



AUSTRALIAN MADE

ARTWORK GUIDE V2 · 2026

Artwork Preparation Guide.

Everything you need to get a perfect DTF print, first time.
Whether you're sending your first design or your five-hundredth,
this is the playbook.

"We check every single file before it goes to print. If something looks off, we'll let you know before it costs you a transfer."

✓ GST inclusive

✓ Free shipping over \$100

✓ Australian made

✓ No minimums

For first-time buyers + experienced designers

Quick Start (p.3-6) · Detailed Specs (p.7-13)

inkfusiondtf.com.au

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Brand new to DTF? Start at Quick Start - four pages, plain English, the essentials.
 Designer or screen printer? Skip to Detailed Specs from page 7.

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NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Read pages 3-6, send us your file, and we'll do the rest. We pre-flight every order before it hits the press - if anything's off, we'll email you before charging a cent.

QUICK START · 01

Five things to check in five seconds. Get these right and your print will be sharp, clean, and exactly what you imagined.



It's a PNG file (ends in `.png`).

PNGs keep edges crisp and support transparent backgrounds - the two things DTF needs most.



The background is transparent (checkerboard pattern when you open it).

A white background prints as a white box. A transparent background prints only your design.



It's at least 300 DPI at print size.

If you want a 20 cm wide design, your file should be at least 2,362 pixels wide. (300 DPI × 7.87 in.)



It's in RGB colour mode (not CMYK).

Canva, your phone, and most apps are RGB by default - so you're probably already good.



It's sized at life-size (not "small for upload").

Save it at the actual size you want it printed. A 10 cm logo should be a 10 cm file - not 2 cm scaled up.

● STILL UNSURE?

Send it anyway. Our team pre-flights every order - if something's wrong we'll email you before printing. You will never end up with a box of dud transfers because of a file we should have caught.

QUICK START · 02

Direct-to-Film is a print process that puts your design onto a thin film, then heat-presses it onto fabric. Soft to the touch, washes well, prints almost anything.

1

Print onto film

Your design (plus a white ink underbase) is printed onto a clear PET film at full resolution.

2

Apply adhesive

Hot-melt adhesive powder is shaken onto the wet ink and cured. The transfer is now stable and shelf-stable for months.

3

Press onto fabric

You (or we) heat-press it onto cotton, polyester, blends, or almost any fabric. Peel back the film - print's on.

WHY WE OBSESS OVER YOUR FILE

DTF is a 1:1 process - whatever's in your file is what comes out on the fabric. There's no halftone screen, no shrink-to-fit, no magic. The press prints exactly what you send. That's why a 300 DPI file looks razor sharp, and a 72 DPI screenshot looks like a bad photocopy.

The good news: get the file right once, and you can re-order the same design forever.

THREE THINGS DTF DOES BRILLIANTLY

- **Photo-real colour** - full-colour gradients, photographs, neon shades all reproduce well.
- **Tiny detail** - fine lines down to 0.5 mm and text down to 8 pt come through clean.
- **Any fabric** - cotton, poly, blends, fleece, denim, nylon. Light or dark.

● **THE BIG DIFFERENCE VS SCREEN PRINTING**

No screens, no setup fees, no minimums. One transfer or a thousand - same per-unit quality. That's why DTF works for Etsy sellers, sports clubs, and corporate teamwear alike.

QUICK START · 03

If you take nothing else from this guide, take this page. These are the issues that cause 90% of preventable reprints.

! MISTAKE 1 · LOW RESOLUTION

Symptom: Your print looks pixelated, fuzzy, or "blocky" around edges and text. **Cause:** The file is below 300 DPI at print size - usually because it was downloaded from a website, screenshotted, or stretched too big in Canva.

Fix: Re-export from your original design tool at 300 DPI. If you only have a small file, reduce the print size - a 5 cm logo at 300 DPI looks great even from a small source.

! MISTAKE 2 · NO TRANSPARENT BACKGROUND

Symptom: Your circular logo prints with a white square around it. **Cause:** Your PNG has a white (or coloured) background instead of true transparency. To us, white = print white ink.

Fix: Open in Photoshop / Photopea / Canva. Remove the background layer so you see the checkerboard pattern, then export as PNG-24 with transparency ticked.

! MISTAKE 3 · CMYK COLOUR MODE

Symptom: Colours print duller or shifted - especially neons, bright orange, hot pink. **Cause:** The file was exported in CMYK colour mode (a print-shop default), which doesn't include vivid neon shades.

Fix: Convert to RGB (sRGB) before exporting. In Photoshop: *Image > Mode > RGB Colour*. In Illustrator: *File > Document Colour Mode > RGB*.

● BONUS: DROP SHADOWS ON THE EDGE OF YOUR ART

Drop shadows that fade out to transparent will print as a hazy grey edge. If you want a shadow, keep it contained - don't let it bleed off into nothing.

QUICK START · 04

No design software? No problem. Here's how to verify your PNG is print-ready using only the tools already on your computer.

ON A MAC (USING PREVIEW)

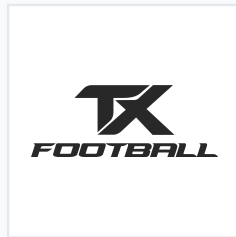
1. Double-click the PNG. It opens in Preview.
2. Go to **Tools > Show Inspector** (or press Cmd+I).
3. Look at **Image DPI** - aim for 300 or higher.
4. Look at **Pixel size** - divide by 118 to get cm at 300 DPI (e.g. 2362 px / 118 = 20 cm).
5. If you see grey/white checkerboard behind your art, transparency is correct.

ON WINDOWS (USING PHOTOS OR PAINT)

1. Right-click the PNG > **Properties > Details** tab.
2. Check **Horizontal Resolution** and **Vertical Resolution** - both should be 300.
3. Check **Image dimensions** in pixels. Divide by 118 for cm at 300 DPI.
4. Open in Paint - if you see a white background instead of checkerboard, transparency is broken.



✓ TRANSPARENT



✗ WHITE BG



✓ 300 DPI



✗ 72 DPI

What you want to see: a transparent (checkerboard) background and sharp, crisp edges at print size.

END OF QUICK START

If you're a first-time buyer, you have everything you need. Pages 7-14 are for designers who want the full technical detail. Or just send your file and let us pre-flight it.

DETAILED SPECS · 05

For designers: here's the canonical list. PNG is the universal answer; vector formats are welcome for direct-order workflows.

FORMAT	USE CASE	NOTES
PNG-24	Preferred	Transparent background, lossless, the universal DTF format. Always export at 300 DPI at print size.
PDF	Vector preferred	Excellent from Illustrator / Affinity / InDesign. Embed or outline all fonts. Preserve transparency on export.
AI / EPS	Vector source	Native Illustrator. Outline fonts (Type > Create Outlines), expand strokes, embed any linked rasters.
PSD	Layered raster	Accepted but please flatten the visible layers. Keep your transparent background layer intact.
TIFF	High-res raster	Fine. LZW compression OK. Make sure alpha channel is preserved.
JPG	Only no-transparency	Acceptable if your design has no transparent areas and no white that should not print. JPG cannot hold transparency.
SVG	Limited	Accepted for direct-order vector work, but our gang sheet builder requires PNG (browser limitation).

MAX FILE SIZE
50 MB

Per file. Use ZIP compression if you're sending multiple artworks via email.

MAX PRINT WIDTH
58 cm

Limit of our 60 cm roll less 1 cm margin each side. Anything wider needs to be split into panels.

NEVER SEND

Screenshots, social media downloads, Word/Pages documents, web-resolution JPGs, or "save image as" from a web page. These are all below 100 DPI and will not print well at any size.

DETAILED SPECS · 06

DPI is a measurement at print size, not a property of the file. Here's the pixel-count chart for every common print size we offer.

PIXEL DIMENSIONS AT 300 DPI

COMMON PRINT SIZE	DIMENSIONS (CM)	PIXELS @ 300 DPI	PIXELS @ 150 DPI (MIN)
Mini (left chest)	5 x 5 cm	591 x 591	295 x 295
Small badge	10 x 10 cm	1181 x 1181	591 x 591
A6	10.5 x 14.8 cm	1240 x 1748	620 x 874
A5	14.8 x 21 cm	1748 x 2480	874 x 1240
A4 / Full chest	21 x 29.7 cm	2480 x 3508	1240 x 1754
A3 / Full back	29.7 x 42 cm	3508 x 4961	1754 x 2480
Oversized	30 x 45 cm	3543 x 5315	1772 x 2657

WHAT HAPPENS AT LOWER DPI

- **300 DPI** - sharp, crisp, exactly what you designed.
- **200-299 DPI** - usable for most work. Slight softness on tiny text.
- **150-199 DPI** - visible degradation on text and fine lines. Acceptable for distressed or grunge looks.
- **Under 150 DPI** - reject. Will print blurry. We'll email you before printing.

THE SINGLE RULE OF DPI

Set your canvas to the **actual size you want printed**, in cm or mm, at 300 DPI. Do not design at 1000 x 1000 px and "size up" later. Bigger is not better when the source data isn't there.

If you only have a small source file, print it small. A 5 cm logo from a 600 px source looks crisp at 300 DPI. Stretched to 20 cm, the same file looks broken.

● QUICK CONVERSION

cm to pixels at 300 DPI: multiply cm by 118.

inches to pixels at 300 DPI: multiply inches by 300.

Example: 25 cm wide x 118 = 2950 pixels.

DETAILED SPECS · 07

The single biggest source of "why doesn't my print look right?" - and the one most beginners don't see coming.

SEND US RGB. ALWAYS.

Our RIP software converts your RGB file into our specific CMYK + White profile during print prep. If you pre-convert to CMYK in Photoshop, we end up double-converting - and neons (red, orange, bright pink, electric blue) shift dull or muddy.

sRGB profile preferred. Adobe RGB and ProPhoto are accepted but get mapped to sRGB on ingestion.

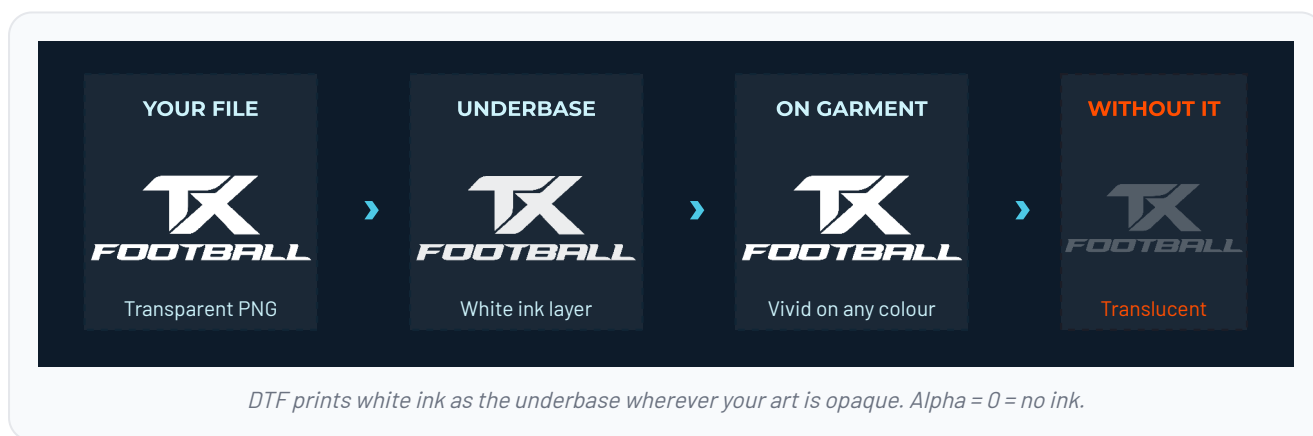
Expected colour shift: 5-10% on saturated neons. Pantone matching is not supported - if exact corporate colour is critical, order a single test transfer first.

THE WHITE UNDERBASE EXPLAINED

Our printer lays down a white ink underbase under every pixel of your art. This is what makes the colours pop on dark fabric. Without it, your design would appear translucent on a black tee.

How the underbase is calculated:

- **Opaque pixels** → full underbase, full colour on top.
- **Transparent pixels (alpha = 0)** → no ink. Nothing prints.
- **Semi-transparent (alpha 1-99%)** → partial underbase. Often prints as a haze or halo.



! WATCH OUT FOR THESE

- **Drop shadows fading to 0%** - the fade will print as a hazy halo around your design.
- **Gradients that fade to transparent** - banding plus halo. Fade to a solid colour instead.
- **White text/details** on a dark fabric - keep them genuinely white in your file. Our printer needs that signal.

DETAILED SPECS · 08

Step-by-step exports that hit our specs first time. Affinity Photo / Designer / Photopea users: substitute equivalent menu items.

PHOTOSHOP (RASTER WORKFLOW)

1. **Image › Mode › RGB Colour** (8 bits/channel).
2. **Edit › Convert to Profile** › sRGB IEC61966-2.1.
3. **Image › Image Size** – set to print dimensions in cm at 300 DPI. *Untick "Resample"* when you're just relabelling resolution.
4. Delete the white Background layer (drag to bin) so you see the checkerboard.
5. Flatten remaining visible layers (right-click › Merge Visible) but keep transparency.
6. **File › Export › Export As** › PNG, transparency on, smaller file off.

Text layers: rasterise or convert to Smart Object before export so fonts can't go missing.

ILLUSTRATOR (VECTOR WORKFLOW)

1. **File › Document Colour Mode › RGB Colour**.
2. Select all text › **Type › Create Outlines** (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+O).
3. **Object › Expand** any strokes, brushes, or live effects.
4. Embed any linked raster images (Window › Links › Embed).
5. Set artboard to exact print size.
6. **File › Export › Export As** › PNG at 300 ppi, transparent background. *Or File › Save As* › PDF/X-4 (preserves transparency).

Affinity Designer: same flow. Use Export Persona › PNG at 300 DPI with transparent background.

● THE PRE-FLIGHT CHECKLIST

- ✓ RGB / sRGB profile assigned
- ✓ 300 DPI at final print size (not 72/96)
- ✓ Background layer deleted (checkerboard visible)
- ✓ All fonts outlined / rasterised
- ✓ Linked images embedded
- ✓ Effects (strokes, shadows) expanded or rasterised
- ✓ Exported as PNG-24 or PDF with transparency
- ✓ Under 50 MB

DETAILED SPECS · 09

Canva is brilliant for DTF when you use the right settings. Skip a step and you'll get a low-res or background-baked file. Follow this exactly.

1. Start with the correct canvas size. Click **Custom size** on the Canva homepage and enter your print dimensions in **centimetres or millimetres** - not pixels. A 20 cm wide chest design should be a 20 cm canvas.
2. Design as normal. Don't worry about background - we'll remove it on export.
3. When you're ready, click **Share** (top right) > **Download**.
4. Set **File type** to **PNG**.
5. Tick **Transparent background**. *This is the most important step* - it only appears once PNG is selected, and it requires Canva Pro on some plans.
6. Set **Size** to **x2** or "Print quality" if available - this scales the export so you hit 300 DPI at print size.
7. Click **Download**. Open the file - check for the checkerboard background.

● NO CANVA PRO?

The transparent background toggle is a Pro feature. Two free workarounds:

- Export as **PDF Print** instead - your design will have a white background, but we can usually remove a clean white bg for free (see "What we'll fix" on page 13).
- Use **Photopea** (free, browser-based, Photoshop-like) to open your PNG and delete the background layer.

! CANVA GOTCHAS

- **Mockup previews** - never download the t-shirt mockup image as your print file. You want the raw design only.
- **Photos as designs** - Canva's free stock photos are 72 DPI. They look fine on screen but pixelate at A4 print size. Use 300 DPI sources or scale your design down.
- **Text on transparent** - Canva sometimes anti-aliases text against the original background. If you see a faint halo, change the background to your final shirt colour while designing, then make it transparent on export.

DETAILED SPECS · 10

Mode-specific advice for our three ordering paths: Custom DTF, Gang Sheet Builder, and Merch Print.

CUSTOM DTF (SINGLE TRANSFER)

Standard PNG / PDF / AI workflow. Order at inkfusiondtf.com.au/custom-dtf. Preset sizes from 5 x 5 cm mini up to 30 x 45 cm oversized, or custom W x H up to 50 x 50 cm. Quantity tier discounts kick in at 10 / 20 / 50 / 100 / 250+ pieces (10 / 20 / 30 / 40 / 50 percent off).

GANG SHEET BUILDER

The builder at inkfusiondtf.com.au/gang-sheet-builder arranges multiple designs onto a 60 cm wide roll. Sheet heights: 30, 60, 100, 150 cm. Prices fixed: \$8 / \$14 / \$22 / \$32 inc GST.

- **PNG only** - the builder is browser-based and only PNG supports transparency in HTML5 canvas.
- **One design per file.** Don't pre-arrange a gang sheet then upload it as one image - upload each design separately and let the builder pack them.
- **Minimum 5 mm gap** between designs (the builder enforces this automatically).
- Upload-time DPI check tells you Hi-res (300+) / Mid-res (150-299) / Low-res (under 150).
- **If you're sending a pre-built gang sheet** by email instead of using the builder, maintain 5 mm gaps, life-size at 300 DPI, max 58 cm wide.

MERCH PRINT (APPAREL DECORATION)

Order at inkfusiondtf.com.au/merch-builder. We DTF-decorate the garment for you and ship the finished product. Print zones per garment vary, but standard safe areas:

ZONE	TYPICAL MAX WIDTH	TYPICAL MAX HEIGHT	NOTES
Left chest	10 cm	10 cm	Corporate logos, badges. Sits ~6 cm down from collar.
Full chest	30 cm	35 cm	Adult sizes only. Scales down on kids.
Full back	30 cm	40 cm	Largest standard zone. Centred ~8 cm below collar.
Sleeve	8 cm	30 cm	Vertical strip. Mind the seam.
Hem / lower back	30 cm	10 cm	Branded apparel placement.

The merch builder shows per-garment safe-zone overlays as you position your art. Use those - they reflect the actual print bed for that product.

REFERENCE · 11

Total transparency on file-fixing. We're proud of catching issues before they cost you a transfer.

FREE PRE-FLIGHT CHECKS

- Resolution audit - we'll flag any file under 150 DPI at your print size.
- Transparency check - we'll spot accidentally-white backgrounds.
- Colour mode conversion - if you send CMYK we'll convert and flag any visible shifts.
- Minor edge cleanup - one or two stray pixels around a logo.
- Mirroring - our RIP handles it. Don't pre-mirror.

FREE MINOR TWEAKS

- Simple white background removal (clean square background behind a logo).
- Centring within your chosen print size.
- Scaling to fit your selected size (within reason).

PAID SERVICES (\$5 ADD-ON)

- **Background removal** from photos or complex artwork - \$5 flat per design.
- Includes hair detail, soft edges, semi-transparent areas.
- Turnaround: same business day in 95% of cases.

WHAT WE WON'T FIX

- Low-resolution screenshots or web JPGs - no upscaler can add real detail.
- Designs we can't verify the rights to (trademarks, sports logos, IP).
- Recreating artwork from scratch - we're a print shop, not a design agency.
- Designs that exceed our print capabilities (effects layered on effects, hair-thin lines at large scale).

FABRIC & INK NOTES

COTTON

Excellent

Whites, pastels, blacks. Best feel after pressing.

POLYESTER

Excellent

Sublimation-style brightness without the dye-migration risk.

BLENDS & NYLON

Strong

Cotton/poly, fleece, French terry all work. Nylon - test first.

● **TONE-ON-TONE TIP**

White-on-white or light-on-light reads as a subtle ghost of texture - intentional, but worth confirming before ordering bulk. Same for black-on-charcoal.

REFERENCE · 12

The five questions we get asked every week. Plus how to reach a human when this guide hasn't covered it.

Why does my print look pixelated?

Almost always a resolution problem - the file was below 300 DPI at your chosen print size. The fix: re-export from your original design tool at 300 DPI, or print smaller. We'll never knowingly print a low-res file - we'll email you first.

Why did the colours shift from my screen?

Two common causes. (1) You sent a CMYK file and we had to convert - the shift is biggest on neons. Send RGB / sRGB instead. (2) Your screen is uncalibrated - what looks "hot pink" on your laptop may sit outside DTF gamut. For exact corporate colour, order a single test transfer first.

Can you turn my photo into a print?

Yes - if the photo is high resolution (think iPhone original, not Instagram download). Add the \$5 background removal upgrade and we'll cut out the subject for you. For low-res social media photos, we'll usually have to decline.

I don't have design software. What now?

Three free options: (1) Canva at 300 DPI with transparent background, (2) Photopea (Photoshop in your browser), (3) email us the rough idea + reference images at info@inkfusiondtf.com.au and we'll point you to a local designer.

Should I mirror my artwork before sending?

No. Our RIP software mirrors automatically during print prep. If you pre-mirror, we'll double-mirror and you'll get backwards text. Send it normal-orientation.

GOT A FILE YOU'RE NOT SURE ABOUT?

Email us at info@inkfusiondtf.com.au with the file attached. We'll review it within one business day and either confirm it's good to go, or tell you exactly what needs adjusting. Free, no obligation.

START AN ORDER
Order Custom DTF ›

VOLUME BUYER?
Apply for Trade ›