

PDF/X-1a

What is PDF/X-1a?

PDF/X is a subset of the Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) specification that is intended to reflect best practices in graphic arts file exchange. PDF/X-1a restricts the content in a PDF document that does not directly serve the purpose of high-quality print production output, such as annotations, Java Actions, and embedded multimedia.

PDF/X-1a also eliminates the most common errors in file preparation. According to a GATF (Graphic Arts Technology Foundation) survey conducted in January 2002, among the 10 most common errors in client PDF files were the following:

- Fonts not embedded
- Wrong color space
- Images missing/Transparencies not flattened
- Overprint/trap issues

Sending your document as a PDF/X-1a file will guarantee that these errors do not occur because for a file to be confirmed as complying to the PDF/X-1a standard:

- All fonts and images must be embedded + All Transparencies must be flattened
- All elements must be encoded as CMYK or spot
- The file must be identified as trapped or not trapped

In addition:

- MediaBox and TrimBox or ArtBox must be defined. BleedBox is optional.
- The output intent* must be specified either by stating a Characterized Printing Condition or identifying an ICC output profile

* The output intent identifies the press condition the file is prepared for, such as type of press, and inks and paper that will be used.