

Converting Text to Outlines The Right Way

David Blatner May 2, 2008

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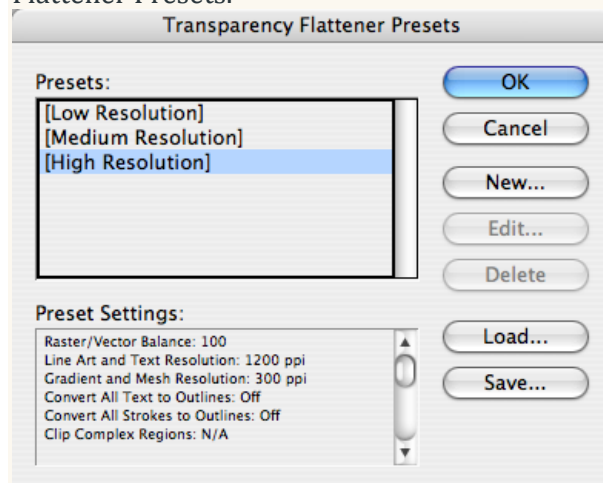
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Why do so many people want their all the text in their documents converted to outlines? Don't answer that; [I've heard the reasons](#), and they all make me sad. Nevertheless, some people do want all the text converted, and they find themselves up a creek because Type > Create Outlines doesn't always give them what they want. Specifically, paragraph rules (rule above/below) disappear. Bullets and numbering disappear. Underlines and strikethroughs disappear. All kinds of stuff disappears, and that's not good.

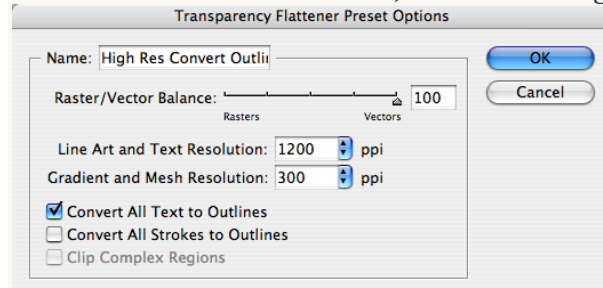
Fortunately, there is a better way to convert text to outlines. We've mentioned it [before](#), but it's time to put it in a post. I first learned this from Branislav Milic, who demoed it to a jaw-dropped audience at an InDesign conference a couple of years ago.

Flatten, Don't Convert

Here's the whole tip in a nutshell: Don't use Convert to Outlines at all. Instead, use InDesign's transparency flattener to convert the text automatically for you when you export a PDF. To do this, you'll need a custom flattener setting, which you can create by choosing Edit > Transparency Flattener Presets.

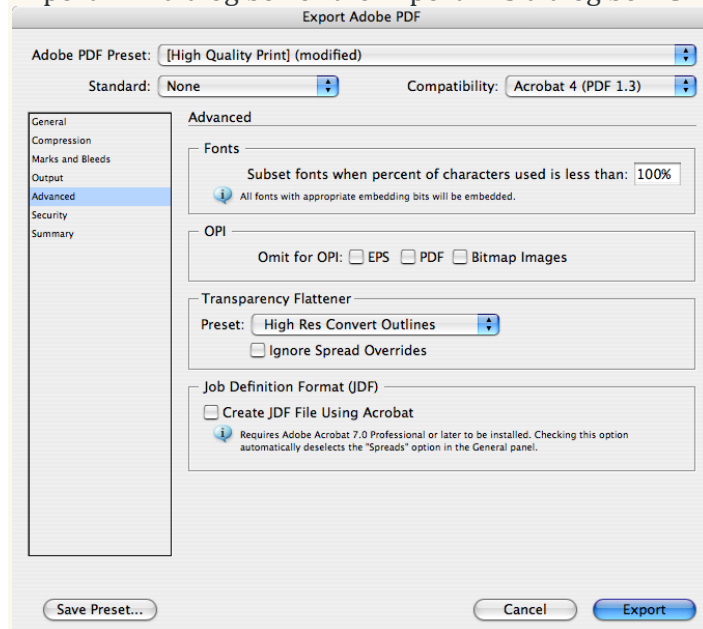


Choose High Resolution from the Transparency Flattener Presets dialog box and click New (which creates a duplicate of the currently-selected preset). I'm not going to get into the details of this dialog box here (hey, there are good books that cover that kind of thing!), but instead just tell you to turn on the Convert All Text to Outlines checkbox. Then give this a suitable name (such as "High Res Convert Outlines") and click OK, then click OK again.



Now you need to make sure your pages are going to get flattened. For each spread that contains text that you want converted to outlines, put a transparency object on it. If you want to convert every page, you can put this object on your master pages. For example, it could be an object with a Tint of .1% and an Opacity of .01% off on the margin that will never be seen. Or you could make a one-pixel large Photoshop file with a transparent background and place it on your pages.

When you export your PDF file, make sure you have Compatibility set to Acrobat 4, which lets you implement the flattener. You could also export each page as an EPS file if you were so inclined, which also requires flattening. Select your custom flattener setting in the Advanced pane of the Export PDF dialog box or the Export EPS dialog box. Click OK.



That's it! All the text in the document (well, at least on each spread that has a transparent object) gets converted to outlines... and you don't lose your rules, underlines, bullets, and so on.

[Editor's note: There is some [updated information on this tip here.](#)]