Online Printing for a Competition

Ian Whiting – October 3rd 2016

How to get a print made from an online printer for mounting for a standard BCC competition.

This is a first pass at this document, please let me know of any mistakes I may have made

There are several different ways to do this. This is one simple low cost method. You may prefer a better quality paper or a different online printer.

Firstly some common dimensions to be aware of

	Actual cms	Rounded cms	Actual inches	Rounded inches
A4	21 x 29.7	21 x 30 cms	8.27 × 11.69	8.3 x 11.7
A3	42 x 29.7	42 x 30 cms	16.53 x 11.69	16.5 x 11.7
A3+ (may vary)	48.3 x 32.9	48 x 33 cms	19.02 x 12.95	19 x 13
Mount	50 x 40	50 x 40 cms	19.68 x 15.75	19.7 x 15.8

For this document I will sometimes use the rounded dimensions to make it easier to envisage, e.g. let's consider an A4 to be 21 x 30 cms or 8¼ x 11.7 inches

The Print

First we need to decide how large we want the finished print to be. This will also be the size of the hole in the mount. So start with that and then calculate how large the paper needs to be. The print will need a white border around all four edges. I would suggest leaving a white border of at least ½ inch (1.2 cms) on each side. Thus the paper size will be larger than the print size by at least 1" (2.5cms) on both the width and the height.

Example: you would like the print to be 7 x 10 inches the paper will be at least 8 x 11 inches. Thus an A4 sheet will work fine.

The print can be mounted so that the mount board hole is just a little smaller than the image.

Or you can choose to mount the print with a little of the white border showing through the mount hole. Typically this will about 2 or 3 mm of white border on all 4 sides of the image. The above A4 example will still work here but if you print your image with the absolute minimum white border you may find it difficult to mount properly.

Most users are happy to print on an A4 or an A3 paper size.

When printing on A3 you may want to leave a larger white border. If you make the image too large the corresponding hole in the mount will be too close to the edges of the mount board leaving only a small margin of mount board. Not only will the mount lose some rigidity it tends not to look very good either.

Too little mount border is not usually a very good idea, also resist the temptation of two narrow borders on a panorama


Usually a wider mount border is better

Having decided how large you want the print to be you will need to get it printed. Most people just opt to print on an A4 or A3 paper but you may find a different size suits you.

Resize your image in Photoshop to fit onto an A4 or A3 paper, leaving enough white border space as appropriate.

You can usually do this by creating a new blank image, in white using the International paper default of A4 or A3. The copy and paste your image on top and save it as JPG at maximum quality or a similar TIFF file (if your online printer accepts TIFFs.)

You can get advanced here and use the printer profile supplied by your chosen online printer company but most just save it as sRGB. I won't go into sharpening here but it is worth reading up on this. Most prints need a bit more sharpening before printing and if printing on a matt or lustre paper this can usually take a bit more sharpening.

Alternatively use Lightroom's Print module. Choose a printer and set the paper type to A4 or A3. Select the image and drag it on to the paper. Set the margins and cell size as required. Save it as a JPG image, example...
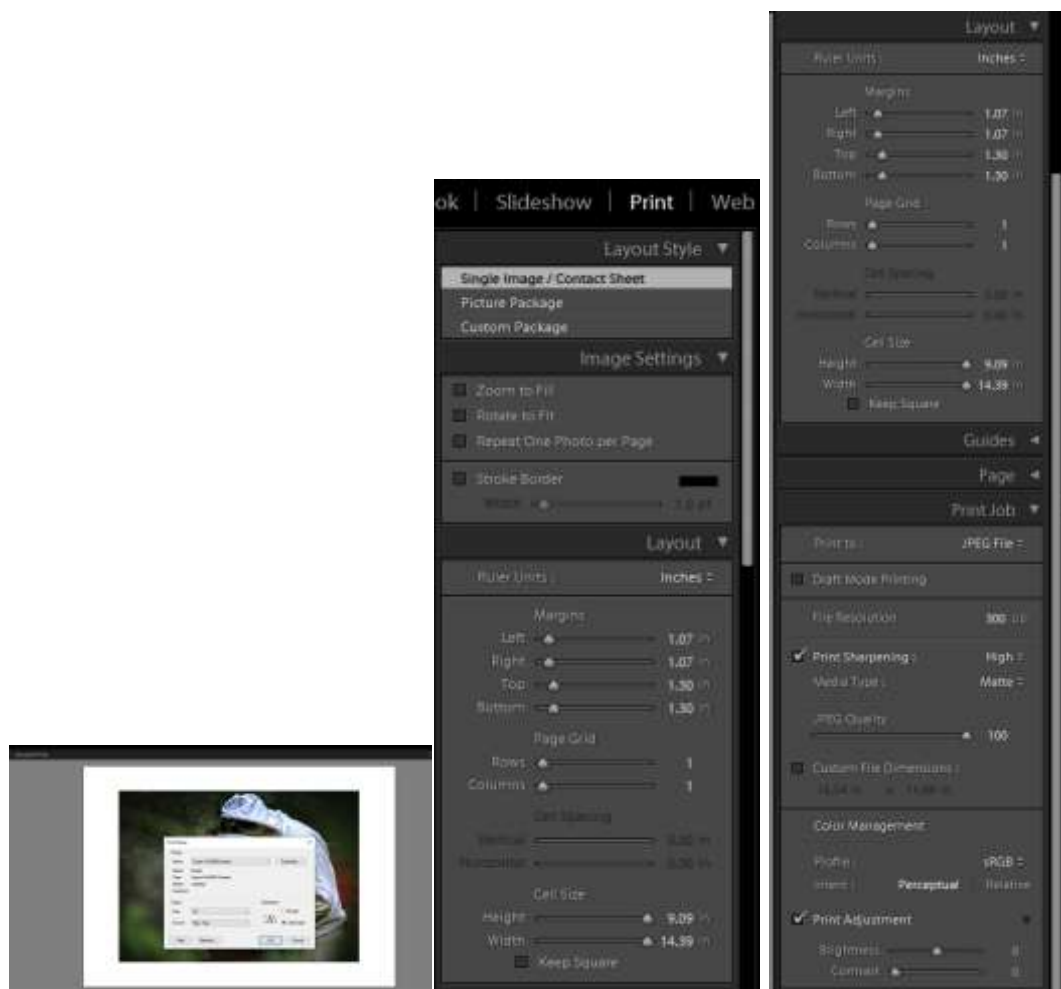
Typically the online printers are looking for 300 dpi images. For an image to print 12 x 9 inches you will need an image with at least 3600 x 2700 pixels (300 x 12 = 3600 and 300 x 9 = 2700). Most would not notice if it had only 240 dpi, and even right down to 150dpi may work.

If you don't know whether to print on glossy, lustre or matt a general rule of thumb says for highly detailed images choose glossy and less detailed, more atmospheric images choose matt. Lustre is between matt and glossy. The more expensive rag type papers may be preferred for those dreamy, arty shots. There is much leeway in this, it all depends upon the image and what you want at the end of the day.
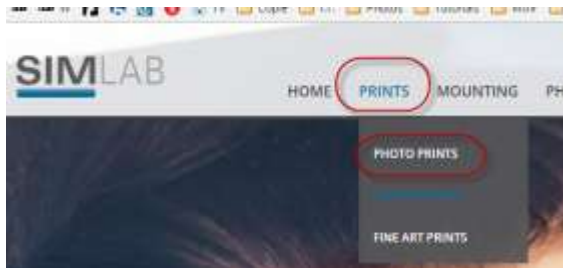
Now you have the JPG or TIFF you wish to upload this should be an image complete with a white border of a pixel size equivalent to the paper size you have chosen at 300 dpi. It will be in top quality JPG and sRGB.

Go onto the printer web site and start uploading your image for the paper type and size you want.

This is the procedure for SIMLAB. Other printers will have a somewhat similar approach. Note, SIMLAB may change their web screens so this may not exactly match what you will see.

www.simlab.co.uk

Select PRINTS and PHOTO PRINTS

You can choose PRICING to see print types and paper sizes, I see that my A3 will cost £1.10

Choose INSIGHT and click UPLOAD PRINTS

Choose STANDARD PRINTS and click UPLOAD NOW

Select the paper size, type and NO BORDERS (because we have included the white borders in our image and sized the image to exactly fit our paper size.) Drag and drop your files onto the spot or click ADD FILES and browse for your image(s)

Here I have clicked ADD FILES and browsed for my image(s)

You can click ADD FILES again to add more image files if they have the same size, paper type and border choice. Then click START UPLOAD
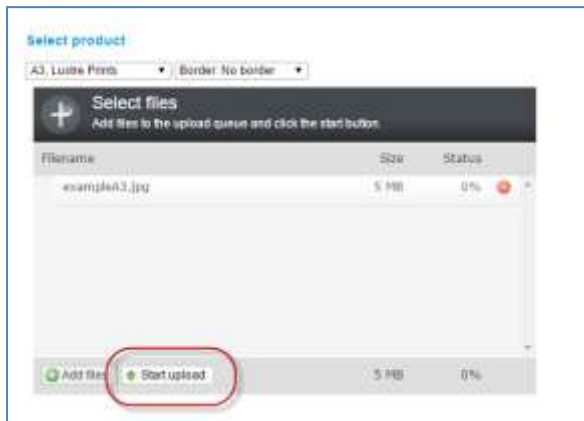
After they have been uploaded you can change some of the parameters if you wish, e.g. paper size or number of copies etc.

To add more items for different paper size or type click ORDER MORE and go through the same procedure again for your next image(s)

Once you are happy with the complete order click PLACE ORDER and enter your customer details and payment method to complete the order.

Delivery cost at this time is an additional £5.50 per order. If you only want one or two prints you might find it more economical to pop into Colemans in Bedford High Street and have them print the order.

Mounts

If you are not making your own mounts you can take the print(s) into Wallace Brown or The Picture Gallery in Bedford and have them mounted with or without a white border showing.

Choose a standard card mount in a particular colour; if you are not sure of the colour to choose a light cream usually works well for most or, less often, black if it really suits the print. White is OK but I find a bright white will take my eye away from the image and can get "grubby" quickly.

I have found it best to avoid other coloured mounts and also unnecessary to double mount it for a competition. Popular mount colours change with the fashion, a few years ago black was very popular, now some judges frown upon the choice.

A judge shouldn't add or subtract marks for the choice of mount but we have seen it happen. Obviously a well mounted image will give a better impression anyway.

Most photographers like to have the hole cut with a slightly wider border at the bottom than the top. However if you have it exactly centred you can later re-use the mount in a different aspect, eg landscape to portrait, if the hole is not centred it looks incorrect when you rotate it 90 degrees.

Have a backing board stuck behind the mount.

Expect to pay about £5.50 for the mount. If you use Wallace Brown ask for the discounted BCC price.