



SETTING UP FILES FOR VARIABLE DATA PRINTING

Setting up a file is easier than you think, depending on the complexity of the project. It may be as simple as replacing a few lines of text and words throughout a document, like name, address, etc. The most complex job involves replacing pictures, logos, and data and even using different templates for difference mailing list records, bar code, QR codes, etc.

1. Design Your Layout

When preparing a Variable Data Print (VDP) job, design your layout using a software like Adobe InDesign. Any layout software that can generate an Adobe PDF can be used. For free PDF software, visit www.h-o-tgraphics.com, click on Support link, click on *Free PDF Software* link.

In the place of a variable element, whether image or text, place one example of the possible text or graphic. This serves as a mock up of the final piece with data in place. For variable data text elements, you can type the name of the mailing list field that will flow in that spot, i.e. <FirstName>

When you finish, print a hard copy of your variable data layout. On the printout, use a highlighter to indicate all variable elements, marking each with name that correlates with your mailing list column title.

2. Data Files / Mailing List

All variable text needs to be supplied in a data base or mailing list spreadsheet.

Use the first row of the data file to title the columns using the same names you marked on the hard copy of your piece. Every data base column represents a different variable field used in the layout. Each row under the header is a record and equates to all the data needed to complete a variable data printed piece.

If your project pulls data from multiple data files, sort and merge the data together into a single data file. Delete unused fields. Provide your data in upper and lower case letters, all caps will not work. Proof your data and review it for accuracy. Make sure each row under the column header you will be using has information. For example: if you are using FirstName as a variable, data won't flow correctly if you only have an initial or no name at all.

3. Handoff the VDP Job to H.O.T.

- Hard copy: supply the hard copy you created and marked up in Step 1
- Data file: submit your mailing list/data base in “tab text” format, a format that can be exported from Filemaker, Excel and Access
- Layout files: collect your fonts, images and layout files in one folder, and submit on a disk or upload to www.h-o-tgraphics.com, click on Send a File link at bottom of page. If you are uploading folder you will need to compress it, you can find a free zip software download at www.h-o-tgraphics.com, click on Support link, click on *Free PDF utility*. If you are using Adobe InDesign to create your file use *File Menu > Package* and all your files, fonts and images will package automatically.