epiCentre

UWE BRISTOL
University of the West of England

This handout takes you through the process of preparing text for lasercutting.

Stage 1 Setting up your document

1. Launch Illustrator by clicking on the AI icon in the dock
2. File > New...
3. Give your file a name
4. New Document Profile choose Print, this may change to Custom later.
5. Number of Artboards choose 1
6. Size if you are cutting your text into material of a standard paper size (ie A4, A3 etc) select it from this menu.
7. If you are cutting your text into a non-standard sized material you can type the correct dimensions directly into the Width and Height fields.
8. Units choose Millimeters
9. Click OK
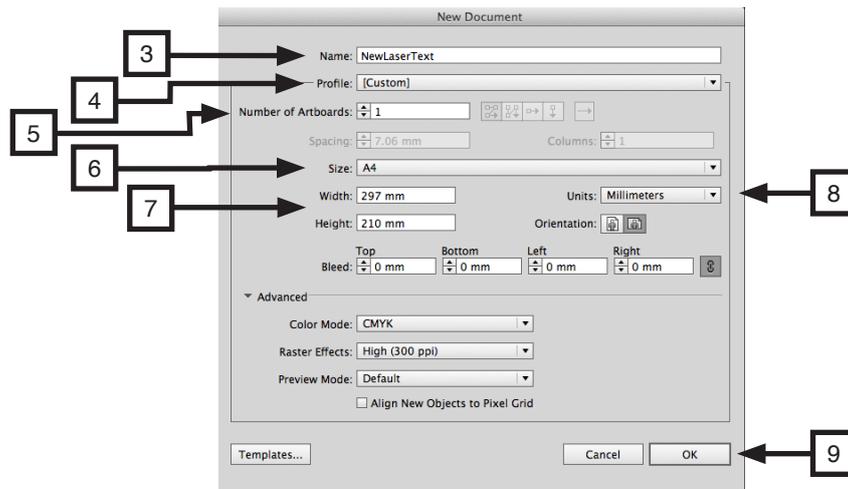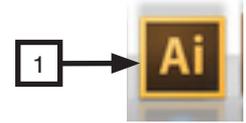
Stage 2 : Step 1 Typesetting your text

1. Select the Type tool from the tool bar
2. Click onto your document approximately in the position you wish your text to begin
3. Type out your text
4. Click and drag over the text to highlight it
5. Use the Text editting tools in the Control Bar at the top of the screen to change the style and size of your text.
6. Font - this menu allows you to choose the font family you wish to use - it is best to avoid complicated script fonts
7. Style - this menu allows you to choose the style you wish to apply to the font you've chosen.
8. Font Size - this menu allows you to resize your text to make it larger or smaller. The size of a text character is always based on the height of a capital letter. You can type directly into the field and use a measurement in millimetres if your text must be a specific size. Just type in the measurement and follow it with mm. Do not use text that is less than 7pt.
9. If you need more advanced character formatting, click on the blue Character or Paragraph buttons
10. To reposition your text, select the Selection Tool (black arrow) in the Tool Bar, click on the text and drag it to a new position
11. You can also resize the text by clicking and dragging any of the 8 resize handles.
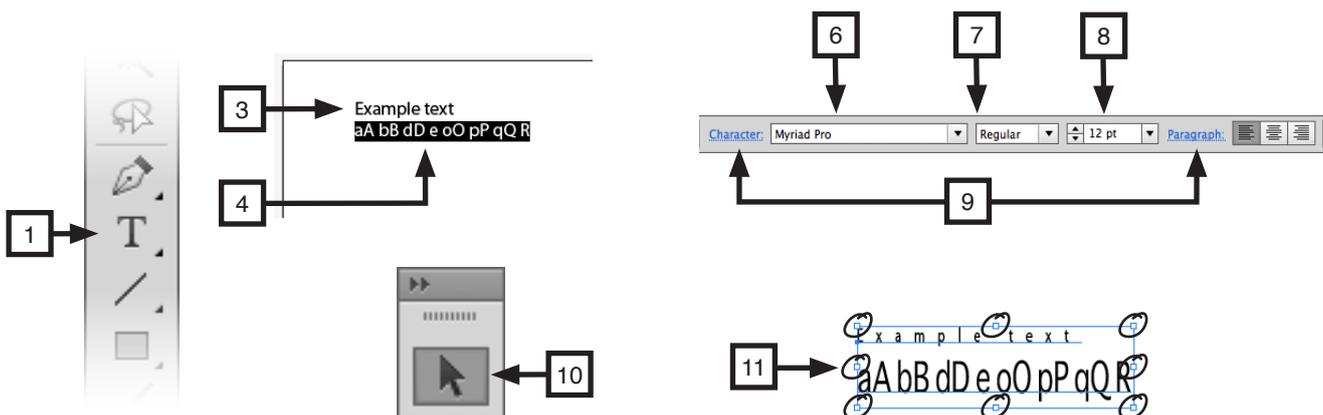
1. Click on your text with the Selection tool to select it
2. Type > Create Outlines
3. Your text is now converted into vector graphics; it is no longer editable as text

aA bB dD

Stage 3 : Step 1   Creating bridges (applicable if text is to be cut into a sheet

Unless you have chosen to use a stencil font you will have to make bridges to the centres of certain letters - a A b B d D e g o O p P q Q R - to stop them falling out once the text is cut. It is best to have no less than two bridges per centre element, as in the example below

1. Click on your text with the Selection Tool to select it
2. Double click on the Eraser Tool icon in the Tool Bar to bring up the Eraser Tool options
3. Set the Diameter to something suitable for your text (1pt minimum) If you unsure what is suitable, read on and then come back to this step You may have to reset the diameter several times until you are happy with the it
4. Click OK
5. Click and drag the cursor across the letter where you wish to make a bridge. If you want your bridges to be exactly horizontal or vertical, hold down the Shift key on the keyboard as you draw your bridge
6. Repeat the last step for each relevant letter
7. If you are unhappy with the thickness or position of your bridge; Edit > Undo then repeat steps 3 - 5.
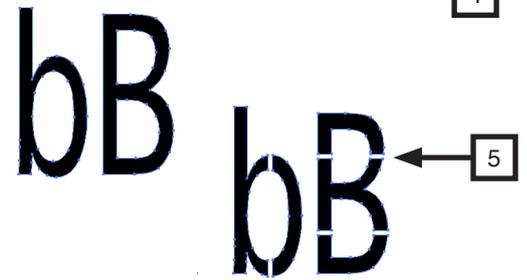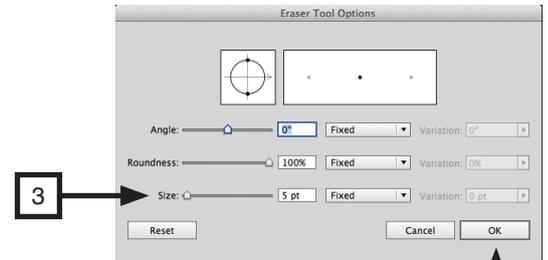
Stage 3 : Step 2   Outline your text

1. Select all your text Select > All
2. Click on the Colour palette to open it
3. Click on the Fill icon to select it
4. Set the Fill colour to None (white box with red diagonal stripe)
5. Click on the Stroke icon to select it
6. Click on the Colour palette sub menu > RGB
7. Click on the R slider and set it to the maximum (255)
8. Click on the G slider and set it to the minimum (0)
9. Click on the B slider and set it to the minimum (0)
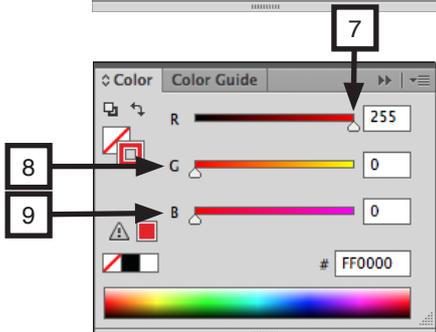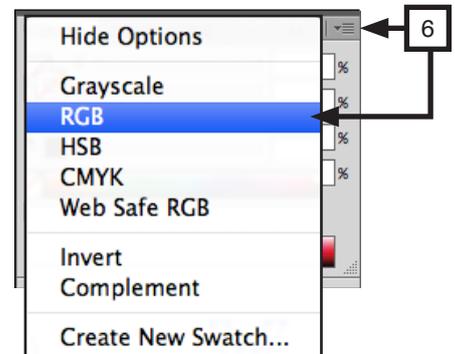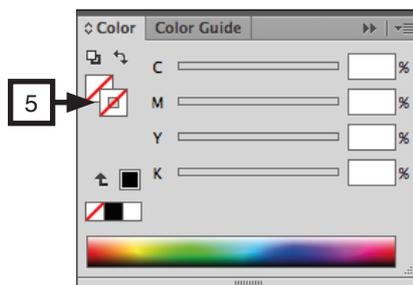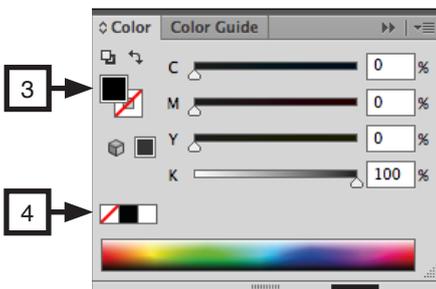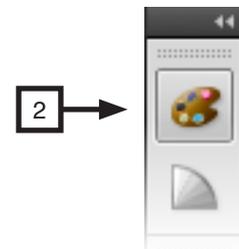
Stage 3 Registering your text

1. Select the Rectangle Tool from the Tool Bar
2. Line the cursor up with the top left hand corner of your artboard
3. Click and drag down to the bottom right hand corner of your artboard, so as to make a rectangle exactly the same size and shape as your artboard
4. In the Colour Palette set the R slider to the minimum (0); set the G slider to the minimum (0); set the B slider to maximum (255)
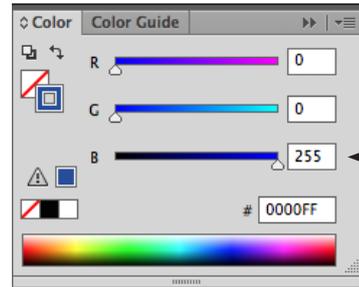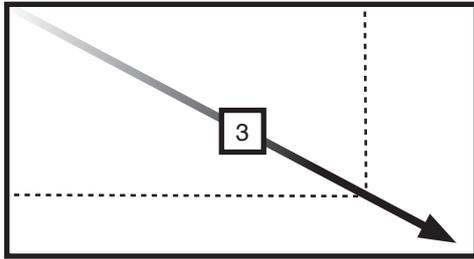
Stage 4 Saving your file correctly

1. File > Save as...
2. Give your file a name
3. Navigate to where you wish to save it - I recommend the DAD home folder
4. Set Format to Adobe Illustrator (ai)
5. Click Save
6. Set version to Illustrator CS
7. Make certain that only Create PDF Compatibe File is ticked
8. Click OK
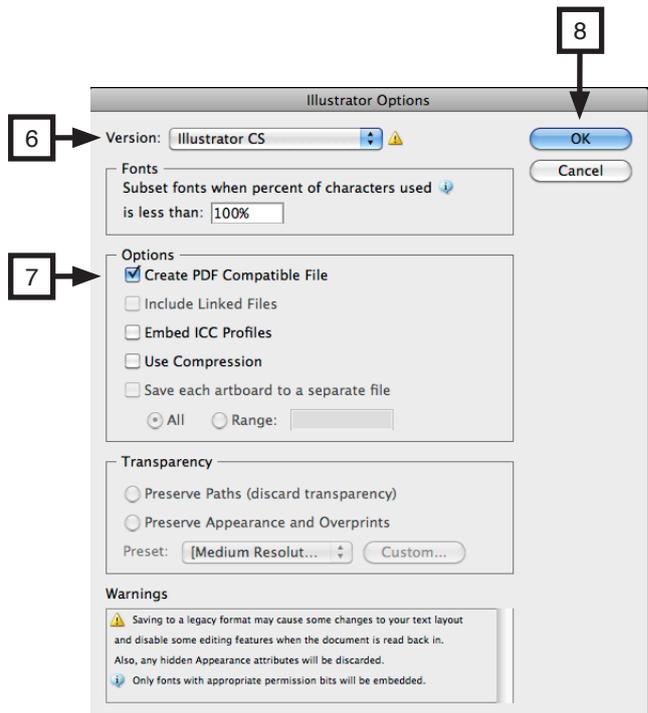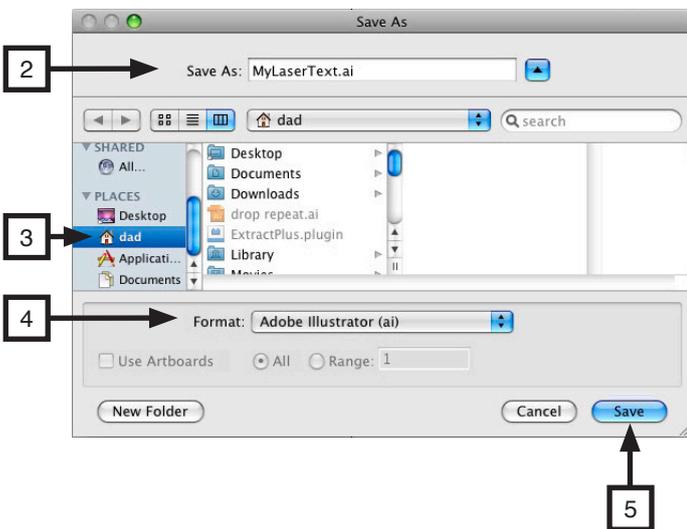
You are now ready to take your file to Fabrication for lasercutting