



GENERATING PDF USING CANVA®

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USER GUIDE



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About Ghent Workgroup

The GWG, established in June 2002, is an international assembly of industry associations, suppliers, educators, and industry members from around the world. The GWG's mission is to develop and share process specifications for best practices in graphic arts workflows. Since its founding nearly 20 years ago, the organization has consistently produced numerous process specifications for PDF exchange, as well as developing practical tools for automating processes, and testing and establishing consistent PDFs for print, publishing, and packaging production – available free at www.gwg.org.

Members include graphic arts associations such as CAPT, CIP4, Fespa, Fogra, JP/Politikenshus, Lab9 Pro, Medibel+, Printing United Alliance, TAGA Italia and VIGC. Vendor members include Adobe, callas software, Canon, DALIM Software, Dataline, ECO3, Enfocus, Fiery, Global Graphics, Heidelberg, HYBRID Software, Hybrid Software Helix, PageProof, Repro-intelligence, Ricoh, Tech Research (Tag) and Ultimate Tech. Industry members are Direct Mailers, RRD Communications and Ubisoft. Educational members are Arteveldehogeschool, CEC Latam, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, Future Schoolz, GIPT Mumbai, Hochschule der Medien, ISEC Lisboa, RIPT Kolkata, Rochester Institute of Technology, The MARA Technological University (UiTM), University of Ljubljana, University of Novi Sad and University of Wuppertal.

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General information

Color working space in Canva®

Canva® uses the Skia Color Management technology to convert all uploaded data to RGB. It uses XYZ D50 as the internal reference for all data conversions. This is loosely comparable to sRGB, but with D50 as the white reference point instead of D65.

In the PDF file, the RGB ICC tag appears as "Google/Skia/unique ID".

```

  ▼ Filled Path: Constant
    ColorSpace: DeviceRGB
    Color Values = [1.00000, 1.00000, 1.00000]
    Overprint=False OPM=0 ri=Relative Colorimetric
  ▼ Filled Path: Image
    ColorSpace: ICCBasedRGB, Google/Skia/7C5FA2151397474A0486BBCC83733D59
  ▼ Image Attributes
    size: 2400 x 1600 pixels (656.193 x 437.830 mm)
    bits/pixel: 24
    resolution: horizontal 3.657 pixels/mm vertical 3.654 pixels/mm
    filters: JPEG
    Overprint=False OPM=0 ri=Relative Colorimetric
```

Limitations in Canva®

Several limitations in Canva® can affect the quality and resolution of files and their components.

Storage limitations

The total storage available to a user depends on the Canva license:

- Canva Free users can upload up to 5 GB of media.
- Canva Pro users can upload up to 100 GB.
- Canva Business users can upload up to 500 GB per team.
- Canva Enterprise users can upload 1–5 TB per team.

Content limitations

Canva imposes several restrictions on design components such as color, images, etc.) used while designing:

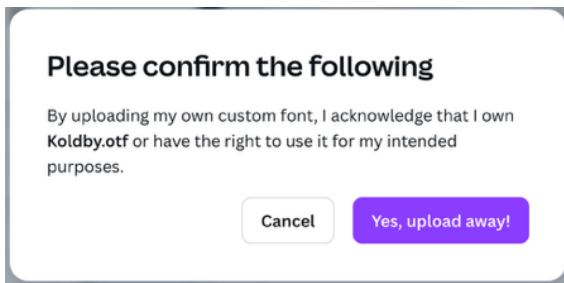
- JPEG, PNG, HEIC/HEIF, WebP images, and files must be smaller than 50 MB.
- Brand and additional colors must be specified using **hexadecimal (hex) color codes**.
- **Illustrator, Photoshop, and PDF files are limited to 300 MB in size.**

Supported font types

You can upload only specific font types to your workspace. Canva supports the following font file types:

- OpenType Font (.otf)
- TrueType Font (.ttf)
- Web Open Font Format (.woff)

When uploading, you must confirm that you have the legal right to use these fonts by acknowledging a notification message.



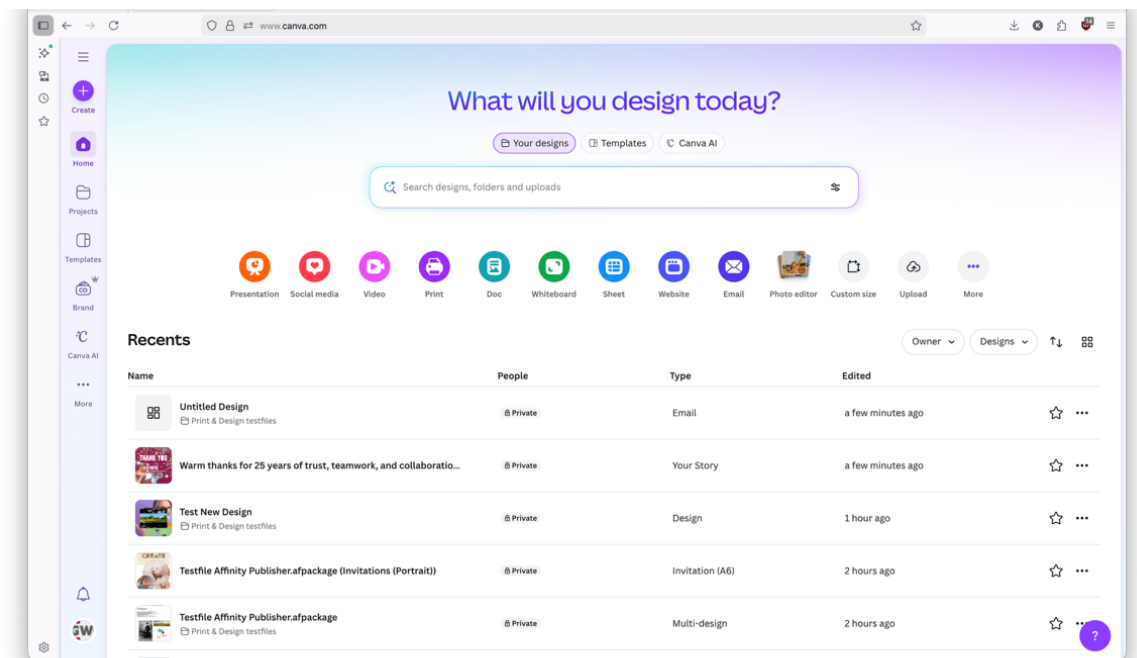
Generating PDF using Canva®

Introduction

Canva® is becoming increasingly popular in in-house printing, marketing, and communication offices. Therefore, the GWG decided to take a closer look at it. With this document, we share our expertise and knowledge with you and offer recommendations for creating PDF files that are accurate and predictable.

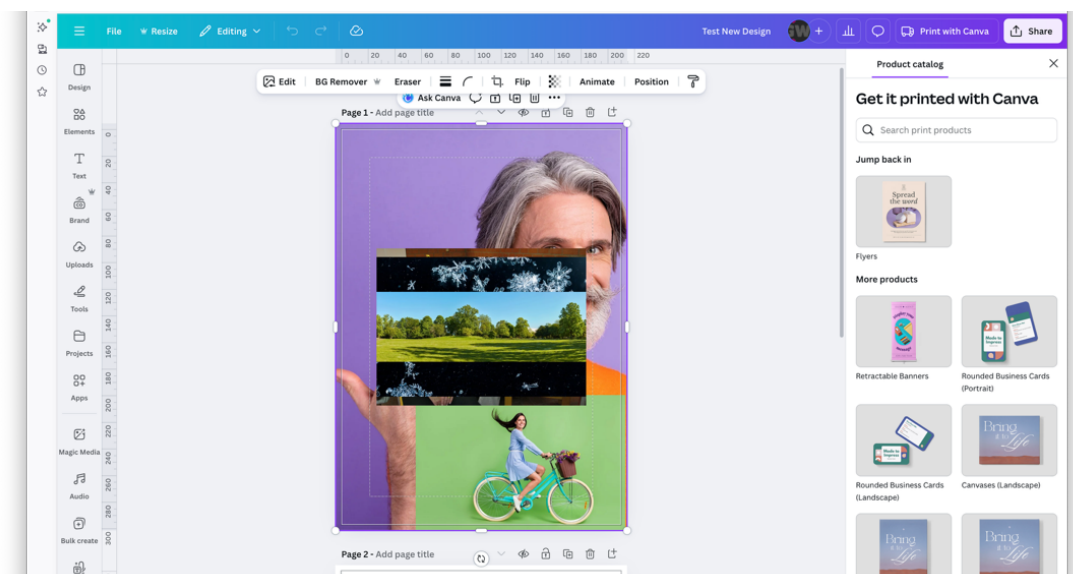
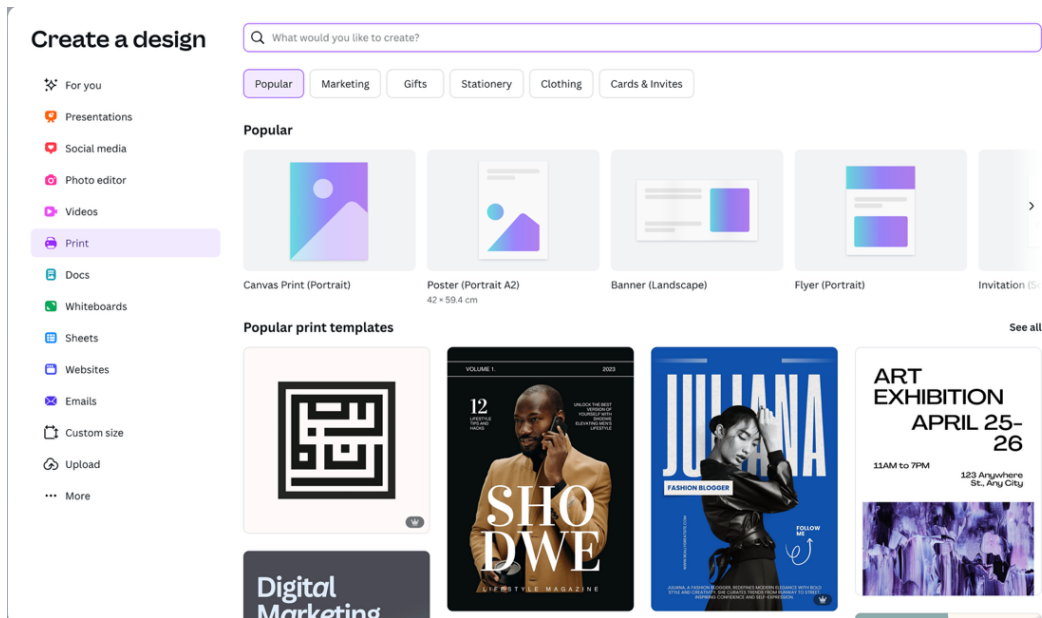
Setting up a new document

To set up a new document in Canva, select the type of document you want to create by clicking the "+" icon on the left side of the Canva window.



Selecting the document type

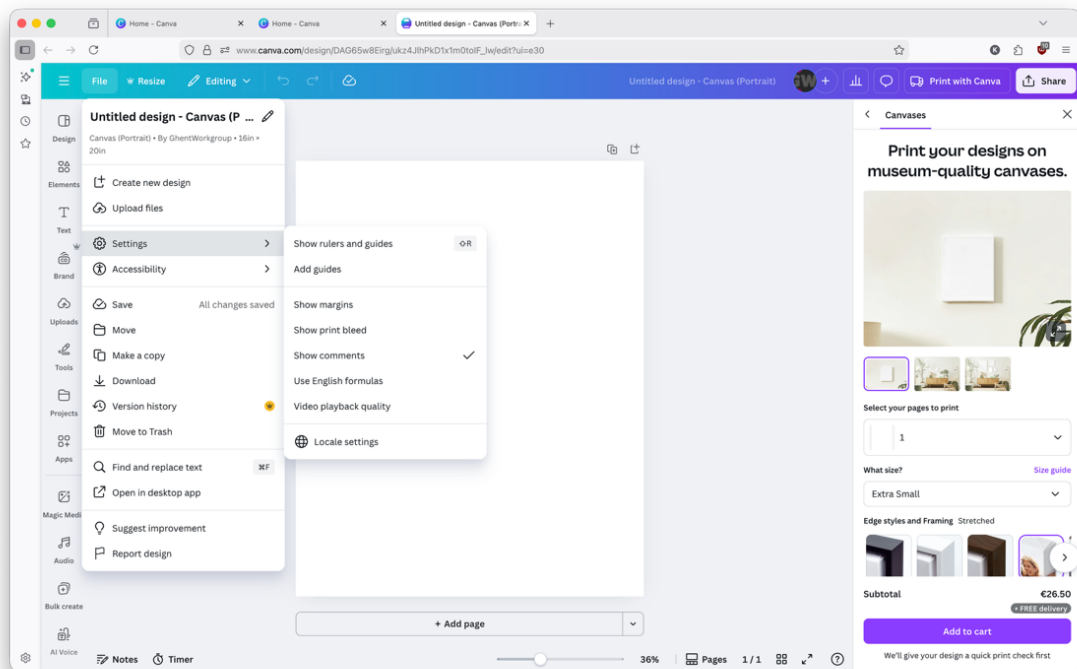
Canva offers a wide range of document types that can be created, such as flyers, posters, reports and newsletters. In this example, an A4 flyer was used.



Showing margins

By default, when you create a new document, the bleed and margins are not displayed. To correct this:

- Click **File – Settings – Show margins**.
- Enable **Show margins**

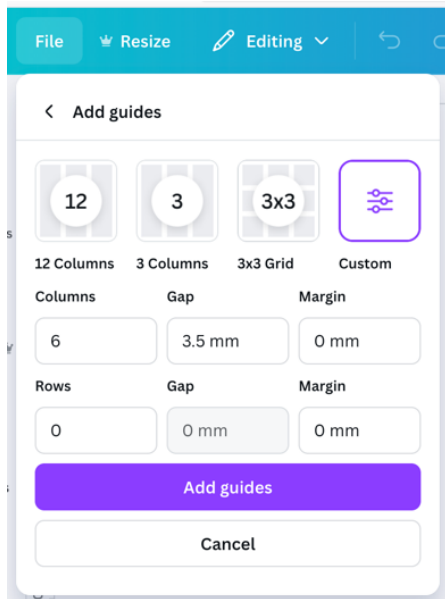


Margins provide a visual indication of the amount of white space you need to leave around a document. This is important for two reasons:

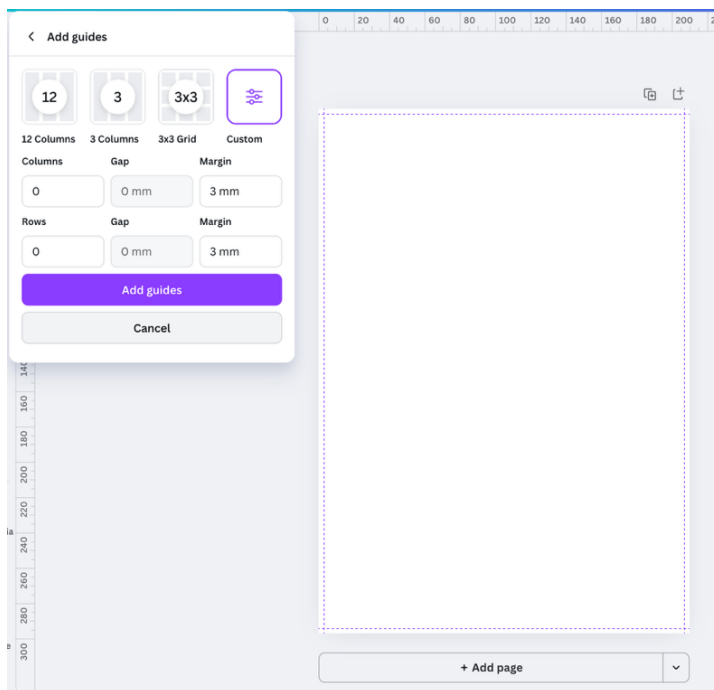
- Office printers often cannot print to the edge of the paper. The size of the non-printable area depends on the printer and can usually be found in the printer's settings. Using margins in Canva gives you a visual reference for what cannot be printed.
- Even on printers that can print to the edge of the paper, you often want to keep important graphical elements away from the edge of the page, as cutting is not always completely accurate. You do not want important elements to be cut off.

The default margins in Canva are 31.75 mm / 1.25 inches. It is usually a good idea to set custom margins instead of using default values.

To do this, first show rulers and guides. Click **Add Guides**, and a new panel will appear.



Select the **"Custom"** option. Then set the number of columns and rows to zero (0) and enter the desired margin.



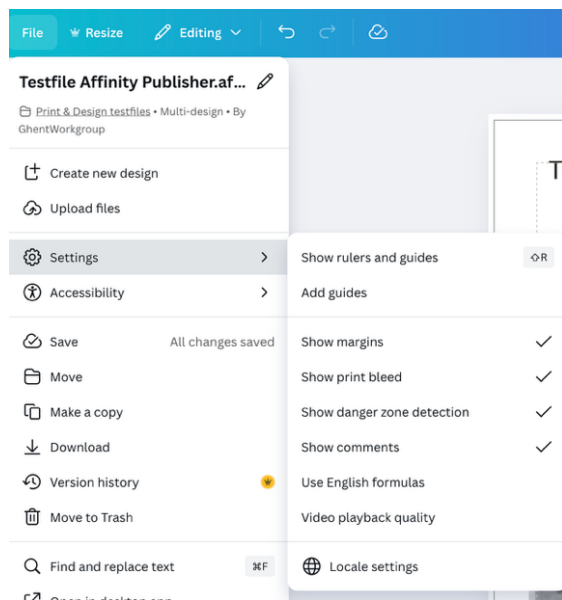
The margin appears as a dashed line at the edges of the page.

Showing the bleed

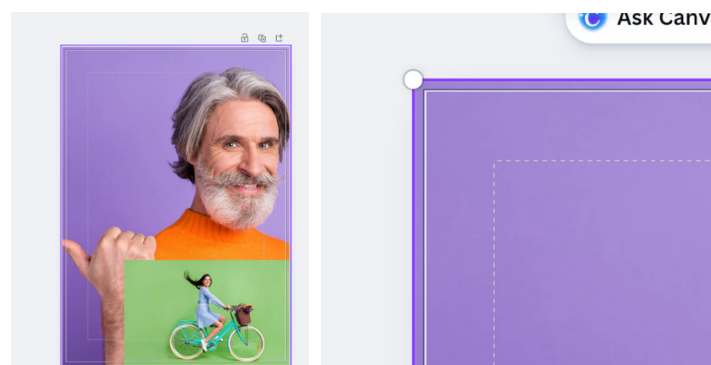
By default, the bleed is not displayed when you create a new document. If you plan to print your document on a printer that can print to the edge of the page, you should enable bleed. On these printers, your file is printed on a larger sheet and then cut to size. Because cutting is a mechanical process that isn't always exact, you don't want graphics in your document to come exactly to the edge of the page – cutting inaccuracies may cause small white lines at some of the edges of your page.

You can avoid this by extending your graphics beyond the page edges. Historically, a 3 mm bleed is used, which is also the standard in Canva.

To show the bleed area, click on **File – Settings – Show print bleed**, then activate “**Show print bleed**”.



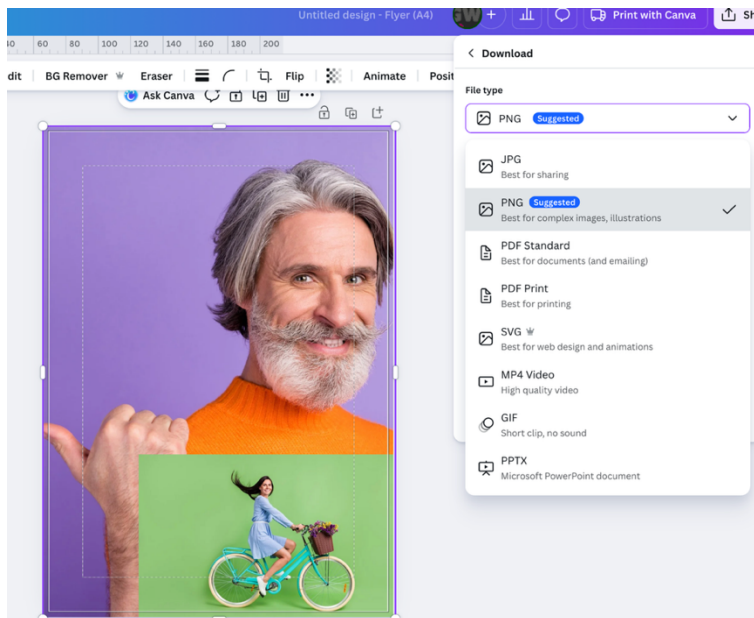
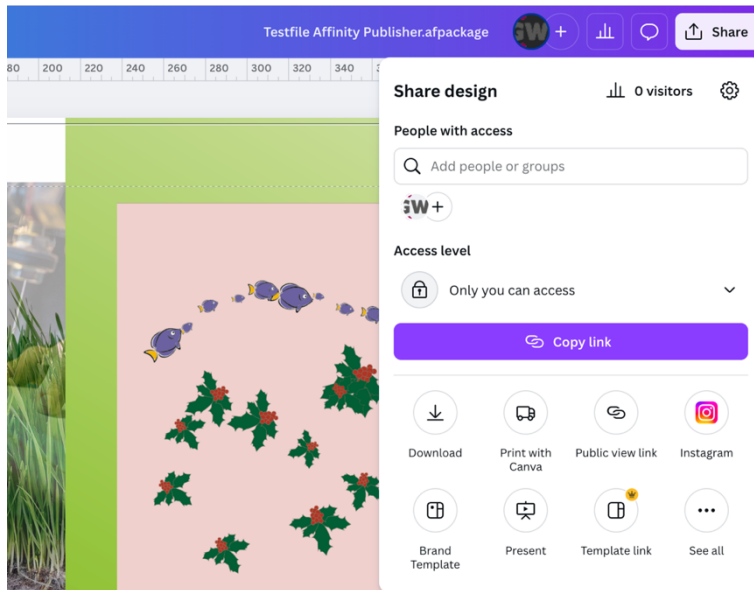
The bleed area is indicated by a rectangle outside the edges of your page. To prevent visual defects during cutting, extend any graphic element that reaches the edge of the page (vector, image, gradient etc.) to the edge of the bleed area.



Creating PDF

Setup

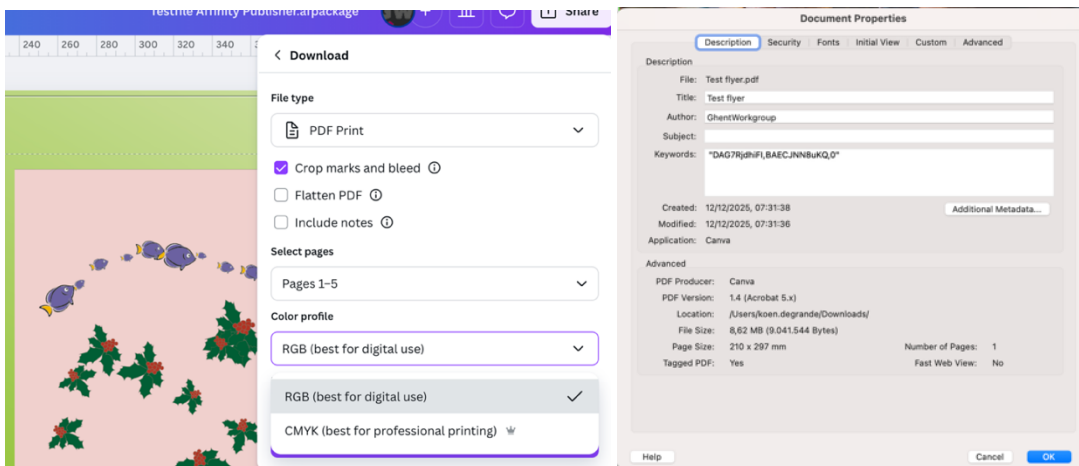
To generate a PDF, first click the **"Share"** button at the top right of the Canva interface. Canva offers several sharing options; to create a PDF file, click the **"Download"** button.



File Type

After clicking **"Download"**, Canva displays a list of supported export formats. For the best results, choose **"PDF Print: Best for printing"**.

You cannot control over which PDF version is generated. For Canva documents generated from scratch, the version number normally is PDF 1.4. For documents created in Canva, the version is usually PDF 1.4. For documents generated from an uploaded Affinity package, Canva may export a PDF 1.7. Both versions are suitable for print.



In most cases, select the option **"Crop marks and bleed"**. This ensures the bleed you added to the document is correctly exported and that crop marks are included (crop marks are used to accurately cut the content to size later).

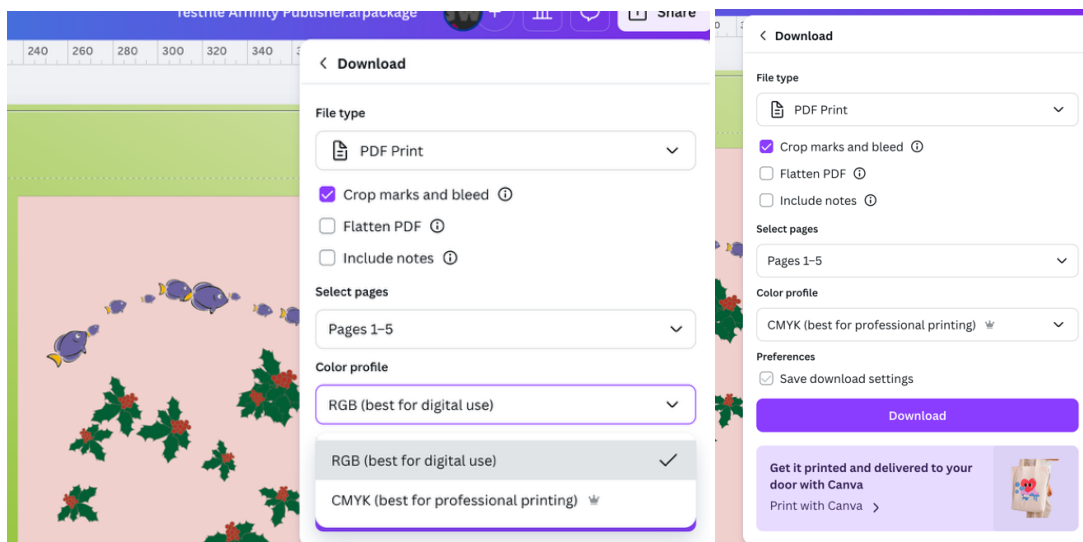


If you do not select the “**Crop marks and bleed**” option, your document will be cropped to the page border. This is suitable if you plan to print the PDF on an office printer. In all other cases, make sure this option is enabled.

Color Mode

When exporting a PDF file, you can select a “**Color profile**”; your options are RGB or CMYK:

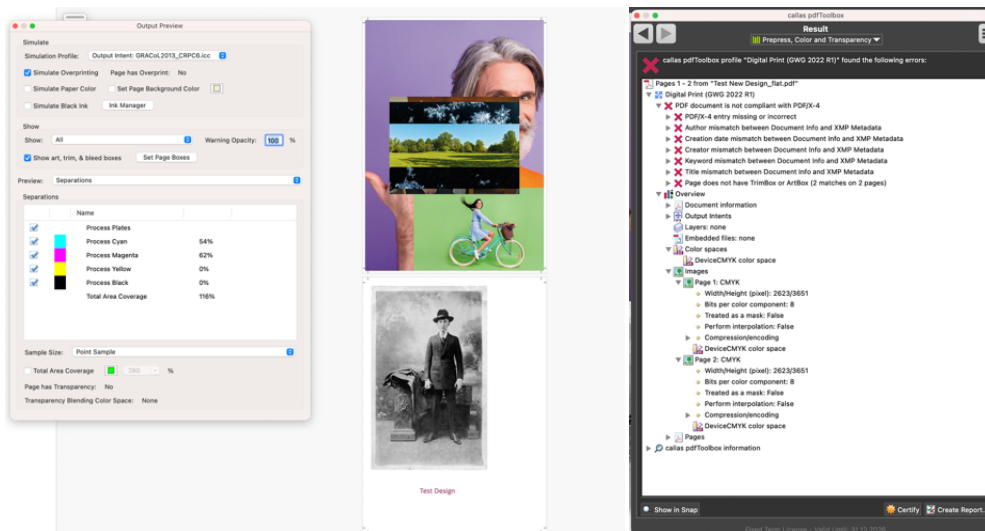
- The RGB option leaves any RGB content in your document (such as images from a camera) unchanged.
- The CMYK option converts all elements in your document to CMYK and adds the “GRACoL 2013_CRPC6.icc” output intent profile to the exported PDF file.



While commercial printers typically use CMYK colors, we still recommend exporting from Canva in RGB. RGB supports a wider color gamut, and it’s best to let your printer handle the conversion to the smaller CMYK gamut they use. They know their equipment and can make a more informed decision for a higher quality conversion.

Flatten PDF

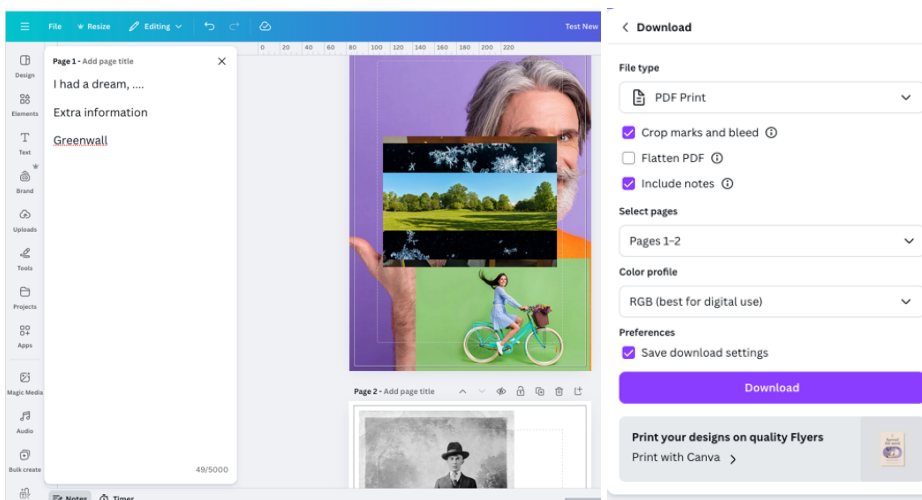
The **"Flatten PDF"** option creates a PDF file in which each page is converted in a 300 ppi image (the color space depends on the previously described color mode option). In general, this is not recommended; this option should not be enabled.



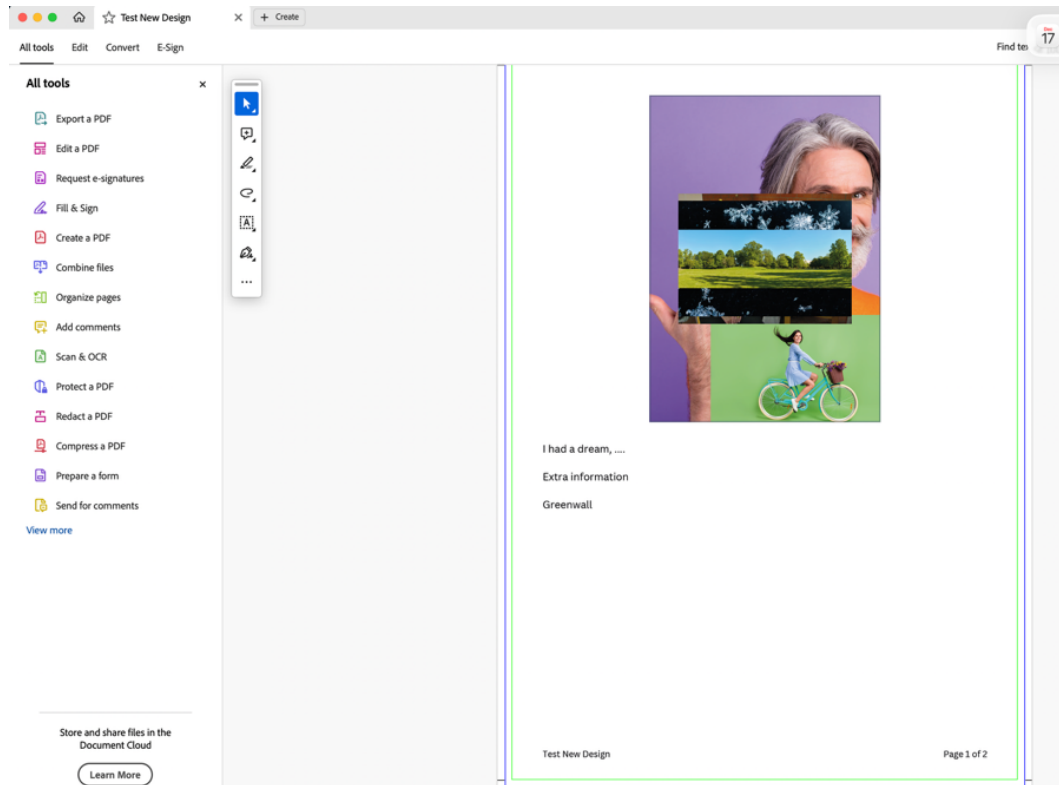
Including notes

While designing your document in Canva, you can add sticky notes, which are mostly used for communication between different people working on a document. When exporting to PDF, you can export these notes as well.

Since notes are usually only useful during the design phase, it is generally a bad idea to include them in the generated PDF file. Therefore, you should not activate the **"Include notes"** option when exporting to PDF.

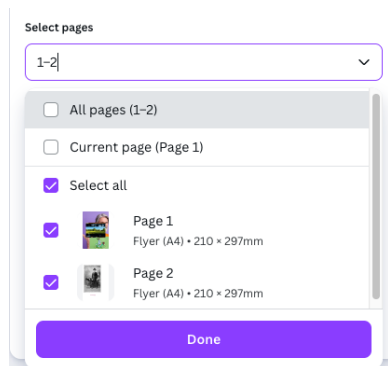


If you activate this option, the Canva document is scaled, and notes are added at the bottom of the document preview. The document name and page number are added at the bottom of each page. This is not suitable for production PDF files.



Multi-page documents

For multi-page documents, Canva allows you to specify the page range to be exported to the output PDF file. This feature can be used to generate multiple partial PDF files from your Canva design if needed.



Preflight

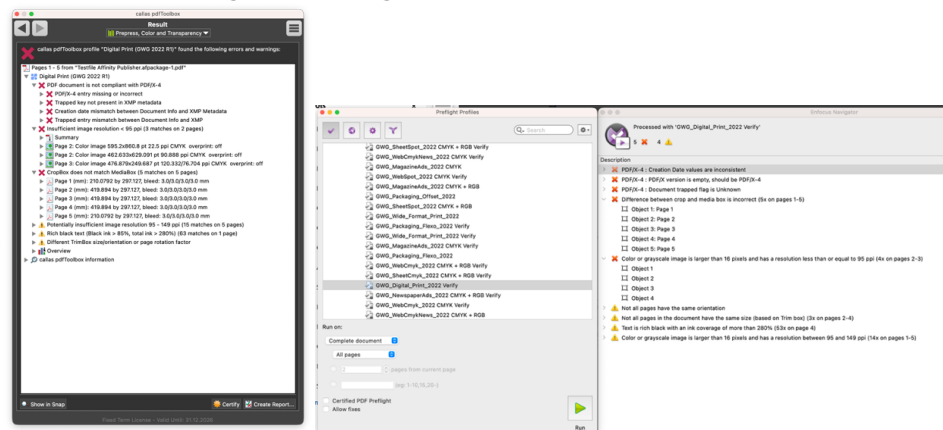
The Ghent Workgroup develops preflight profiles (rule sets for quality control) for various market segments. One of these segments is digital printing. Since documents created with Canva® are typically intended for printing on digital output devices, we used the preflight profile “GWG_Digital_Print 2022” to check PDF files exported from Canva. More information about the preflight profiles is available [on the GWG website](#).

Please note that we used the verification version of the profile, which means no automatic corrections were made – only verification checks were performed. We conducted the test with callas pdfToolbox Desktop 16.1 and Enfocus PitStop 25.11.

What did preflight find?

The most relevant preflight messages were:

- **Difference between Cropbox and Mediabox**
In a PDF file, the Mediabox typically shows all exported graphic elements, including bleed, gutter around the page, and crop marks. The Cropbox is the portion of the page displayed when the file is opened in Adobe Acrobat. The GWG prefers that the Cropbox be identical to the Mediabox to avoid confusion when the PDF file is opened in Acrobat.
- **Resolution of images is less than 95 ppi**
PDF documents intended for commercial printing require relatively high-resolution images, typically 150 ppi or higher.
- **Non-compliance with PDF/X**
The PDF/X standard, developed by ISO, consists of rules to maximize the reliability and portability of PDF documents for print production. All GWG profiles are based specifically on PDF/X-4. As Canva does not export PDF/X-4 compliant files, some error messages indicating non-compliance are unavoidable.



Are Canva PDF files usable?

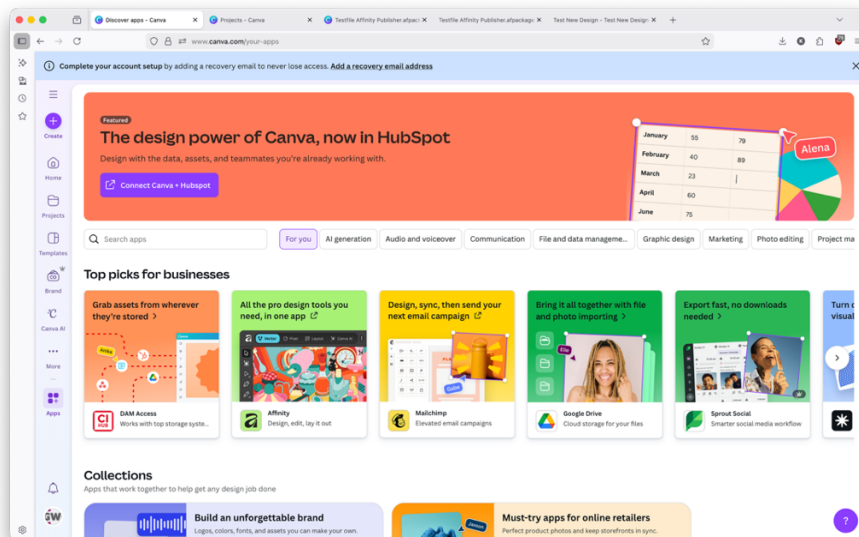
If Canva exported PDF files generate preflight errors when preflighted with modern GWG preflight profiles, does this mean these PDF files are not usable for print?

As long as the recommendations in this document for generating PDFs from Canva are followed, the resulting PDFs should be usable in most print workflows. Even though some aspects (such as color spaces used, PDF/X-4 compliance) may trigger GWG preflight rules, printers should be able to correct those issues automatically, without affecting print quality.

As always, it is best to communicate with your printer early and often. They may have specific recommendations for you to follow or may ask you to follow different rules. GWG advice is always generic; your printer knows what workflow they are using and what equipment your file will be printed with.

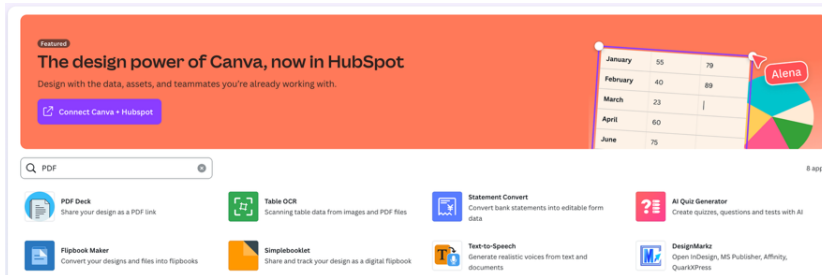
Apps

Apps extend the functionality of Canva®. Canva and external developers distribute them to users through the home page of the Canva® website. Canva® is not responsible for the quality of these add-ons. Some are better and more complete than others.



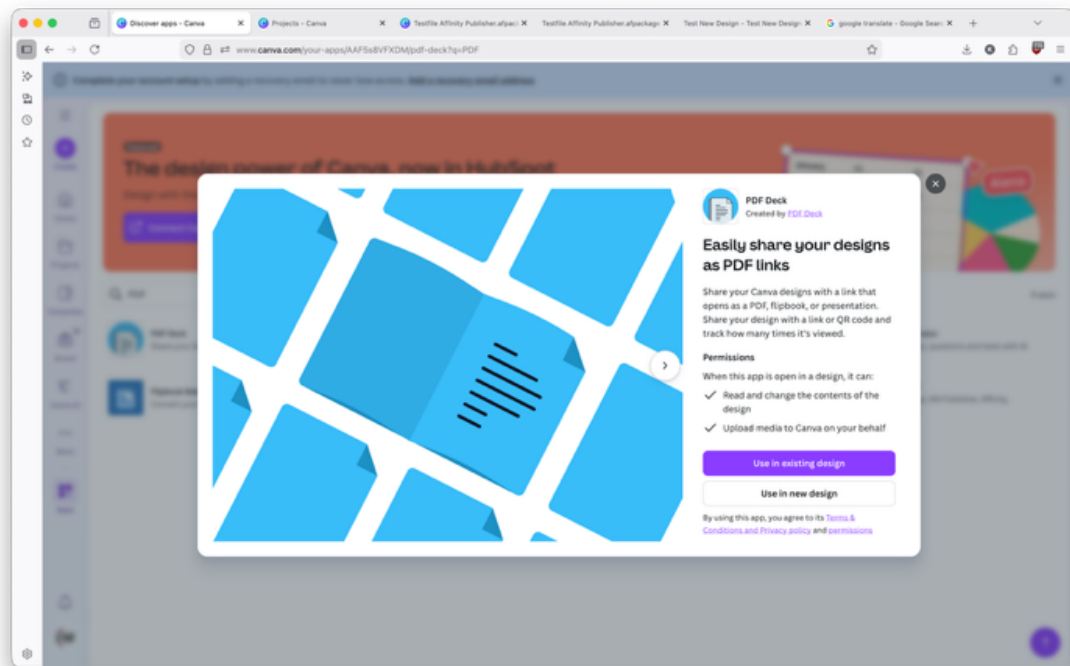


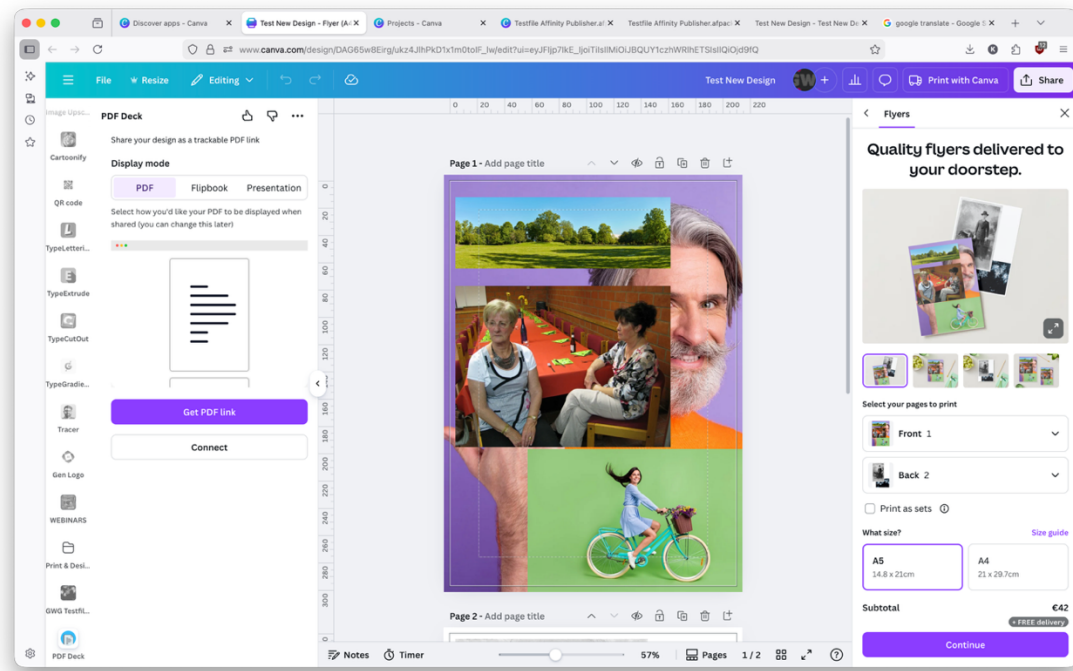
We searched for PDF apps, but there wasn't much available. There was PDF Deck to share your design as a PDF for approval, an OCR app for images and PDFs, and that was about it.



Using Apps

Apps are powered directly by Canva®. We used PDF Deck as an example.





Select **"Get PDF Link"** and a new popup appear with a predefined file type.

