

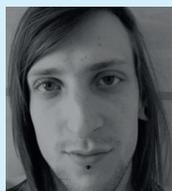
Adobe Illustrator
and Photoshop

Personalise your promo materials

Aaron Miller reveals how to use elements from your life to add a unique twist to your mailshots

One of the hardest aspects of working freelance is ensuring that you have a steady stream of work coming in. It's up to you to win those all-important commissions. Emailing a link to your website isn't enough. While this approach might lead to contact from a creative director or art editor, the chances are that said commissioner will be receiving 200 similar emails a day.

You need to stand out and impress them. So here, with the help of UK-based printer Ripe Digital (www.ripedigital.co.uk), I'll show you how to get the most out of different paper stocks to really make your promotional mailer stand out from the crowd.



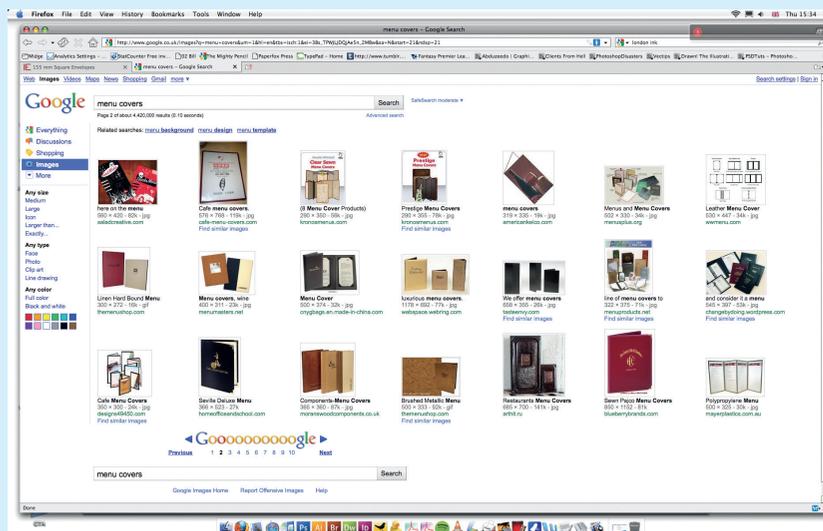
Aaron Miller

A freelance illustrator based in Cheltenham, UK, Miller took the leap into full-time freelance illustration after nearly a year of working as a pizza chef by day and illustrating by night. www.aaronmillerillustration.com

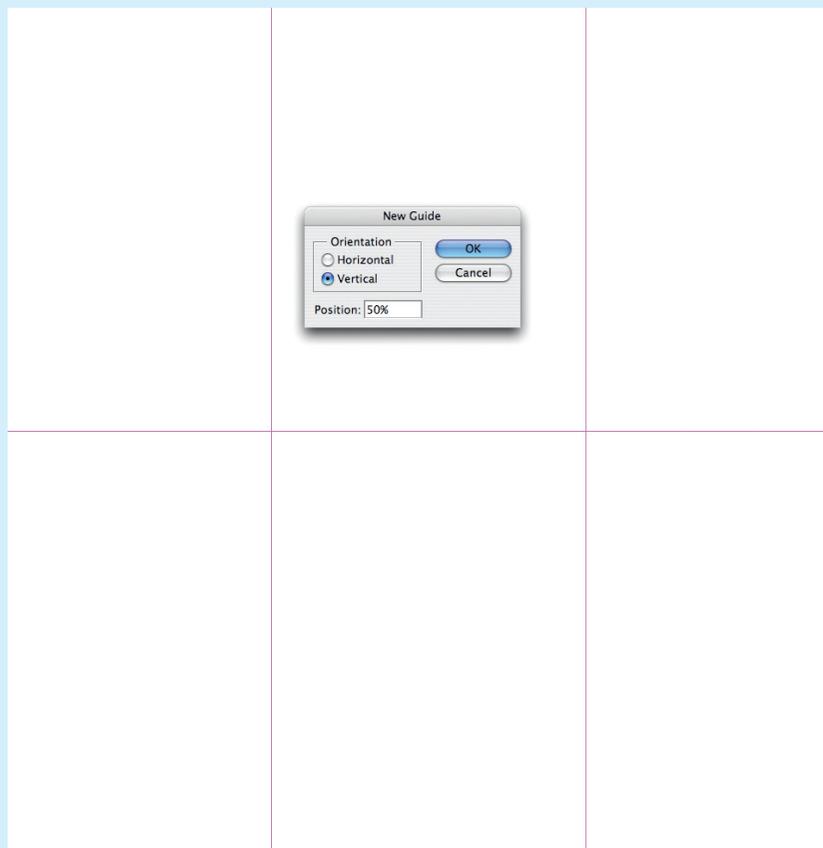
Skills

- Use Rulers to set up a template
- Plan and experiment with paper models
- Gain experience dealing directly with a commercial printer



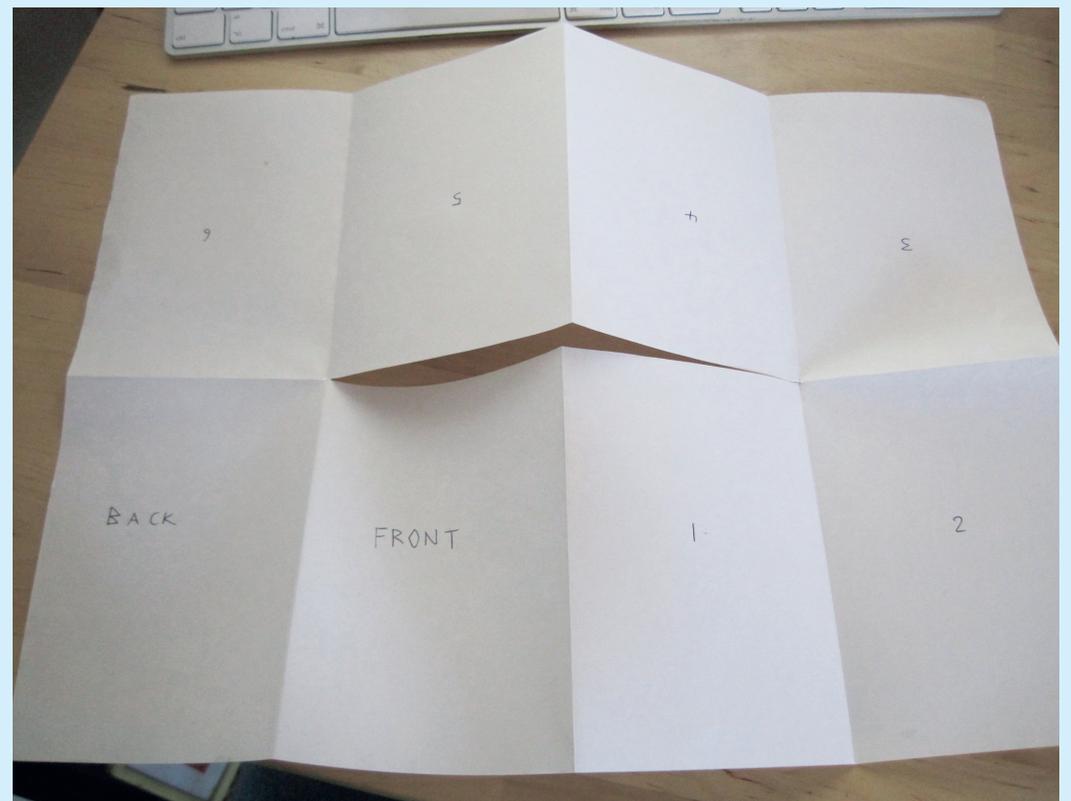


01 First, you'll need to come up with an idea or a theme for your mailer. For me, this was obvious; it had to be food related (I spent over a year working as a pizza chef before going freelance full time). On a new page of your sketchbook, start writing down some ideas – whatever you are interested in. Your idea could be centred around a hair salon, for example, or something as simple as a specific colour palette. Searching on Google Images is a great way of gathering information quickly.



03 Once you're happy with your mock-up you can begin designing your mailer on the computer. Use Photoshop to set up a template. Create a new document, and then go to View>New Guide and enter 50% Vertical, repeating this for the three other horizontals. This way you know your template is 100% accurate. Lock this layer with the guides on and you are ready to start adding your artwork.

www.computerarts.co.uk

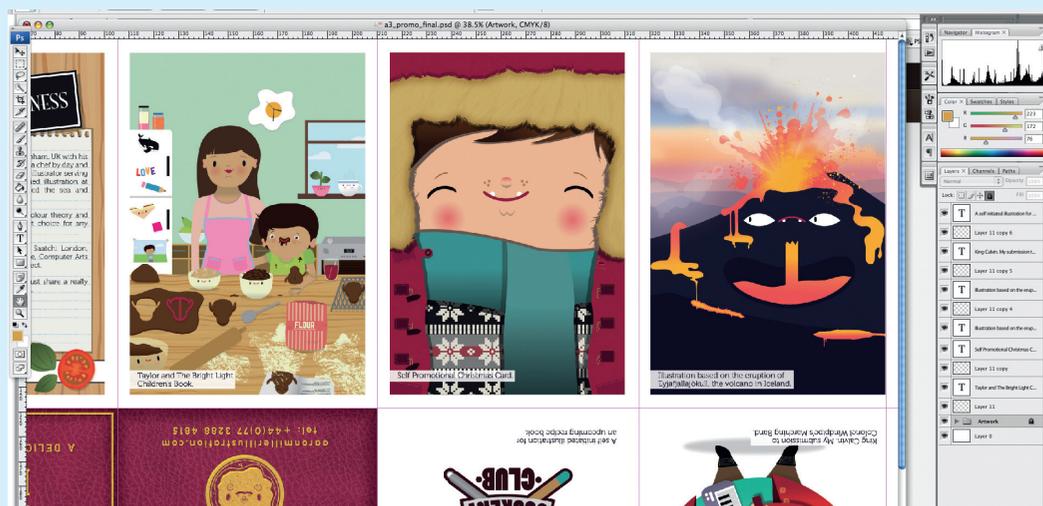


02 To get yourself noticed and, hopefully, commissioned, you'll need to sell yourself as a brand. My idea is to produce a menu-style booklet. Obviously, with promotional work you need to try and keep the costs low, because you're going to produce a large amount, so I'd recommend using just one sheet of A3 paper and utilising the space. Use a blank piece of paper and make a rough template to see if your idea is possible.



04 Each section of your template or page of your book will be A6 size, so in a new A6-sized document start prepping each image. As you won't want to lose any details within the folds, add a small 5mm border around each image. This actually helps to frame each one and keep them separate to one another. It's also very important to give the viewer a little information about each image, so add some simple annotations within a slightly translucent white box, as above.

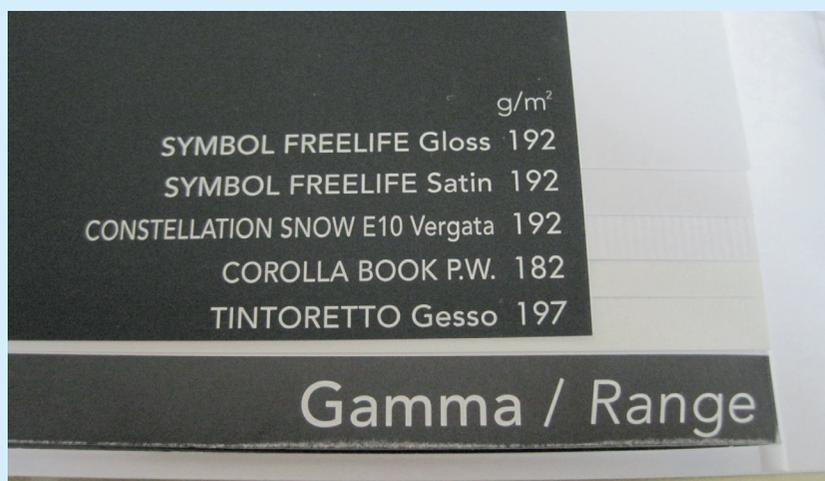
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05 Remember that this should be a showcase that demonstrates to a possible client how your style would be the perfect choice for any project, big or small. So it's wise to look through each piece of work in your portfolio and choose varied pieces that show a range of techniques and skills. In the end, I chose images from children's books, and included Christmas card designs and self-initiated works.



06 Now's a good time to print off a little rough and see if it works as planned. If you're happy with your promotional mailer now's the time to contact some printers and get some quotes for production. Email the printer and explain exactly what you're after and the quantity you'll require. They may even have some suggestions regarding ways in which you could improve your design.



07 If, like me, you don't know that much about different paper stocks, weights and finishes, ask the printer to send you a few samples. Don't be scared to ask; your mailer has to look professional and, more importantly, you want to be totally happy with it. Remember, you will send this out to hundreds of potential clients and first impressions matter. A little time spent weighing-up your options will pay dividends.

Be easily contactable

Make sure you include your full contact details on your mailer, or on a business card in the envelope. Make sure it's as easy as possible for clients to get in touch or view more examples of your work on a website. Be sure to put the international calling code for any phone numbers used in your mailer – for example, +44 (0) 7748... After all, you never know who will see your work and want to get in touch.

Edit with care

Never include work that you're unhappy with in a self-promotional mailer. It might be that it's in a different style to what you're used to, or contains subject matter you don't want to tackle again. If you'd rather not repeat the experience, don't even show it to potential clients.



08 To really add that extra 'wow' factor and ensure your mailer gets opened, not binned, you could consider getting a rubber stamp made and using it to stamp the outside of the envelope to make your mailer stand out from the pile. Be sure to include a business card and any other promotional materials, too. I've included some thick card that's printed to look like a restaurant napkin – use your imagination!