

Get the colour right

Six simple rules so the print that arrives looks like the picture on your screen.

Ten minutes to read, a lifetime of better prints



Colour is only right when the whole chain agrees: your eyes, your screen, your file and our printer.

What you see on screen is what you get in print

That has always been our promise, and we keep it every day. But a screen is a lamp and a print is paper, and they only agree when a few things are set up properly at your end. None of it is difficult. Do these six things once, repeat two of them now and again, and the colour will take care of itself.

1

Work in calm light

Your eyes adapt to the room. Bright or shifting light fools them, and you end up correcting a problem that only exists on your desk.

- Keep the room light consistent and shade the windows if you can.
- No window in front of the screen or behind it, and nothing bright reflecting in it.
- Set your desktop background to a plain mid grey.

2

Calibrate your screen

If you do only one thing in this guide, do this. An uncalibrated screen is usually too bright and too blue, which is why so many "dark prints" are really bright screens.

- Use a colorimeter. We recommend the Calibrite ColorChecker Display. Let the screen warm up for 30 minutes, then run the software.
- Settings to aim for: white point D65 (6500 K), brightness 120 cd/m², gamma 2.2.
- Repeat every three to four weeks, and whenever you move the screen or change the room.

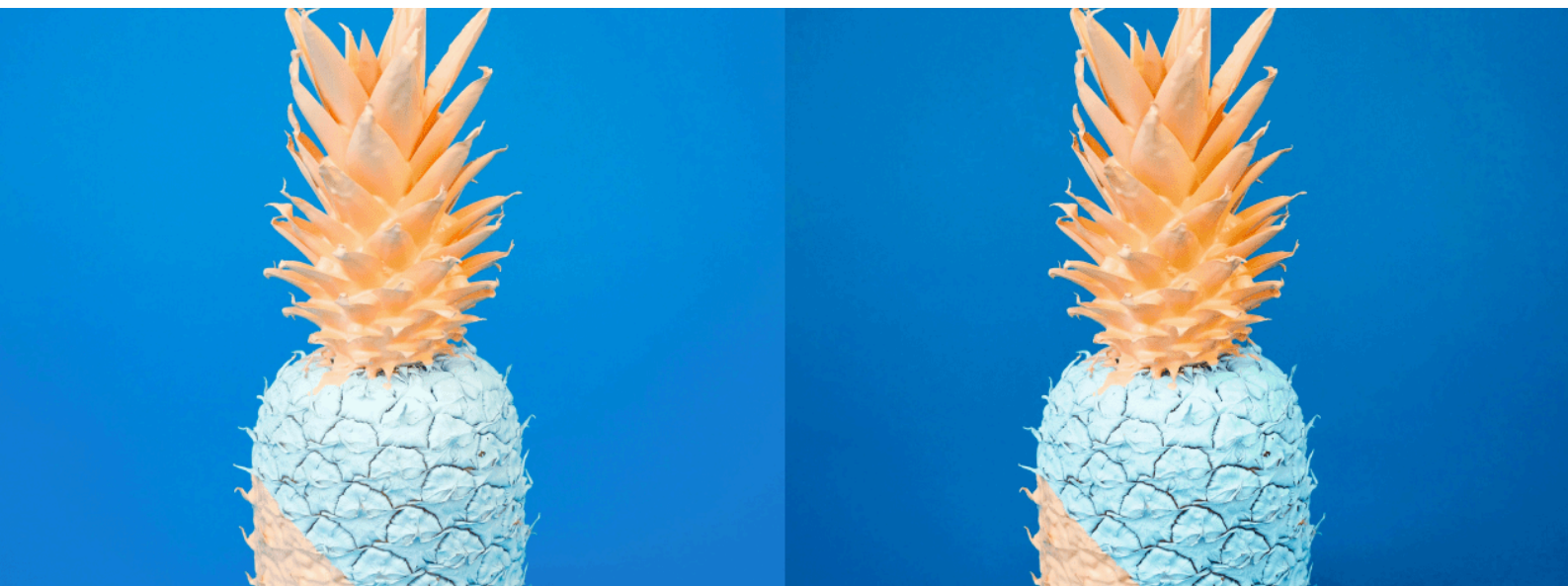
If you cannot quote those three settings, the screen has not really been calibrated to anything.

3

Set Photoshop up once

Thirty seconds, once, and every file you open after that is handled the same way.

- Edit → Color Settings. Working RGB: Adobe RGB (1998).
- Colour management policies: Preserve Embedded Profiles, for RGB, CMYK and Gray.
- Conversion options: Adobe (ACE), Relative Colorimetric, Black Point Compensation and Use Dither ticked. Save the preset.



Soft proofing shows you the print before it exists: the same picture, as the paper will render it.

4

Soft proof with our paper profile

Every paper we print on has its own ICC profile. Soft proofing applies it to your file on screen, so you see how the blacks, the contrast and the colours will sit on that paper before you order.

- Download our profiles and install them (Photoshop and Lightroom pick them up automatically).
- Photoshop: View → Proof Setup → Custom, choose the paper, Perceptual intent, Black Point Compensation on.
- Leave "Simulate Paper Color" unticked. It exaggerates the paper white and leads to colour casts.
- Expect the proof to look a little flatter than the original. That is the paper's real range, not a fault. Adjust gently, and do not chase deeper blacks than the paper can give.

5

Send the file with the profile embedded

The profile is how your file tells our printer what the colours mean. Without it, we are guessing.

- Save as TIFF or maximum-quality JPEG, 8 or 16 bit, with Embed Color Profile ticked.
- Keep the file in Adobe RGB (1998). There is no need to convert it to the paper profile yourself.
- Black and white? Skip the colour profiles and see our black and white guide instead.

6

When it matters, order a test strip

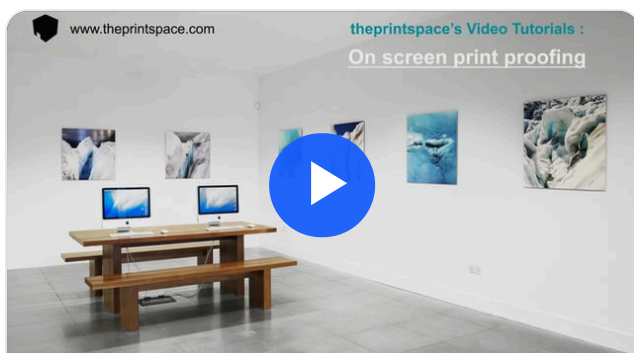
For an edition, an exhibition or a tricky file, a test strip is cheap insurance.

- A 4 x 30 inch strip of your image on your chosen paper, from £3.95.
- Check it in daylight, make your adjustments, then print the edition with confidence.

WATCH

Two short videos

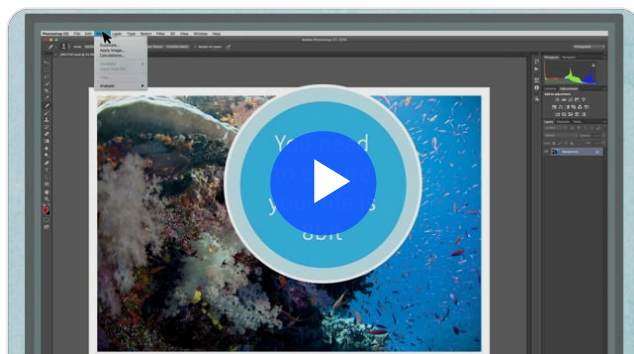
Click a card to watch on Vimeo. Together they take just under six minutes.



Preview your print

Soft proofing in Photoshop, step by step. 3 min.

vimeo.com/3145639



How to prepare your file

Size, format and profile, ready to upload. 2.5 min.

vimeo.com/162863135

LINKS

Everything you need, in one place

Our ICC paper profiles	theprintspace.co.uk/help/knowledge-base/fine-art-print-colour-management
Calibrating your screen	theprintspace.co.uk/help/knowledge-base/how-to-calibrate-your-screen
Soft proofing in Photoshop	theprintspace.co.uk/help/knowledge-base/how-to-soft-proof-your-print-using-adobe-photoshop
Soft proofing in Lightroom	theprintspace.co.uk/help/knowledge-base/guide-to-using-print-profiles-in-adobe-lightroom
Test strips	theprintspace.co.uk/guides/theprintspace-test-strips
The full colour accuracy guide	theprintspace.co.uk/guides/colour-accuracy

Want a hand with any of this?

We can arrange a chat about colour management, walk you through your own setup, and look at a file together. Email your artist manager, or reply to the newsletter this came with, and we will set it up.