

# Dealing with Fonts

## Problem

We've all experienced the problem of sending an Illustrator file to someone else or working between two different computers and not having fonts appear as planned. There's a reason for this and it's important that you understand why this is happening and how to deal with it.

If the font you selected is not installed on the computer the font will not be viewable and a message will ask for a substitute or computer selected default. Almost all computers have different sets of fonts so plan on this being a problem. Only a few fonts are typically common between Macs and PCs (helvetica, verdana, times new roman, arial and courier come to mind) .

Fonts or descriptions of fonts are located in the Font folder of the System Folder in Macs and in the Windows directory for the PC. The good news is that font files can be copied and transferred to other computers so they can view/print your files as designed. So, if you know the fonts you've used, you can send those files along with the Illustrator file for uploading. Keep in mind, your PC fonts will not "play" on a PC and vice versa....that's a bummer.

## What's a person to do?

When I'm getting ready to send an Illustrator file to a printer I first get a list of the fonts I've used in the document. Do this by going to Window>Document Info>Fonts. I call my printer and ask if they have these fonts. If they didn't have all the fonts I copy them off my computer and include them in a folder called fonts and include on a disk or zip with my Illustrator file. The printer will load these in their computer before opening the file...no problem. Printers deal with this all the time so get their advice early on how they prefer to deal with it. By the way, this font issue is not just an Illustrator thing. All page layout programs work the same way (Pagemaker, QuarkXpress and InDesign)

## Other Options

Yes, there are other ways to deal with this problem, but they have pros and cons depending on prepress and output requirements.

**Saving as a PDF:** This has become a popular option because PDF (portable document file) basically takes a picture of the original file. PDF files include all fonts and linked images. PDFs are platform independent and viewable on any computer as long you have a compatible edition of Adobe Acrobat. Downside to PDF is that once converted the file cannot be changed or edited...so, if you find a last minute typo while proofing at the print shop it cannot be changed without going back to the original Illustrator file. PDF files are larger than native Illustrator files...still you don't have to mess with fonts. For classroom situations I sometimes prefer to see the ai file because I want to see the vector art and bezier lines.

**Creating Outlines:** Creating outlines converts selected words or type into vector art. Again this ensures that the file will be viewed correctly if all fonts are converted to outlines. Downside is that words cannot be easily edited and it's not recommended for small type sizes below 11 pt because it may slightly alter and effect readability.

**Embedding Fonts:** When saving files in Illustrator 10 you will see an option for embedding fonts. Sounds like a great concept but I can only get this to work as part of saving as a PDF.

**Bottomline:** Know what fonts you're using and where the file will be viewed or printed. If not sure that they will be viewable you must include fonts, save as PDF with embedded fonts or create outlines.