

The file mechanics below are what make a carton print right and fold clean: panel maps, bleed, grain, and glue keep-clears. Build them in from the start and your proof round is about design, not repair.

Panel map & dieline layers

- Design on the dieline we supply, at 100% scale; never redraw, rotate, or nudge it.
- Keep cut, crease, and bleed lines as spot colors on their own locked layer, set to overprint.
- Label your panels: front, back, sides, glue flap, dust flaps, tucks. Confirm which face is the shelf face.
- Check art that crosses a crease on a folded mockup, not just the flat layout.
- Never flatten or merge the dieline layer into the artwork.

Bleed & safety

- Extend backgrounds and images 1/8 in. past every cut edge, dust flaps and tucks included.
- Keep type and logos at least 1/8 in. inside every cut and crease.
- Raw board shows white at any edge left unbled.
- Avoid borders that run parallel to a cut edge; small die drift makes them read crooked.

Grain & caliper

- Board grain should run perpendicular to the primary body creases; we set this at die layout.
- Creases across the grain fold clean; creases along the grain crack, especially under heavy toner coverage.
- Common SBS calipers: 14 pt small and light, 16-18 pt general retail, 20-24 pt heavy fills and auto-lock bottoms.
- Wide unsupported panels bow on thin board; step up one caliper instead of fighting it.

Glue flap & closure keep-clears

- Leave the glue flap unprinted and uncoated; adhesive bonds to bare board, not toner or laminate.
- Hold UV and laminate out of every glue zone, including auto-lock bottom seams; we flag these on the dieline.
- Glue zones extend onto the inside of the mating panel; heavy coverage there weakens the bond.
- Keep solid dark coverage off tuck flap edges; tucks scuff slightly as they seat.

Prepress checklist

- Press-ready PDF at final size with bleed, dieline included as a separate spot layer.
- Fonts outlined; send the live working file alongside.
- Images 300 ppi effective at 100% scale.
- Build white-underlay art as a named spot color ("White") on its own layer, set to overprint.
- CMYK only, no RGB elements; call out color-critical brand builds so we watch them on press.

Send us the file

- Unsure about any spec? Send what you have through the quote form and ask for a dieline review.
- We check panel map, bleed, grain, and glue zones before anything is cut or printed.
- No dieline yet? We draw one from your dimensions or a physical sample.