

Canva and CMYK: What will be handy to know:

A simple Q&A guide for preparing print-ready files

If you design marketing materials using Canva, you may have noticed that colors sometimes look a little different once they're printed. That's usually because of the difference between RGB (digital color) and CMYK (print color).

Below are some of the most common questions people have about Canva and CMYK when preparing files for print.

Q: Does Canva use RGB or CMYK?

Canva designs are created in RGB by default.

RGB (Red, Green, Blue) is the color system used for digital screens such as phones, computers, and tablets. Because Canva is primarily a digital design platform, it works in RGB. This means the colors you see while designing are optimized for screens rather than print.

Q: What is CMYK and why does it matter for printing?

Quick & Dirty Explanation:

This is the color system used by most printers. Instead of mixing light like RGB, printers layer tiny dots of ink to create the final color. Because RGB and CMYK produce color differently, certain bright digital colors can look slightly different when printed.

We have a detailed article which goes into depth on this difference on our Website under: Tips, Tricks & Tools Page -> Debugging the Jargon Label.

Q: Can Canva export designs in CMYK?

Yes- but with limitations. Canva offers CMYK PDF export through its PDF Print download option (*available with Canva Pro and some team accounts*).

To do this:

- Click Share
- Select Download
- Choose PDF Print
- Enable Crop marks and bleed if needed

This option converts the file closer to CMYK for printing.

Q: Will my colors look exactly the same when printed?

Not usually. And there's a couple of reasons for this.

Some colors that appear vibrant on screens- especially bright blues, greens, and oranges- may print slightly duller. This happens because RGB can display a wider range of colors than ink can reproduce.

Professional printers often adjust colors during production to get the best possible result when they can do so. That ability is often locked into how you've saved it.

Q: What should I do to prepare a Canva design for print?

Here are a few helpful guidelines:

- Use high-resolution images
Aim for images that are at least 300 DPI for sharp printing- *a more in-depth article for understanding the difference (DPI VS PPI) is available on our website under: Tips, Tricks & Tools Page -> Debugging the Jargon.*
- Choose standard color tones
Extremely bright or neon colors may not translate well to print.
- Use PDF Print export
This helps ensure the file is suitable for professional printing.
- Add bleed if needed
If your design extends to the edge of the page, enable bleed to prevent white borders.

Q: Should I worry about RGB vs CMYK when using Canva?

For most everyday print projects like:

- Flyers
- Posters
- Business cards
- Brochures

Canva's **PDF Print** option generally works very well 😊

However, if your project requires very precise color matching- such as brand-critical packaging or large commercial runs- then you may be better off sending the pieces to a local Designer and/or Print Shop with Designers on staff and letting them assemble it.

Canva is a fantastic tool for creating quick, professional-looking designs. Just remember that it works primarily in RGB, while printers use CMYK. So you can either expect slight variations or make sure to keep your colors within tones that can translate.

Another useful tip: When you're creating your logo with a local Designer, they will often give you a "Brand Kit" (and if they don't- bug them for one!) which is all your colors in both RGB (Hex Codes) AND CMYK (% Codes) which will help keep your Brand vibrant and consistent!