



how to create a cutter guide

SETTING UP YOUR DOCUMENT

You'll need an artwork cutter guide if you plan to order bespoke shaped Labels or bespoke sheets.

If you're ordering a circle/oval or square/rectangle, you don't need to supply a cutter guide — we'll set this up for you based on the shapes and dimensions you want.

What is a cutter guide?

A cutter guide is a path around your artwork which shows us exactly where you want your bespoke shapes to be cut. To create these, you'll need to use **Adobe Illustrator**.

How to create your cutter guide

1) First, open your file in Adobe Illustrator, and set up your document size to the final size of your artwork, then change the bleed settings to 3mm on each edge. Once opened, fit your artwork file to the art/bleed boxes. Once it's the correct size, we recommend outlining any text. You can do this by selecting each item, then right clicking and selecting **'Create Outline'** (See fig 1.1).

2) Once outlined, name your layer **'Artwork'** and duplicate the layer. You will now have two layers in your document. Lock the original **'Artwork'** layer and rename your new layer **'Cutter'** (See fig 1.2). You can hide the artwork layer by clicking the 'eye', so that you only see your cutter layer.

Make sure you don't move anything in your document, or you'll have misaligned artwork and cutter line(s).

If you're using a vector image, please skip to **Section 3**.

If you're using a Raster Image (jpeg/gif/png), you'll need to convert it to a vector using the 'Image Trace' panel (See fig 1.3a). Please continue onto the next page to follow instructions on this process.

Fig 1.1

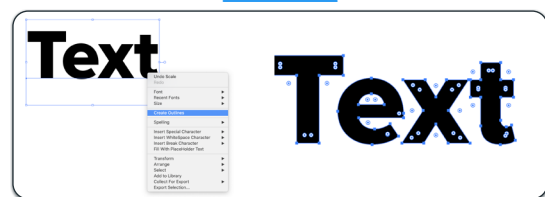


Fig 1.2

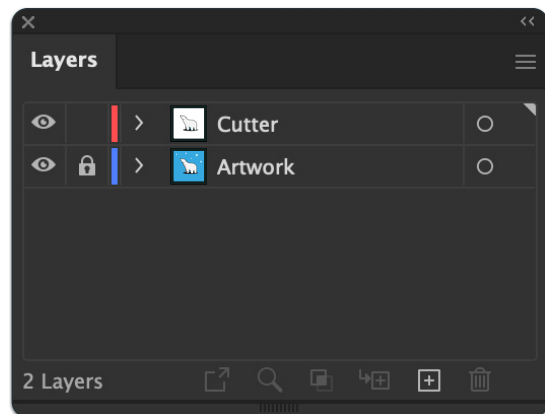
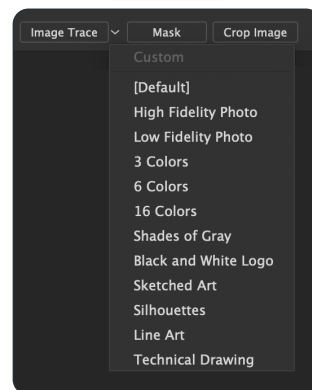


Fig 1.3a





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SETTING UP YOUR CUTTER LINE - PART 1

Image Trace (Menu: Object > Image Trace)

If it's a simple image, we recommend using the 'black and white logo' from the 'Image Trace' options.

Alternatively, use the '3 colours' or '6 colours' option (depending on what gives the best results), and then convert.

Once you have traced the image, you will now need to flatten the transparency. Menu: Object > Flatten Transparency > OK. This will change the image from a single piece into its groups. With the image selected, right click, then select 'ungroup' so you can move the sections individually. Remove all unwanted sections leaving only what you need to make the guide (See fig 1.3b).

3) Select all on the 'Cutter' layer, then go to Menu: Window > Pathfinder > Unite (See fig 1.4). Delete any holes or unwanted anchor-points in the new shape you've created in your cutter layer (See fig 2.1). If your image is appearing as a solid colour, switch to 'Stroke' (See fig 2.2), instead of 'Fill', to see the outline of your shape (See fig 2.1, centre).

You can clean up any rough edges by using Menu: Object > Path > Simplify. Use this tool left to right until you are happy the line is nice and smooth and works well with your custom shape (See fig 2.3). You can manually fix straight cuts.

Fig 1.3b



a) Raster Image b) Converted c) Remove Unwanted

Fig 1.4

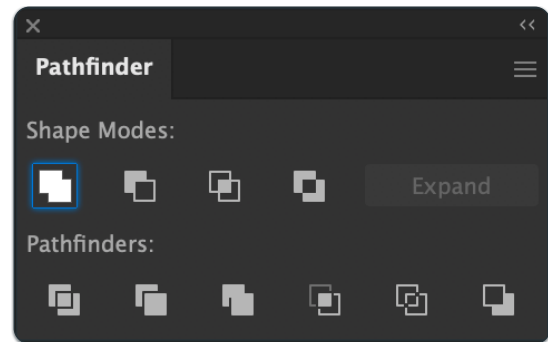
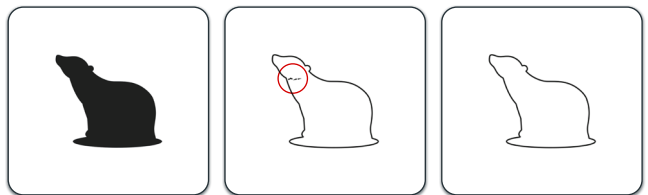


Fig 2.1



Pathfinder > Unite Remove unwanted Finished

Fig 2.2



← Click this double sided arrow to switch Fill to Stroke

Fig 2.3



Simplify Path

Creating the 'cutter-line'

4) Select all items in the cutter layer, then go to the object **Menu: Object > Path > Offset path** (See fig 3.1).

Click the 'Preview' tick box to get an idea of how far your cutter line is away from the edge of your artwork. Adjust the offset to your desired effect (we recommend a minimum of 1.5mm border). Once made, make sure the new path and the original line are ungrouped, then delete the original line, leaving only the new line.

5) Now you need to convert your cutter line to a 'Spot Colour'. Select the cutter line, making sure you have selected the 'stroke' rather than 'fill', then click 'New Swatch' in the swatches panel and rename it 'Cutter'. Set the colour type to 'Spot Colour' and colour mode to 'CMYK' and choose a colour for your cutter line. Something like 100% magenta and 50% yellow will show as a bright red cutter line. You can now click the 'eye' on the artwork layer to show the cutter layer over the artwork layer, to check your cutter line fits as you expect (See fig 4.2). Make sure to turn the line into an overprint stroke, **Menu: Window > Attributes > Overprint Stroke**, check the tick box (See fig 4.3).

Fig 3.1

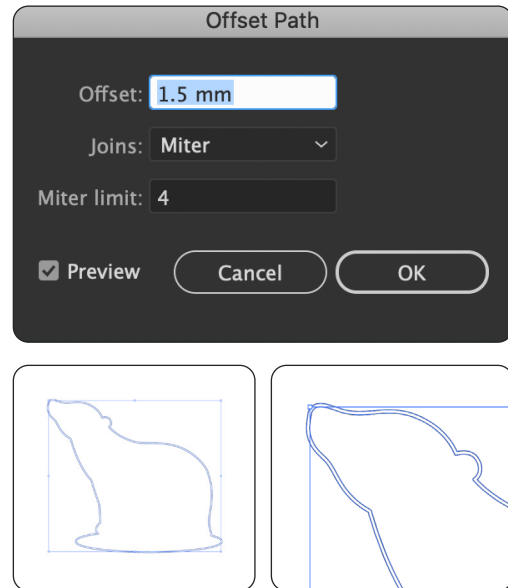


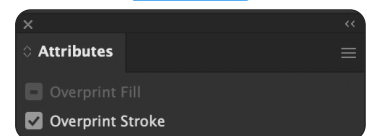
Fig 4.1



Fig 4.2



Fig 4.3





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SETTING UP YOUR CUTTER LINE - PART 3

Using 'Multiple' objects

If your design includes multiple objects/shapes, you will need to make sure your cutter line includes all objects within the boundary of the cutter line. Select all the objects and then unite them as we did in Fig 1.4.

Once united, using the 'Offset Path' function, increase the offset until all objects are touching, then hit return. Unite the objects again, and you will have your cutter line.

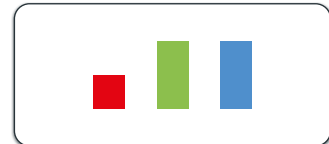
Make sure your line is smooth. This will make your Labels & Stickers easy to peel off later. Rounded corners also make it easier to peel.

If you've never done this before and you have a logo icon with text underneath, you might want to experiment with this process a bit and find a custom solution for the shape you're trying to achieve.

The examples here are only for two types of graphic. We recommend you experiment to get an idea of how this process works and how you can develop creative solutions to make the best cutter guides for your graphics. It could be that you make the guides from this process but draw your own version over the top once you've seen a shape you can work with.

Don't forget to overprint stroke if you have a background.

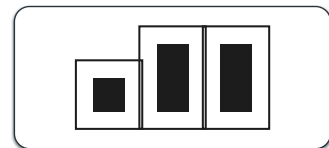
The process.



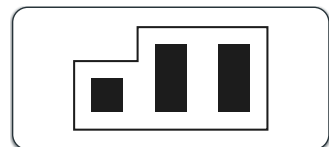
Starting shape



United shape



Creating the Offset path



Uniting the Offset path



Adding a Spot colour and curved edges for easy peeling



Adobe Acrobat

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CHECKING YOUR ARTWORK

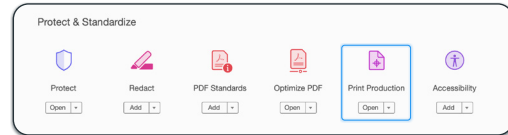
6) Save your file in PDF format, making sure to choose the **'Press Quality'** option under the PDF presets. You can also add trim marks here, but remember to include bleed and make sure you've **preserved the spot colours**, so your cutter guide doesn't convert to CMYK.

Once you've saved your PDF, open your document in Adobe Acrobat and select output preview.

Tools: > Print Production > Output Preview. and check the cutter guide has saved as a separate colour to the **CMYK** in your print file by looking at the **'Spot Colour'** section in the Output Preview Box. To make sure it's working, uncheck it to see if it disappears.

Now you're ready to submit your artwork to the Printed Easy team!

Tools



Output Preview Box

