

# To bleed or not to bleed?

*That is the question...plus what it is, why it matters and how to set up your file.*

It's likely you've heard printers or designers use the words bleed, margin, trim - but what do they actually mean and how do they affect you and your print projects?

## Trim

The trim size refers to the final cut size of the finished printed piece.

## Margin

Margin is the space between the trim edge and any critical content (text/images) that you don't want cut into.

## Bleed

Bleed is the extension of any image or graphic past the trim that is intended to print or extend off the edge of a page.

## Why are these important?

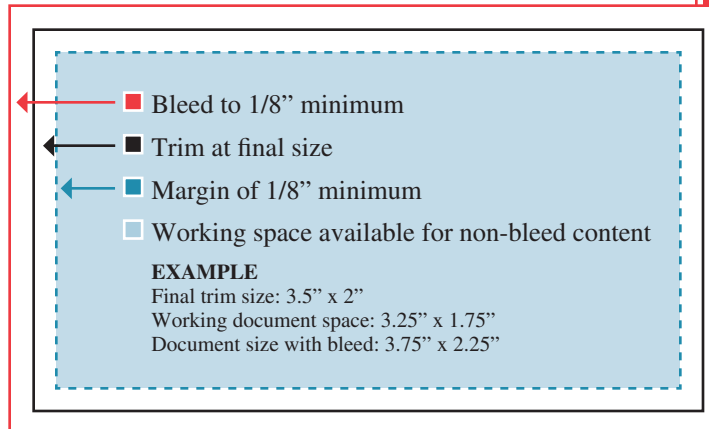
Even with modern equipment and advancing technologies, paper can shift slightly at the printing press, bindery equipment or cutter. It's important to take this into consideration when designing a print piece to eliminate any possible negative effects that a slight shift may cause.

## Results of not including a bleed when necessary:

Your 8.5" x 11" design has a full red background that you want to run to the trim edge of the piece; you do not include a bleed. The cutter is set to cut the piece at the exact trim edge, which is where the red background ends. If there was any shift when the piece was printed or a shift on the cutter, you will see a thin white border between the trim edge and red background on your finished piece. This may only happen on one edge or all, so it will look sloppy and unplanned. To avoid this, follow the instructions below.

## Setting up your document

- **Trim** should be set at the actual final size of the printed piece.
- **Margins** should be set at a minimum of 1/8" from the final trim size to avoid any critical text or images being cut off when the finished piece is trimmed.
- **Bleeds** should be set at a minimum of 1/8" beyond the final document size (trim edge). If your design has any images or elements that are intended to go to the trim edge, extending your graphics out an 1/8" past the trim, this will eliminate any chance for white space between the trim and graphics.



## Take a look at the example below.

- Notice how the images at the top and bottom are extended beyond the trim - they "bleed" beyond the edge of the page.
- Notice how the text is well inside the minimum margins, ensuring that no critical type is trimmed off.

## DOCUMENT SETUP



## FINAL TRIMMED PIECE



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