

# Give your client a better understanding of their print files

Every designer should help educate their client when it comes to print files. If that means printing out a sheet with file explanations...do it. It will make your client happy and let's not forget a returning, paying, customer!!

## Everything you wanted to know about logo files, but were afraid to ask

Since the onset of computer-aided graphic design, most logo designs have been and continue to be created on the computer. One of the side effects of this groundbreaking transition has been an alphabet soup of graphic file tags like EPS, TIFF and JPG, the lot of which can be terribly confusing to the uninitiated.

Having worked for ad agencies and design firms for many years, I've received all sorts of questions from clients about the graphics files prepared for them. Here are the most common:

Which graphics files am I supposed to use for what?

What files are essential?

Which are best for printing?

Which are best for on-screen uses such as Web sites and PowerPoint presentations?

To best answer these questions, it's first necessary to discuss the five primary types of graphic files used and then to make recommendations as to which ones you can and can't do without. I will start with the highest resolution files and work downward.

### AI Files

AI stands for Adobe Illustrator, one of the most widely used graphic design programs in the world. Usually a file with the tag AI is an original design file, meaning that this is the file the designer created when originally developing your logo design. AI files can only be opened using the Adobe Illustrator program and cannot be pulled into other applications.

### EPS Files

EPS stands for Encapsulated PostScript. PostScript is the universal language used by computer printers as well as professional printers. This type of graphics file can be pulled into almost any other application – from Microsoft Word and PowerPoint to layout-based programs such as Adobe InDesign and Quark Xpress. It can easily be reduced or enlarged without loss of resolution and is the best file to give to a professional printer for reproducing your logo on the printed page.

### TIFF Files

TIFF stands for Tagged Image File Format. This type of graphics file is compressed, meaning that it has been paired down to contain only vital information. Like an EPS file, a TIFF file can also be pulled into almost any other application. However, a TIFF file cannot be enlarged without loss of resolution; it can only be reduced.

Guide note: TIFFs normally are not compressed, although they can be. And while they can be reduced in size, you may lose some quality if you do reduce it.

### JPG Files

This graphics file is also compressed and can open into almost any other application. JPG files are typically used for on-screen purposes such as on Web sites and PowerPoint presentations; this is because the files are smaller than EPS or TIFF files. They are not ideal for printing and cannot be resized without significant loss of resolution.

Guide note: Some printers do indeed accept JPG; it's not usually the file of choice, though, so you should ask your printer first. In fact, you should always ask your printer what file types they support.

### GIF Files

These are used in the same fashion as JPG files but are compressed even more, making them ideal for graphics with solid fields of color; because of their high compression, these files should not be used for graphics with gradients (such as photographs).

## Recommendations

When you are having designs professionally created for you, make sure your designer provides you with, at the least, the following files:

**AI file:** This file provides you with the original artwork in case you ever switch designers or need your design modified or updated.

Guide note: It is rare, except in the case of logos, to be provided with the original file (which may or may not be an Illustrator file). The file belongs to the artist; if you do need the original file, expect to pay more. An EPS of your work should be sufficient. For example, in order to use an Illustrator file you must have Illustrator – and it must be at least as recent a version as the designer used. With an EPS, it should plug into any design program (but you'll still need the design program).

**EPS file:** You will need this file for any printed and promotional materials.

**JPG file:** You will use this file for posting your design on the Web and in digital presentations.