



FIRST IMPRESSION GROUP
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HOW TO GUIDE

Guide to Creating Variable Data Printing Documents

Document

Variable Data Printing is a terrific marketing tool to get more personal with your target audience. Response rates can increase dramatically simply by using a personalized greeting. First Impression (1IG) has the capability of printing a wide range of variable data and images that will help your direct mail become significantly more effective! Following is the information you need to prepare your files for print.

Files Required – When supplying art files for producing Variable Data Printing (VDP), Native files with fonts and artwork are best. PDF's may be provided, however, try not to outline text and be aware fonts may be changed if 1IG does not have them available. Please provide a hardcopy and/or PDF of the document with variable fields called out.

In-line Variable Text – Variable text that appears within a paragraph can be tricky when designing. Design your document to give enough space to accommodate your variable data. If enough space is not given, font sizes may have to be reduced, paragraph spacing may not match the rest of the document, and reflow issues may occur.

Mailing Panel – Complete address information will be necessary if your piece is going to mail. Design your document with the desired font and font size for the mail panel. Please know that adjustments may be made to adhere to postal service requirements.

Personalized Greeting – Design your document with greetings on their own line whenever possible. Use an appropriate font size for your place holder. Greetings may be altered slightly to accommodate the longest name in your data.

Data

Please provide your data files in spreadsheet format (Excel or CSV format). Text Documents are more difficult to work with and may delay turnaround. **Helpful tips:**

- The first row **MUST** be column headers. The column headers should match the variable fields in the original artwork provided.
- The 2nd row of data will be record #1.
- All of the rows should be data records that will be used for the variable data fields. There can be no additional headers below the first row, subheads, or additional sections. If there is additional data columns, please indicate which can be ignored.
- Address fields must be separated into their own columns. (Company, Contact, Address 1, Address 2, City, State and Zip along with any additional data for the delivery address.)
- International Addresses must have a column that includes the country.

When mailing, 1IG needs to know:

Mailing Class Information: First class, Standard, Non-Profit

Postage Payment Information: Customer owned indicia, 1IG indicia, Stamps

De-Duping: 1IG can de-dup your mail list and send it back to you after mailing your project. Please let us know how you would like your project de-duped (By name, by address, etc.)

1IG will NCOA (National Change of Address) the addresses. The NCOA System makes available current change of address information that can help reduce your undeliverable mail. Most addressing errors are identified and corrected before your project enters the mail stream. Upon request, we can supply a copy of your amended list.

Advantages of Variable Data Printing with 1IG

Why use 1IG for your Variable Direct Mail Projects?

We understand, when your project includes variable data, you're not just printing pieces, you're delivering personalized communication at scale. This is where 1IG stands out. We've built our workflow around accuracy and control, anchored by a two-step proofing process.

First, we generate a detailed digital proof that maps your data directly into the design so you can review exactly how, where and which fields from your data file will appear. Then we go an extra step by providing a live data proof from the actual data stream. We don't simply proof one record, but multiple records. We typically search out fields with the most characters to ensure even the lengthiest of names & data will fit in the allowed space. This extra layer of verification catches issues early, protects your data integrity, and ensures every piece is right the first time.

We use XMPIE which is considered one of the most state-of-art software in VDP. It is frequently ranked among the best for its sophisticated personalization, cross-media capabilities, and seamless integration with Adobe InDesign. XMPIE excels in producing complex, high-volume, personalized campaigns.

At 1IG, we spot check inserting of match mailings frequently, usually every 10-20 records. This provides early error detection (if any) and accuracy assurance thus giving customers complete peace of mind.

Our proximity (less than two miles) to the bulk mail center reduces transport time and costs. Mailing out of the bulk mail center improves speed of mail processing and gets mail delivered faster. Being near the bulk mail center makes it easier to qualify for deeper postage discounts. It provides more flexibility with scheduling and problem solving should there be an issue. Lastly, it has allowed us to develop relationships with the postal staff that translates to a smoother acceptance, better guidance on regulations, and early awareness to changes in mailing requirements.

Beyond the technical side, we make the process easy and predictable. Our team works with you to clean and structure your data, flag potential problems, and guide you through each proofing stage so nothing gets overlooked. We don't just run files. With our two-step proofing process, you get confidence at every stage and a finished product that is accurate, consistent, and ready to perform.