

Flattening Transparency in Adobe Acrobat Pro

What are transparencies?

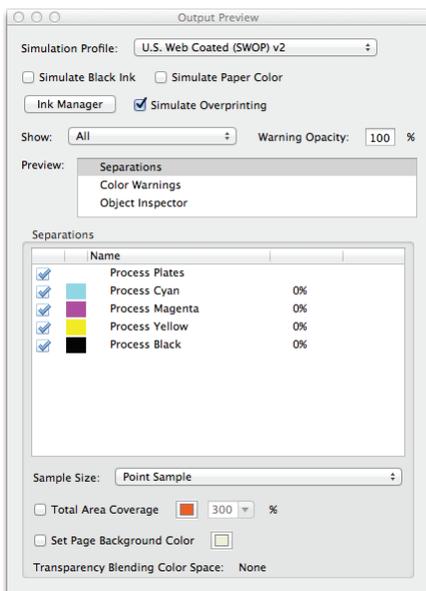
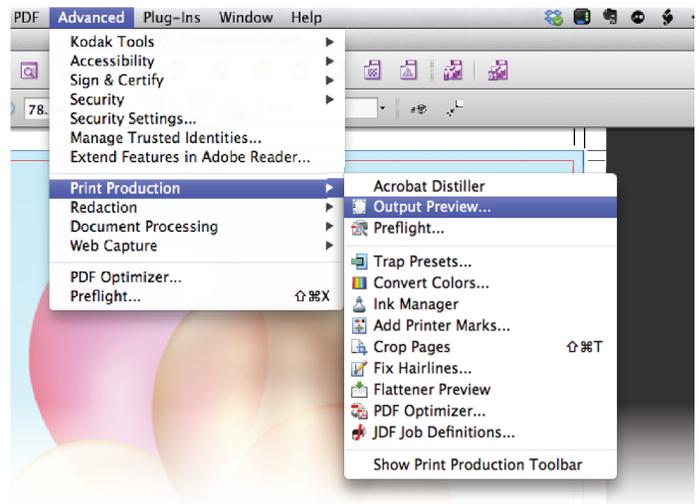
Transparency in PDF files refers to objects on a page, such as images or text, which are transparent or 'show through'. Transparency is typically used for shadow effects, to lighten (parts of) images so that the text on top remains readable, to make objects fade into another object or to create a tint of a certain color.

The transparent objects that are in a PDF need to go through a process called "flattening", this ensures the best results for your ad to print high quality as expected. This document will give you the "best practice" steps to successfully flatten your PDF(s) to ensure compatibility with high quality printing, utilizing Adobe Acrobat Pro versions 9 and X. The screen shots included are taken in Acrobat Pro running in MacOSX, but apply to PC versions as well.



Step 1 - Color separations - Acrobat 9 Pro

In Acrobat Pro 9, open the "Output Preview..." tab by selecting: Advanced/Print Production/Output Preview... This will open a popup window that shows the color separations that are used in the PDF.



This Output Preview window shows that this PDF contains 4 process color separations and is ready to flatten the file as listed on Step 2.

If your PDF contains more than 4 separations, they will need to be converted to 4/c process colors.

If the extra color separations are not converted, the file may produce undesired results.

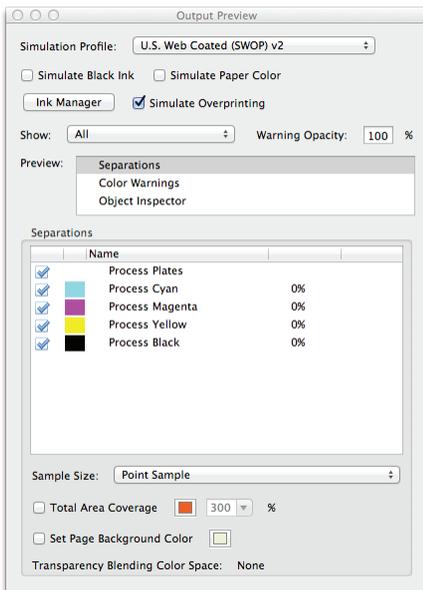
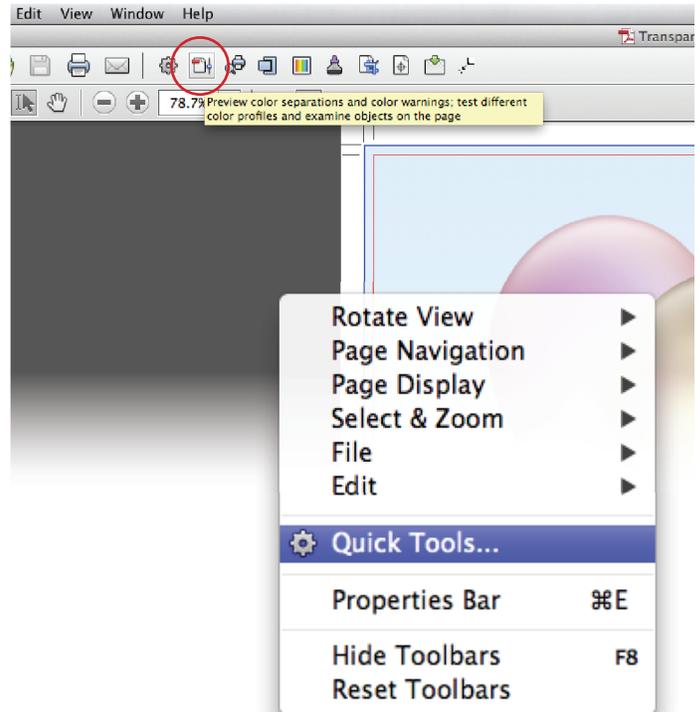
See page 5.

* Please note: while showing "All", any graphics that are not CMYK will be previewed using the Simulation Profile.

Step 1 - Color separations - Acrobat X Pro

In Acrobat Pro X, open the "Output Preview..." tab by selecting the Output Preview tool. If the Output Preview tool is not available in your toolbar, Control/Click or Right-Click on the toolbar to select "Quick Tools..." The Output Preview tool can now be added to your toolbar.

This will open a popup window that shows the color separations that are used in the PDF.



This Output Preview window shows that this PDF contains 4 process color separations and is ready to flatten the file as listed on Step 2.

If your PDF contains more than 4 separations, they will need to be converted to 4/c process colors.

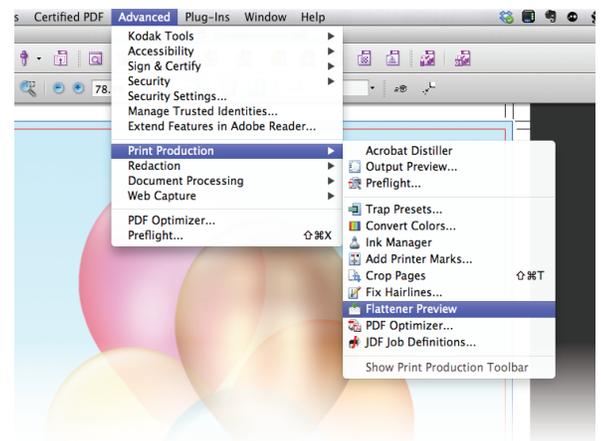
If the extra color separations are not converted, the file may produce undesired results.

See page 5.

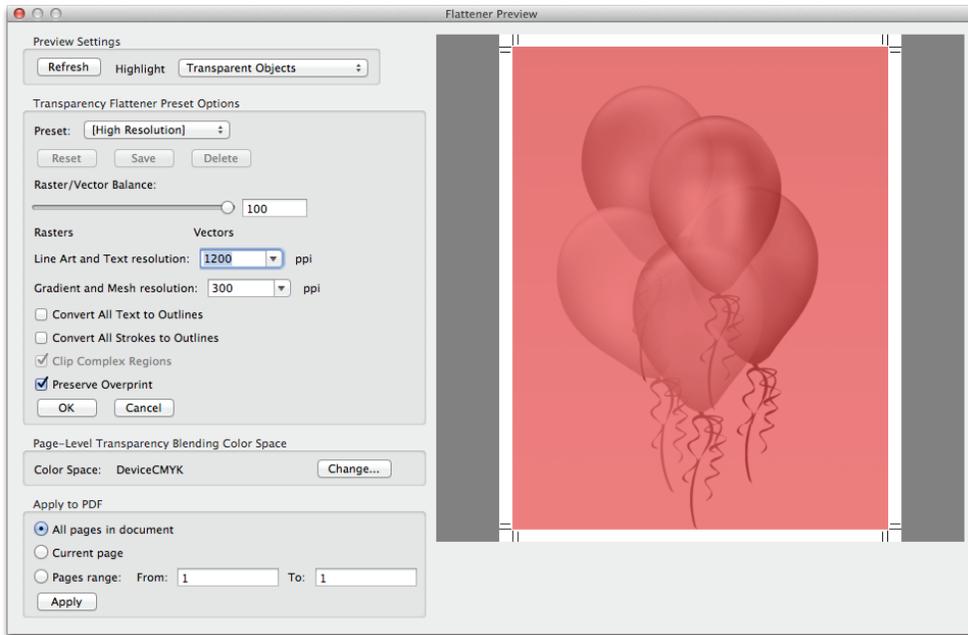
* Please note: while showing "All", any graphics that are not CMYK will be previewed using the Simulation Profile.

Step 2 - Flattening your PDF - Acrobat 9 Pro

Open the "Flattener Preview" window in Acrobat by going to Advanced/Print Production/Flattener Preview.



Step 2 - Flattening your PDF - Acrobat 9 Pro



With the Flattener Preview window open, make sure the following settings are applied:

Highlight Transparent Objects

This will highlight any element that has transparency applied to it. If the entire page is affected, it will all be highlighted in red.

Preset:

Set this to [High Resolution]

Raster/Vector Balance:

Set the slider to 100

Line Art and Text resolution:

Set this to 1200 ppi

Gradient and mesh Resolution:

Set this to 300 ppi

Convert All Text to Outlines

Uncheck this selection.

Convert All Strokes to Outlines:

Uncheck this selection.

Clip Complex Regions:

This will be inactive.

Preserve Overprint

Check this selection ON.

Page-Level Transparency Blending Color Space

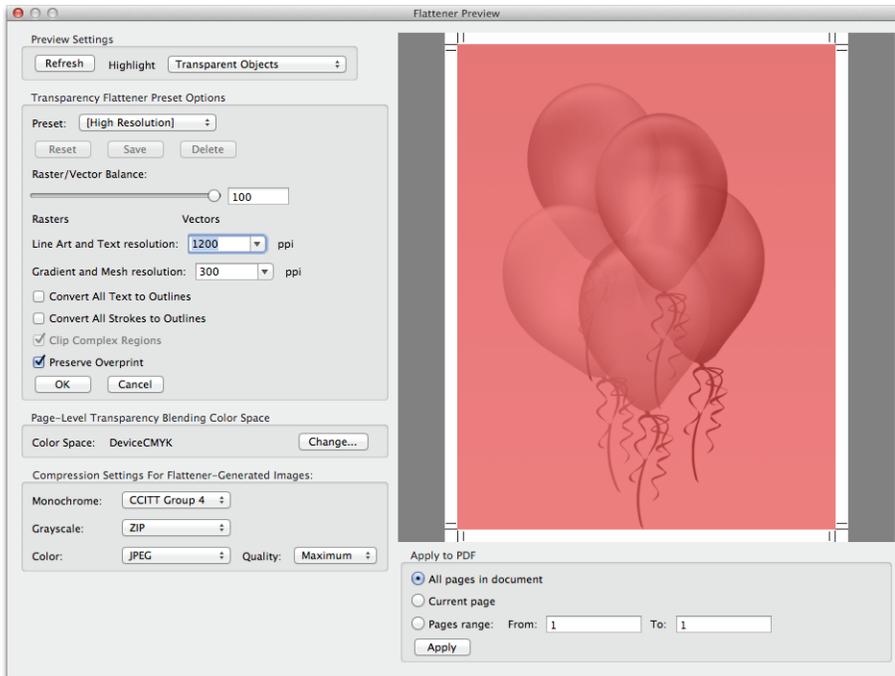
If nothing is active, select Device CMYK

Apply to PDF

Select All pages in document.

When all of your settings are ready, press the "Apply" button. Acrobat will now flatten your file. At this point, preview your file to be sure no elements were dropped out when flattening. See page 5 for examples of elements dropping out.

Step 2 - Flattening your PDF - Acrobat X Pro



With the Flattener Preview window open, make sure the following settings are applied:

Highlight Transparent Objects

This will highlight any element that has transparency applied to it. If the entire page is affected, it will all be highlighted in red.

Preset:

Set this to [High Resolution]

Raster/Vector Balance:

Set the slider to 100

Line Art and Text resolution:

Set this to 1200 ppi

Gradient and mesh Resolution:

Set this to 300 ppi

Convert All Text to Outlines

Uncheck this selection.

Convert All Strokes to Outlines:

Uncheck this selection.

When all of your settings are ready, press the "Apply" button. Acrobat will now flatten your file. At this point, preview your file to be sure no elements were dropped out when flattening. See page 5 for examples of elements dropping out.

Clip Complex Regions:

This will be inactive.

Preserve Overprint

Check this selection ON.

Page-Level Transparency Blending Color Space

If nothing is active, select Device CMYK

Compression Settings For Flattener-Generated Images:

Set Monochrome to CCITT Group 4

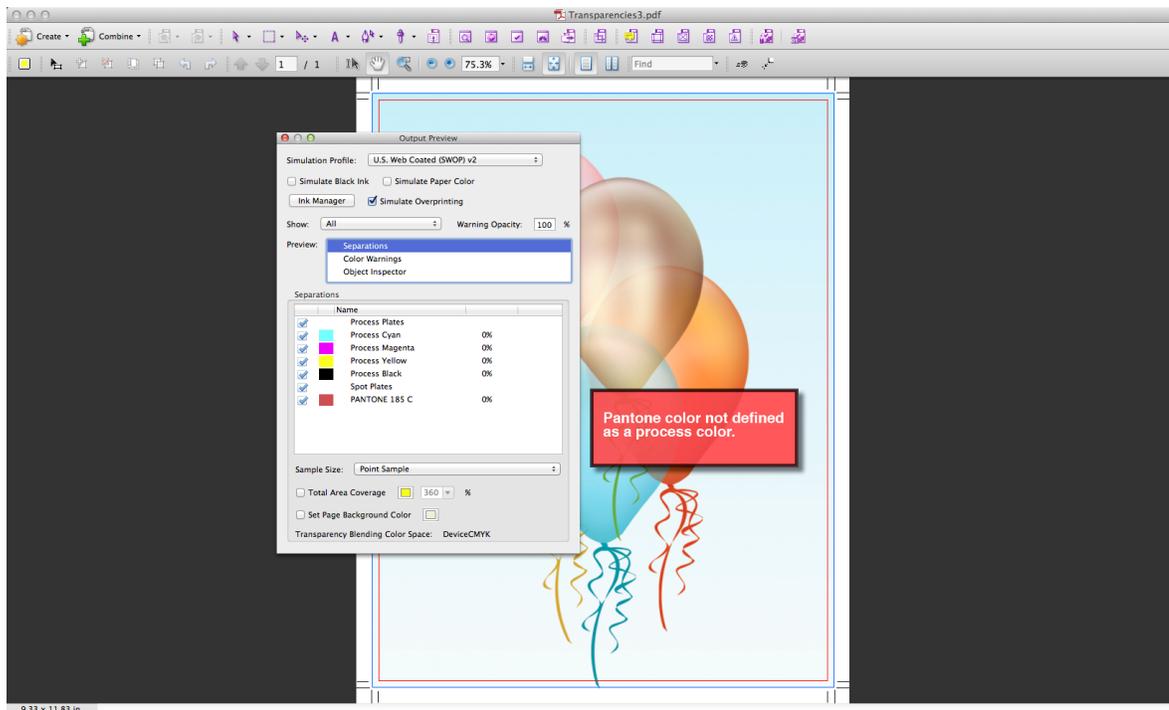
Set Grayscale: ZIP

Set Color: JPEG Quality: Maximum

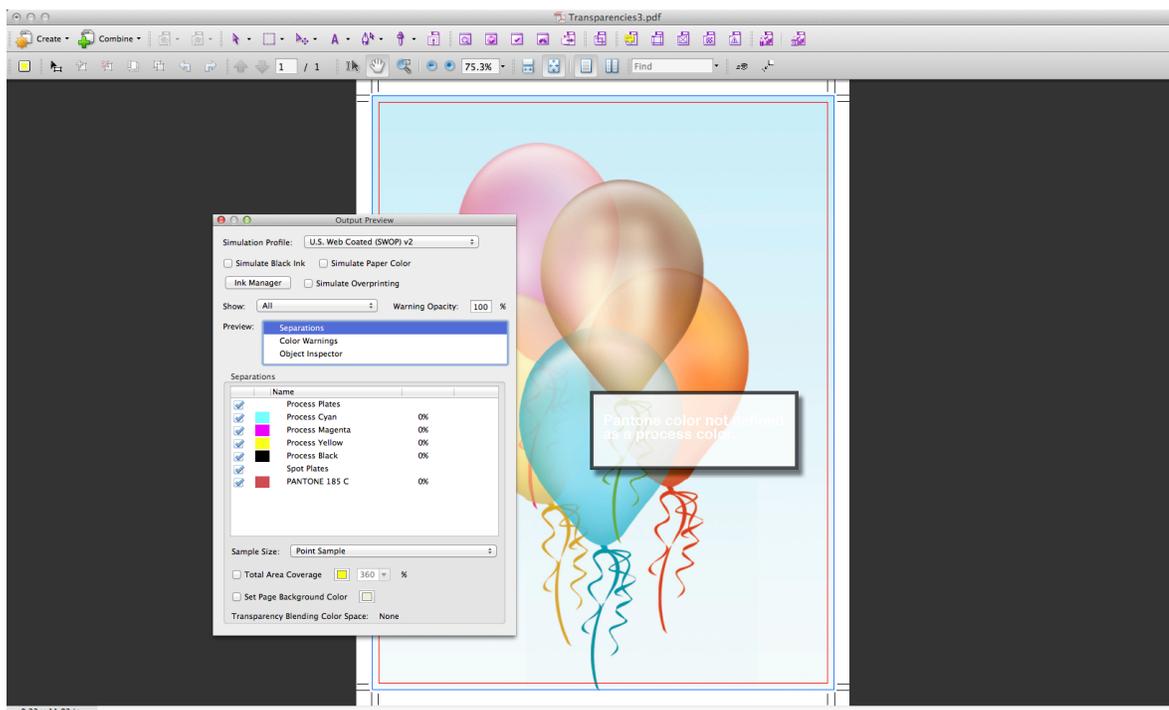
Apply to PDF

Select All pages in document.

Step 3 - Spot Colors causing unintended overprint errors.



In the screenshot shown above, while looking at the “Output Preview” of the page you will notice that “Simulate Overprinting” is checked on. This setting attempts to simulate the appearance of the print PDF on screen to your monitor. When this setting is toggled on and off, this will give you a preview of any elements that will drop out if they flattened with transparent elements. Spot colors if not converted to process colors before flattening will cause the graphic to knock out the underlying colors. This is illustrated in the screenshot below.



In this case, the spot color knocks out the underlying process colors. This will be reproduced incorrectly in the printed product. The file should be corrected in the original layout document making sure that the spot color swatches are converted to process colors before exporting your PDF.