Not All Printed

BLACK

is Created Equally...

W hen using black in four color process printed materials, there are several types of black that every designer should know about. Knowing when and how to use different builds of black can make all the difference in quality for a final, printed piece.

100% Black (K)
When setting up documents for full color offset printing, all files should be in CMYK color mode at the time of publishing (not RGB). All regular text should be created using only 100% black, (K) without any other color values, as this makes for the sharpest, most readable type. Using a black made up of additional color values, such as C, M and Y can create registration problems and effect the quality and readability of your text.

Rich Black
A rich black is created by adding a percentage of Cyan, Magenta and Yellow to enrich a 100% black. When a document contains large black fields or a large black headline, it is desirable to use a rich black for these areas to insure that the black will have solid coverage. Express Color prefers a build such as [C-40%, M-40%, Y-0%, K-100%] or [C-20%, M-20%, Y-0%, K-100%] for a rich black. (Rich black should NEVER be used for paragraph text! This usually causes trapping issues, and the possibilities of blurry text.)

RGB Black
RGB is a color model which deals with light rather than ink. The default RGB black values are 0-Red, 0-Green and 0-Blue, or in other words, no light. The CMYK interpretation of this mix is something like [75% Cyan, 68% Magenta, 67% Yellow and 90% Black]. While this may create a nice dark black on your screen, it should not be used in offset printing, and never for printed text.

Registration Black
Registration black is created with 100% of all color values. The ONLY time registration black should be used is for printer marks such as targets and crop marks. The use of registration black makes targets and crop marks visible on all channels, providing a useful reference for plate alignment. If used in design, registration black uses an excessive amount of ink that may cause problems on the paper and also prevent the ink from drying in a timely manner.