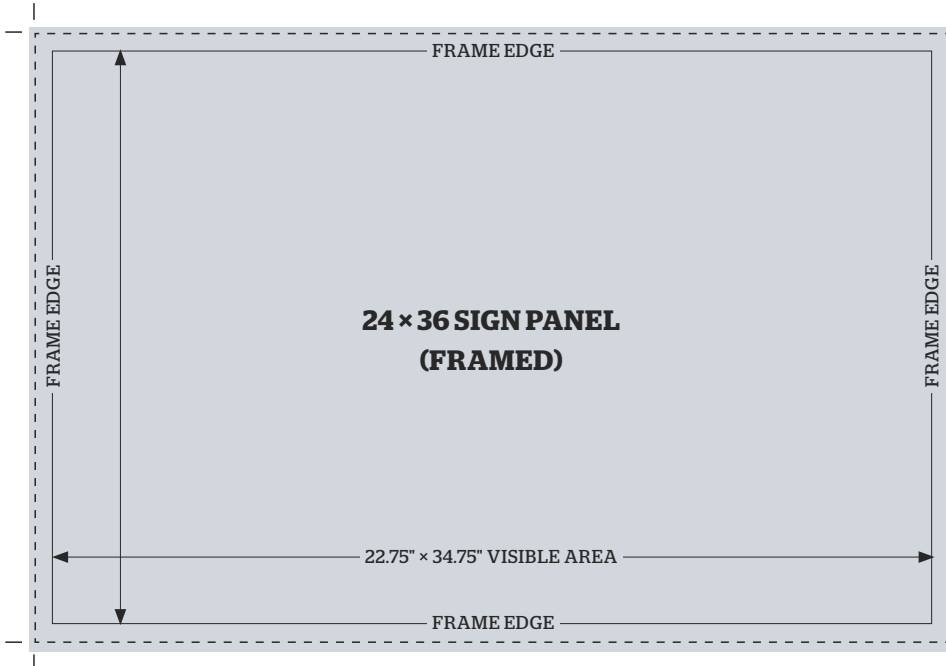


TRIM LINE

**18 x 24 SIGN PANEL
(FRAMED)**

Design allows for $\frac{5}{8}$ "
frame coverage
 $\frac{1}{4}$ " bleed.

Includes crop marks.



TRIM LINE

**24 x 36 SIGN PANEL
(FRAMED)**

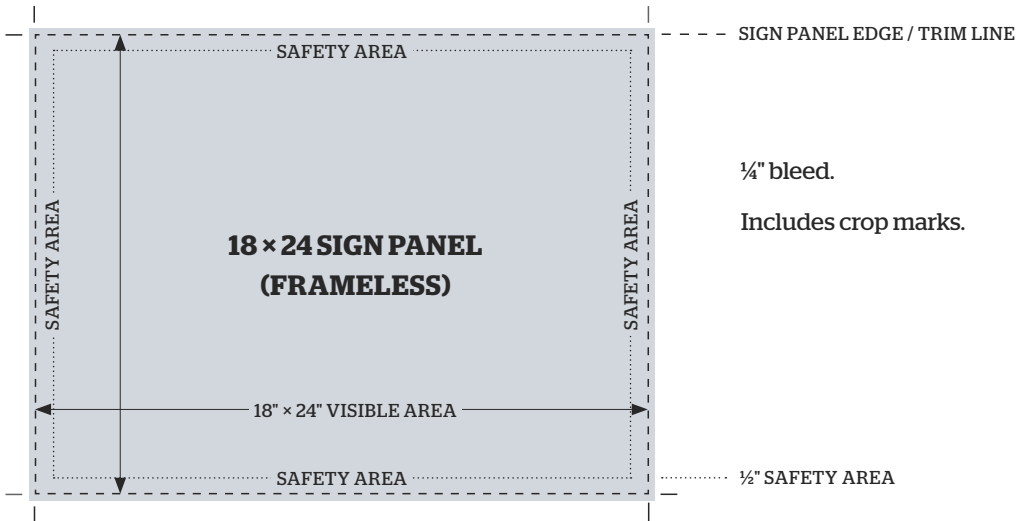
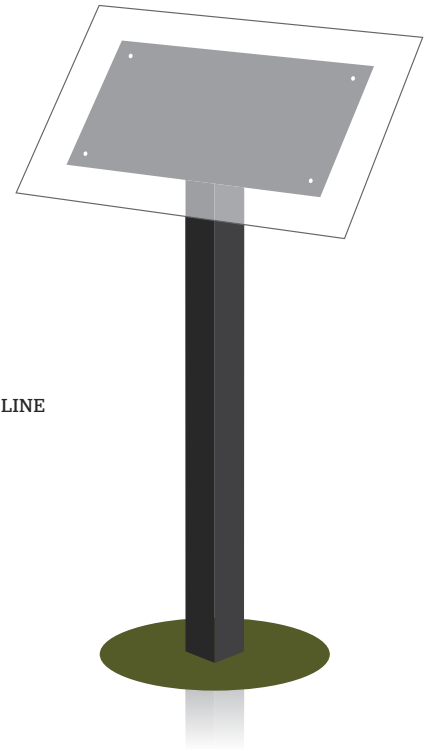
Design allows for $\frac{5}{8}$ "
frame coverage
 $\frac{1}{4}$ " bleed.

Includes crop marks.

FRAMELESS PANELS

If your sign panel will be mounted frameless, it's recommended that you keep critical graphics and text a minimum of 1/2" from the panel edge, unless intended to bleed off the panel edge. 1/2" thick high pressure laminate panels have a standard 1/8" finishing bevel.

Templates are available at vackersign.com/resources.



IMAGES

Images placed at a minimum of 150 dpi.

To avoid appearing pixelated, images should be a minimum of 150 dpi (dots per inch) **at the size they will be placed in the design.**

What does '150 dpi' mean and why is it important?

Digital images are made up of many pixels (blocks of color), and the number of pixels in the image determines its resolution. The resolution determines how clear the image will look—the higher the resolution, the clearer the image will look in a design. Low resolution images can appear pixelated (blurry). Because the resolution for the web is much lower (around 72 dpi), **images taken directly from the web or search engines will usually NOT work in printed materials.**

How can you tell what the resolution of an images is?

Without a photo editing program like Photoshop, it can be difficult to determine the resolution of a photo. While not perfect, it is possible to get a fairly good idea of the resolution of an image by looking at the size of the file. The more pixels an image contains, the larger the file will be.

Use these general guidelines for determining the usability of an image:

- Less than 125 KBlikely not suitable for print
- 125-500 KB.....likely usable as a small thumbnail sized photo
- 500 KB-1 MB.....likely usable at 2"×3"
- 1 MB-1.5 MB.....likely usable at 4"×6"
- 1.5 MB-2 MB.....likely usable at 5"×7"
- 2 MB-3.5 MB.....likely usable at 8"×10"
- 5 MB or higherlikely usable at 12"×18" or larger

Another tip.

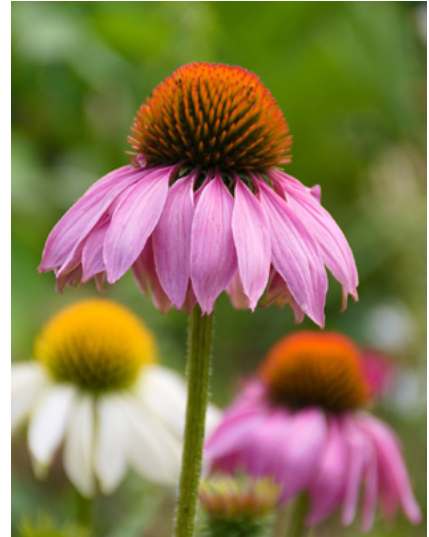
Be sure to view the image at 100%, or "actual" size once you have placed it in your sign design.

Scanning Old Photos.

When scanning small black and white historical images (which can often be small), be sure to change your scanner settings from the default setting to higher resolution.

If your images are not embedded, but rather "linked" to a folder on your computer, be sure to provide us all of the "linked" images in a file folder.

By default, Programs like MS Publisher and Powerpoint embed placed images.



COLOR

Use a CMYK document color mode.

By default, Publisher and Powerpoint use a RGB color mode which is appropriate for screens, but not print. It is not possible for you to change your document to a CMYK. No worries, we can take care of it, but do be aware that that a shift in colors can occur that can't be avoided.

ADDING A 1/4" BLEED

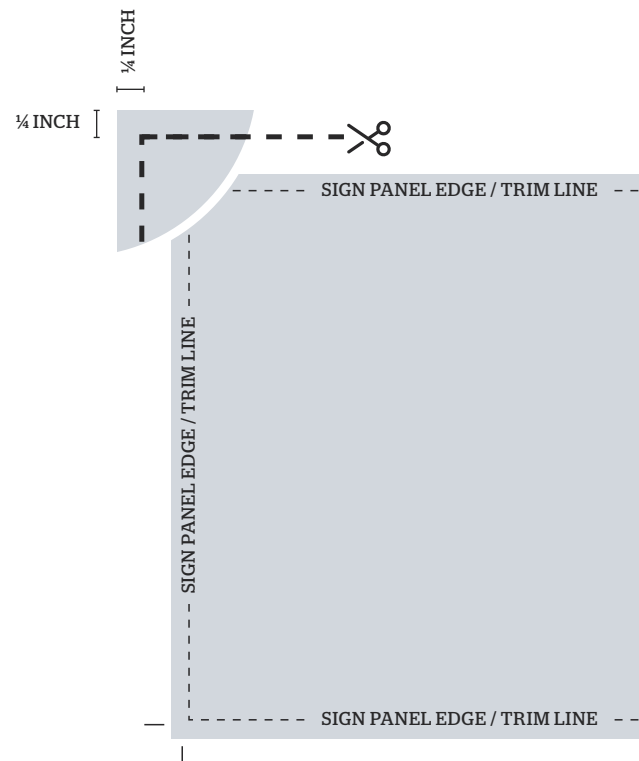
What is a bleed and why is it important?

No machine cuts a sign panel exact. Adding a bleed provides a little wiggle room. A bleed is when the background of the design extends (is dragged) beyond the artboard edge. In the case of a 1/4" bleed, the "extra" 1/4" of background is printed allowing for some margin for error in the trimming and production process. The placement and printing of crop marks, helps ensure an accurate trim along the panel edge by helping to tell the machine where to cut the edges.

For InDesign users, see page 14 in this document for instructions on how add a bleed and package your files.

For Publisher and PPT users, since these programs are not intended for commercial print, there is not a tool for adding a bleed. To solve this problem, **after your design is complete**, increase your artboard .5" in both height and width and extend your background to that new artboard edge.

For Photoshop users, since PS is an image editing program and not intended for page layouts, there is not a tool to add a bleed. To solve this problem, **after your design is complete**, increase your canvas size .5" in both directions and extend your background to that new canvas edge.



ADDING TRIM MARKS

Crop marks assist in accurately trimming the along the artboard/sign panel edge.

For InDesign users, see page 14 for instructions on how to add trim marks.

For Publisher, PPT and Photoshop users, there is not a tool for adding trim marks. No worries, we'll add them.

BEFORE YOU SEND US FILES

Be sure that your layouts have been carefully reviewed, edited, spell checked, proofed and approved by all project stakeholders. Submitted files that have not been carefully proofed can cause significant delays in the production process and increase costs.

SAVING AND EXPORTING TO A PRINT QUALITY PDF

Exporting a print quality PDF from InDesign:

See the last page of this document on packaging a native InDesign file and exporting a print-quality PDF with crop marks.

Exporting a print quality PDF from Publisher and Powerpoint:

Save your file as a PDF in the "Save as" menu. Be sure to save a final version in the native program as well.

ORGANIZING YOUR FILES

Create a folder and name it with your agency or project name. Be sure to include: ALL production files and images that are linked (not embedded in your file).

HOW TO SEND US FILES

Upload to Vacker Sign at hightail.com/u/vackersign.

In the dialogue box, please include:

- Your name.
- Your project name.
- Your contact at Vacker.

FINAL CHECKLIST

My design has been proofed:

- All text has been spell checked.
- Approved by all project stakeholders.

My file format is one of these file types:

- InDesign (.indd), Illustrator (.ai, .eps), Photoshop (.psd, .tiff), high-resolution PDF (.pdf).

My file set up includes:

- Artboard set up to 100% scale.
- ¼ inch bleed.
- Crop marks.*
- CMYK color-mode.*
- Images at a minimum of 150 dpi.

For sign that will be framed:

- Sign design allows for frame coverage of 5% of the sign panel perimeter.

For sign that will be frameless:

- Critical graphics and text are a minimum of ½" from the panel edge, unless intended to bleed off the panel edge.

Pre-production:

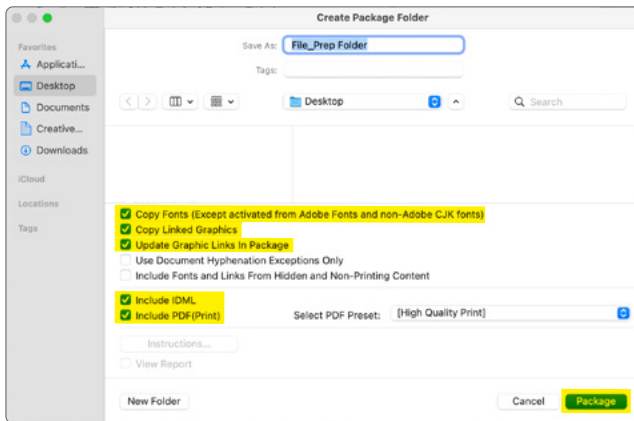
- Individual files for each unique sign panel design. No multi-page PDFs.
- All fonts have been provided in a font folder, or all text has been converted to outlines.*
- All images have been either embedded or provided outside of the design file in a separate file folder.*
- Please include your name, project name, and your contact at Vacker in the dialogue when uploading to hightail.com/u/vackersign.

**Exception for Publisher and Powerpoint generated PDFs).*

EXPORTING FROM ADOBE INDESIGN

Packaging a native file

Select **File > Package > Package** and within the dialogue box, make sure **Copy Fonts**, **Copy Linked Graphics**, **Update Graphic Links in Package**, **Include IDML** and **Include PDF (Print)** are selected. Finally select **Package**. This will export a packaged folder of all of the design elements and fonts that can be submitted.



Exporting a print quality pdf

Select **File > Export > Format: Adobe PDF (Print) > Save**

Within the **General** tab of the dialogue box, Select **[High Quality Print]**, and **All Pages**. Within the **Marks and Bleed** tab select **Crop Marks** and type “ $\frac{1}{2}$ in” into the bleed settings. Finally select **Export**.

