


# Color Proofing

Next to proofs made from the printing plates themselves, the most accurate proofs are made on wide-format ink-jet printers. These proofs accurately represent the color that the press will deliver, although sometimes the paper substrate used for proofing is whiter than your chosen printing paper. Such proofs are often used as contract proofs to indicate to the printer the color that you expect to see in the final press run.

As a general rule, the closer the proofing method mimics the conditions of the printing press, the more reliably it indicates the final product's quality. Most color proofing systems are optimized for process color printing; some proofing systems can also proof high-fidelity colors and spot colors. For spot colors, you can also get a *drawdown*—a smear of ink produced on the paper to be used—to verify quality and tone. Consult your vendors to see what proofing options are available.

The final stage of proofing is not only for checking your work but also for checking the printer's work. Without a contract proof, it may be difficult to settle disputes with the printer about color quality. The proof serves as an agreement between the printer and the customer and as a guide for adjusting the press during a press run.

Some people prefer to make a *press check*, visiting the printer's facility as the job is ready to print to approve the job as it comes off the press. This step is less common in the era of virtual (onscreen) proofing and highly accurate ink-jet prepress proofs, but it's always an option. However, changes made during this press check can be *very expensive*, because they may require making new printing plates and result in press downtime.



**Try to keep** an “anything is possible”  
attitude regarding color. Push the limits.  
Then proof, proof, and proof again.

—Mark Landkamer, Landkamer Partners,  
San Francisco, CA