

# Creating perfect blends

When you fill an object or area of a printed page with a transition from one color to another, the result is called a blend or gradient. A blend should contain a smooth transition between colors, whether you are printing to a desktop printer, color copier, or offset press.

No matter what software you use to create a blend, certain factors may combine to create a harsh color transition, or a “banding” effect in the blend. To avoid this, take the following precautions.

- Keep the blend as short as possible. As the length of the blend increases, so does the chance of banding. Blends less than five inches long are usually fine.
- Keep a high amount of color change. The more drastic the color change in the blend, the less chance of banding in the blend. Try to keep at least a 50% change in color in the blend. In other words, a blend that transitions from a 75% tint of Pantone 200 to 50% Pantone 200 will have a greater chance of banding than a blend from 75% to 10% of the same color. When specifying CMYK color, try to ensure that one of the inks has at least a 50% change. For example, a blend from 10% cyan, 90% magenta, 80% yellow, 20% black to 50% cyan, 10% magenta, 80% yellow, 10% black should be fine, since there is an 80% change in the magenta ink.
- Avoid blending to pure white. A blend from any color to pure white will often exhibit a harsh transition near the end where the color tapers to white. To avoid this, use a 5% tint of the original color instead of white. A 5% tint will appear “nearly white”, and will avoid the banding problem.

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