

what is white ink?

We all know that there are four colours in a standard printing process—CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow and black). These four colours are used to create the entire spectrum of printed colours.

Although you may see printed designs that feature white, what you're actually seeing isn't ink, it's the absence of it! The white paper stock or substrate is showing through in the printed design, creating the illusion of a printed white ink.

Adding white as the fifth colour in the CMYK printing process means you can enjoy all the colours you normally design with, but on a strongly coloured card. This means getting effects like white text on black card.

Here at printed.com, we use a technique called 'spot white'. This means that white ink will appear as the colour in a design or used as a highlight in a coloured design, like printing a white flower onto a coloured paper stock, for example. Because white is a light coloured ink, we need to make several passes to layer the it up and get a stronger colour, which means the finished effect won't be 'paper white' or opaque against the coloured card.

why print with white?

Using white ink in your designs frees you up for all sorts of exciting creative opportunities. Instead of being limited to white or cream paper stocks, you can use vibrant, brightly coloured stocks and still get a white colour in your artwork. Without white ink, the elements you colour white in your design will simply show as the colour of the paper underneath.

setting up your artwork file with adobe indesign/illustrator

Our software reads each artwork file that comes through before sending it to the press, so your artwork will need to be set up in a specific way to ensure that the white ink goes exactly where you want it to.

To make sure your print comes out looking perfect, just follow these quick steps:

Step 1

In Adobe InDesign or Illustrator, create a new layer that will contain the white portions of your design. This layer should be named "White".

IMPORTANT!

The software we use to print is case sensitive, so make sure the "W" is capitalised.

Step 2

Once this layer is in place, create a new colour swatch. If you're using InDesign, start by clicking on "Window," then "Colour," then "Swatches". In Illustrator, click "Window" then "Swatches". The Swatch Palette will appear.

Step 3

Click in the upper right hand corner of the Swatch Palette and select "Add Swatch/Colour Swatch".

We'll need you to do the following:

- Change the swatch name to "White"
- Change the colour type to spot colour
- Make sure the colour mode is CMYK
- Make the colour 100% magenta

Step 4

Click on the background artwork layer, select and copy the elements that you require to be white and "Paste in Place" on the white layer, filling or applying a stroke to the selected elements with the "White" swatch.

Step 5

In **InDesign**, click "Window," then "Output," then "Attributes." Please select the artwork on your white layer and tick the box "Overprint Fill" or "Overprint Stroke" (if applicable).

In **Illustrator**, click "Window," then "Attributes." Please select the artwork on your white layer and tick the box "Overprint Fill" or "Overprint Stroke" (if applicable).

Step 6

Save your file as a PDF using the PDF preset (**PDF/X-4:2008**), changing the compatibility to **Acrobat 8 (PDF 1.7)**.

Under "General/Options" tick "Create Acrobat Layers from Top-Level Layers" then select "Marks and Bleeds" and tick "Use Document Bleed Settings". The "White" layer should be at the top with all of the rest of the artwork behind it.

Your file is now ready for submission!

still not sure?

If you're still bamboozled about how to set your artwork file up for white ink printing, we're more than happy to give you a hand. Just supply us with an editable vector PDF and give us a detailed description of where the white ink should be printed on the design. We'll do the rest!