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### What is Your Color Space? RGB vs. CMYK

***One of the leading causes of production delays is working through problems with digital artwork files. By setting up your artwork in the right color space, you will achieve the quality that you're looking for while saving time and hassle.***



Chroma key work is a function of the RGB Color Space

### What is RGB Color?

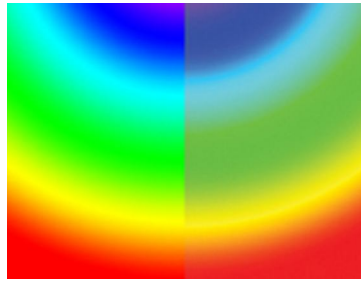
Computer and TV monitors emit light in a color spectrum known as RGB color (short for Red/Green/Blue) named for the primary colors of light. Video cameras, scanners and digital photographers all capture images using this color spectrum - and computer monitors use the same. RGB color space allows for special effects techniques like chroma key compositing or "green-screening" (see this month's cartoon) where one image is layered over another by manipulating aspects of color and light - so, an actor in front of a green screen can be superimposed on a different background for visual effect.

### "But why don't they match?" -- The CMYK Color Space

We're often asked this question -- why doesn't my printed wrapper match what I see on my monitor? It's simple - inked paper absorbs or reflects light, rather than emitting light, so the range of colors is not the same. Thus, when you see color on your computer monitor (RGB) and a then see a printed version, a variation is seen.



Graphic design for offset printing uses a color scheme



known as CMYK (Cyan/Magenta/Yellow/Black "Key") or PMS so color matching between these two environments is often needed. In printing inks on paper, transparent pigments are used to filter out the RGB wavelengths in proper combinations to create the desired color. These filters are known as CMYK or four-color process printing.

### Tips and Suggestions

Because offset printing, silkscreen printing and most digital color processes use CMYK as a reference, digital artwork that is created in RGB (like still images, screen captures, or digital photos) should first be converted to CMYK prior to printing. Color-matching, when needed, is much easier when working in CMYK color space.

- Adobe's website has an excellent tutorial that discusses how to convert RGB to CMYK for use in a design. ([RGB convert tutorial - click here](#)).
- For short run projects, our high-quality **thermal disc printers** use RGB color. Submit your artwork as a .bmp image with a resolution of 300 dpi.
- Submit matching artwork for **packaging elements in CMYK** color with text and lines as vector graphics.
- **Offset printing (aka four color process)** calls for CMYK with Pantone for spot color. This type of printing is best if photo images have a lot of detail and the colors are soft in tone. The end result is a smooth finish on the disc face.
- **Silkscreen printing** is an excellent choice for solid colors and vibrant colors, but the end product is textured and photo images can sometimes have a coarse appearance. However, it is much easier to match colors between the disc face and packaging elements using silkscreen printing.
- Whenever time allows, request a hard copy proof if you need to check for color matches. We offer this for all of our printing processes.
- Our website ([www.videolabs.net](http://www.videolabs.net)) includes templates for preparing your artwork for submission and helpful tips for graphic designers.

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