

Adding A Bleed to Print/Cut File Setup in Adobe Illustrator

The guide outlines the procedures I use to create a bleed on Print/Cut files. There are a hundred different ways to skin this cat - I have found these to be the fastest methods for me. You may need to experiment to find a workflow that is right for you.

Use these methods when a white contour around an object is not desired.

There are 2 examples in this guide.

1) The Correct Way to set up a bleed - best for when you will need to reuse a file in the future

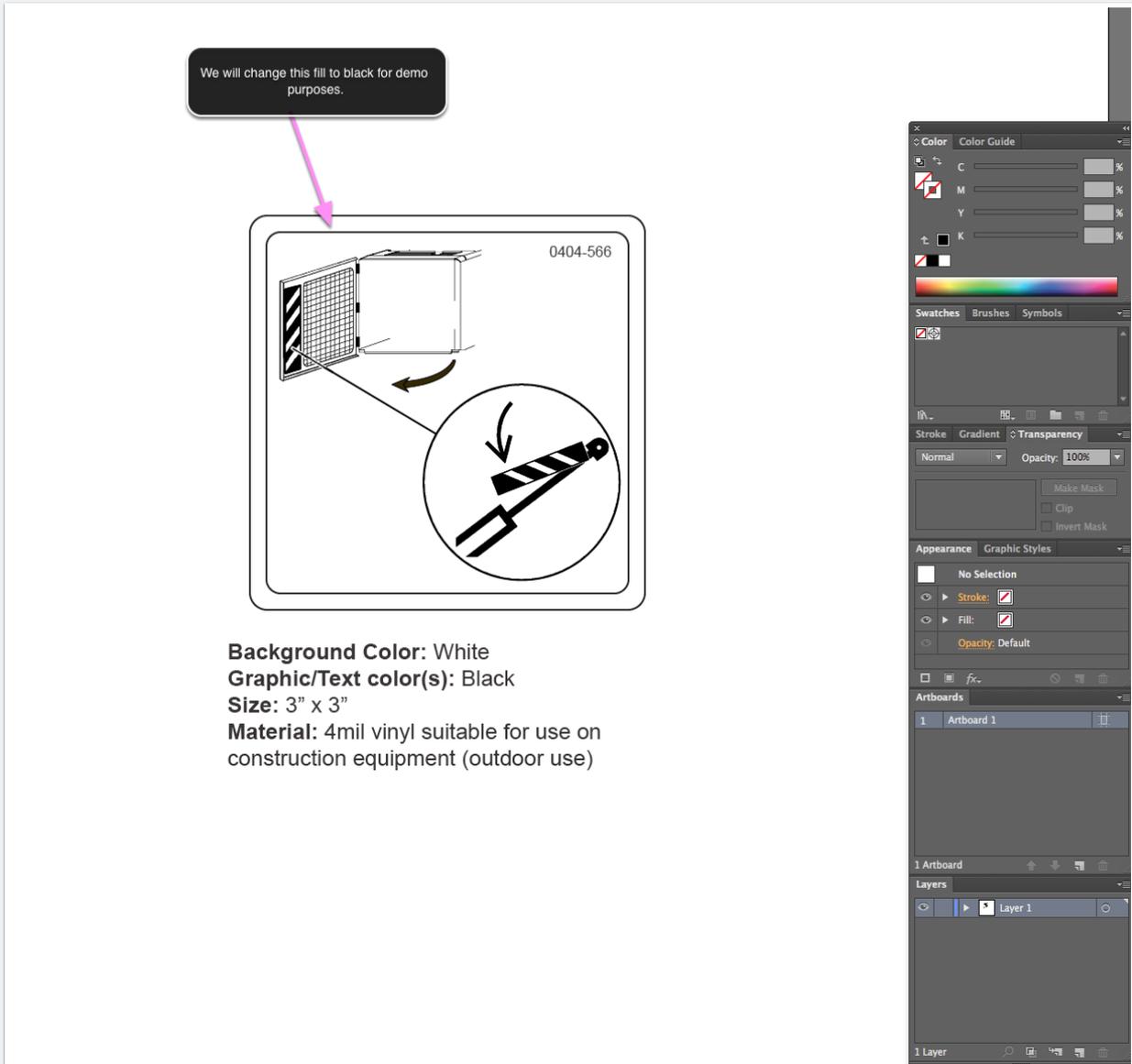
2) The Quick and Dirty Way to setup a bleed - good for one-off jobs that need a quick fix

The CORRECT WAY: 1) Open your file/artwork. Inspect for possible issues.

This file was supplied by a customer. For the purposes of this tutorial, we will change the outline fill to black to setup a bleed.

It appears it was not originally created in Adobe Illustrator. This means we need to check for issues that may cause any errors when we send the file to the RIP.

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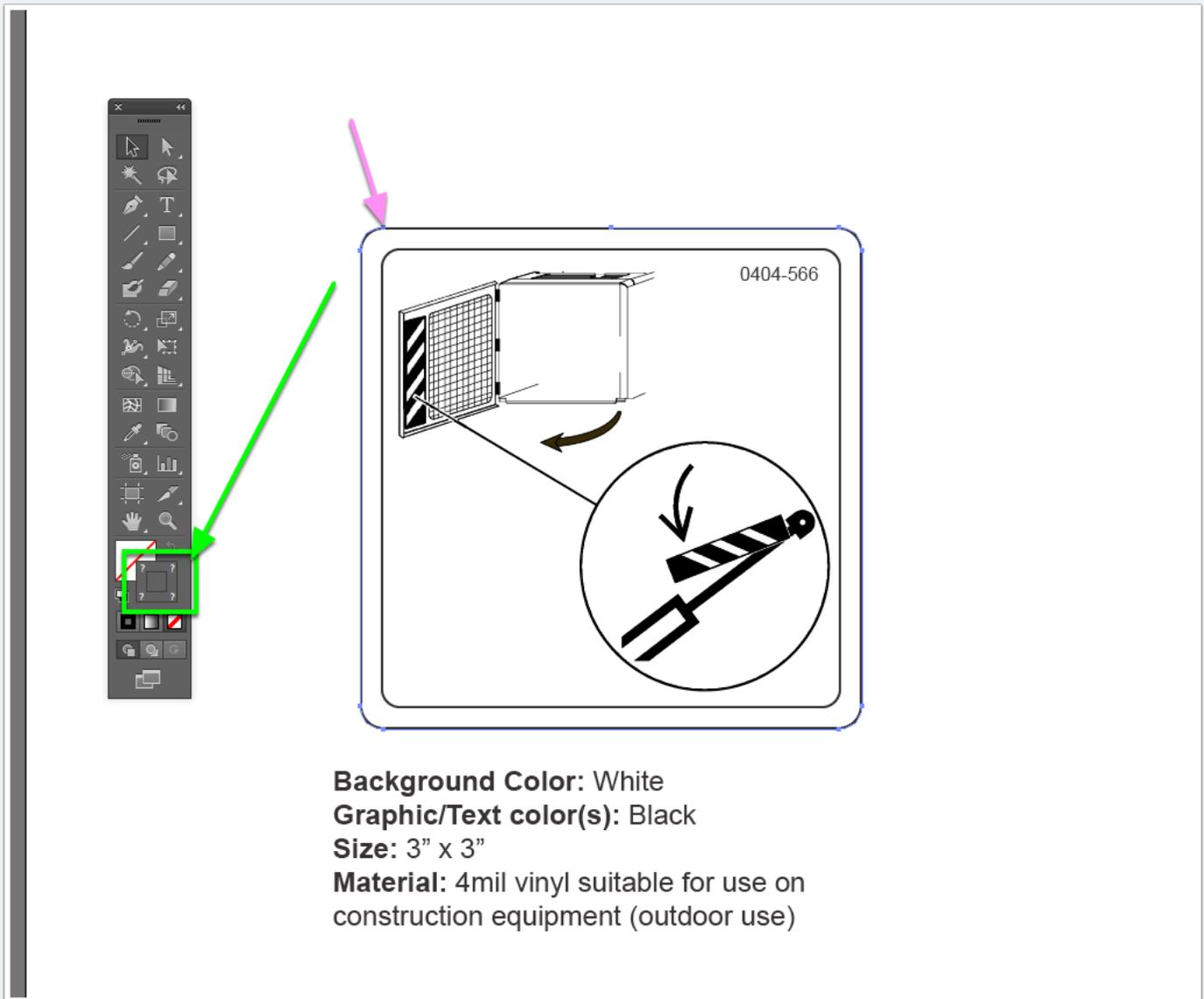


1-a) Check for Clipping Mask

When I select the outer rounded rectangle in the artwork, the stroke which appears to be black - does not have a stroke color in Illustrator.

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This probably means that our artwork has a clipping mask, which is known to cause many issues with Roland Versaworks.



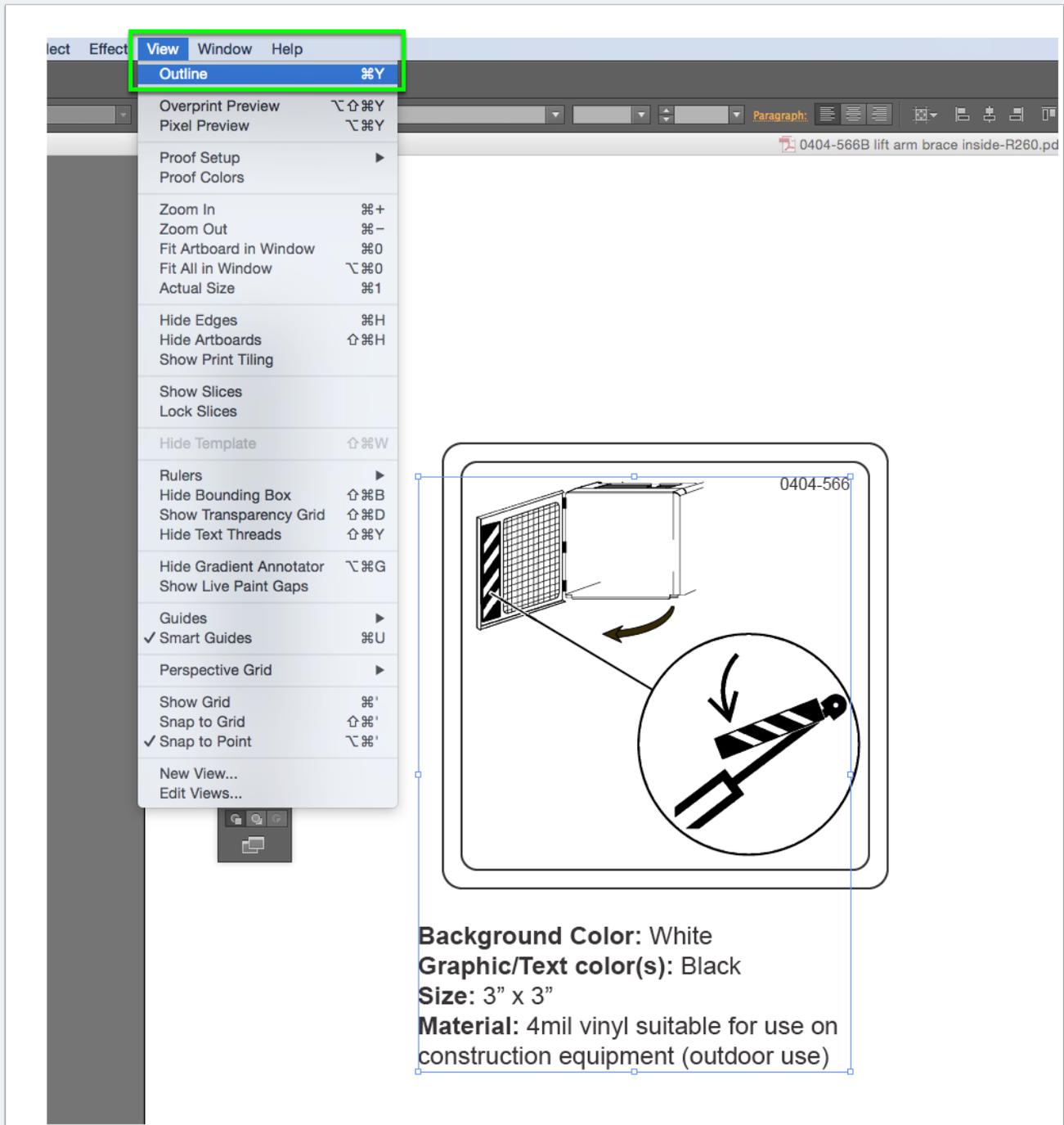
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1-b) Switch to Outline Mode

It helps to look at the artwork in Outline Mode. Any clipping masks contained in the file will be visible once you switch to outline view.

To switch to Outline view: In the top nav, click View > Outline

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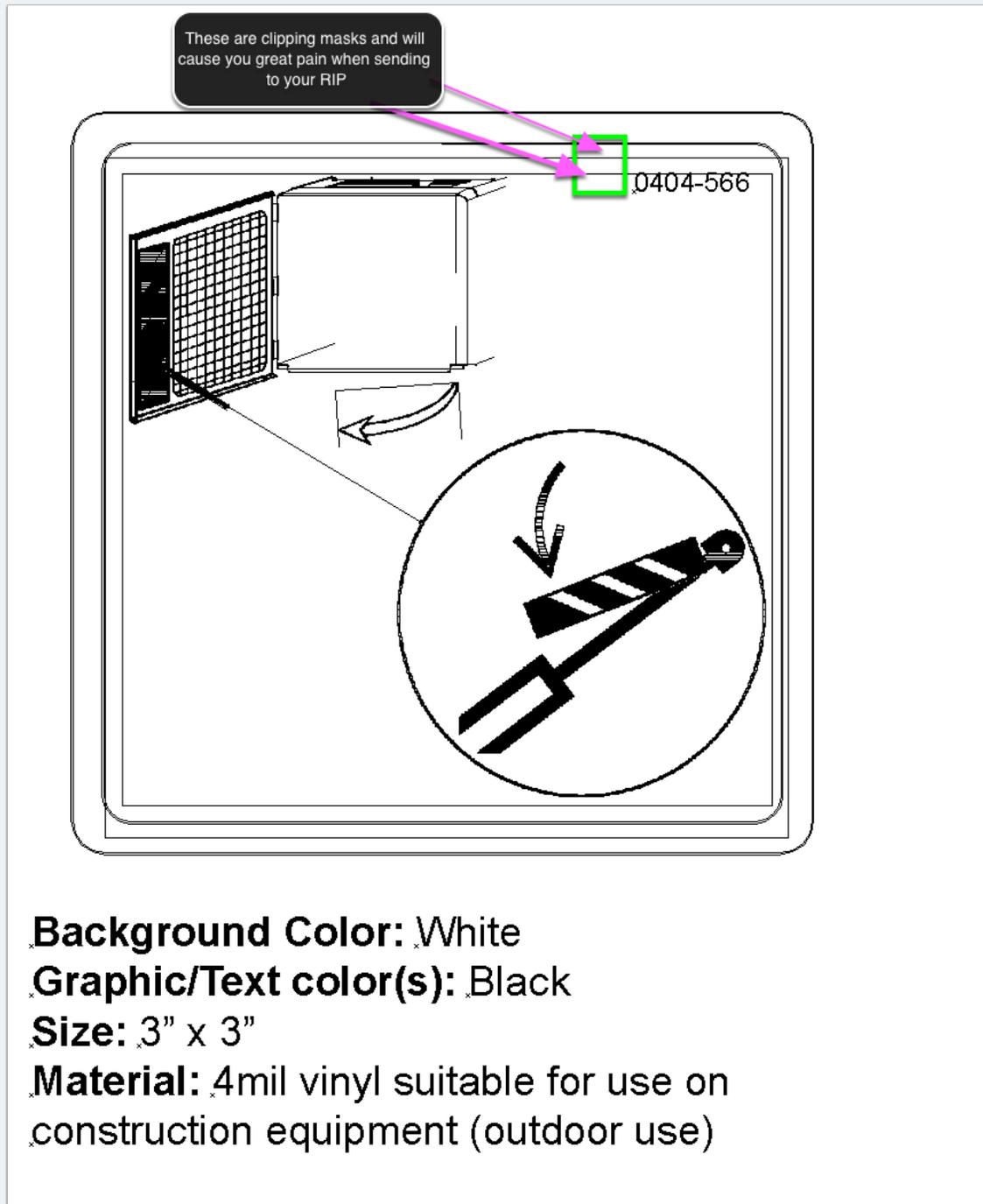
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1-c) Inspect artwork

After switching to outline view, we can now see that there are two rectangle paths that do not show up in the regular view. These are clipping masks and will need to be removed.

****NOTE:** This is not always the case. Sometimes it could just be a path that did not have a stroke or fill selected.

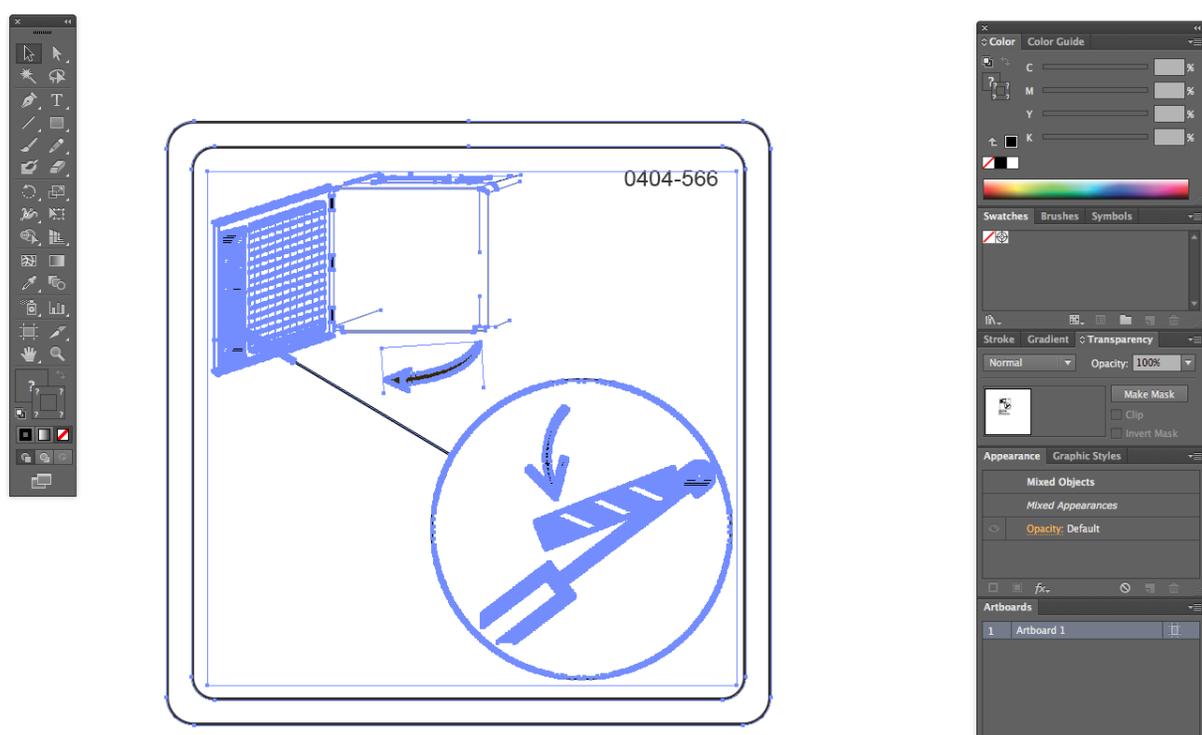
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2) Remove Clipping Masks

To remove clipping masks from a file, select all the artwork (Ctrl+A, On Mac: Cmd+A)



Background Color: White
Graphic/Text color(s): Black
Size: 3" x 3"
Material: 4mil vinyl suitable for use on construction equipment (outdoor use)

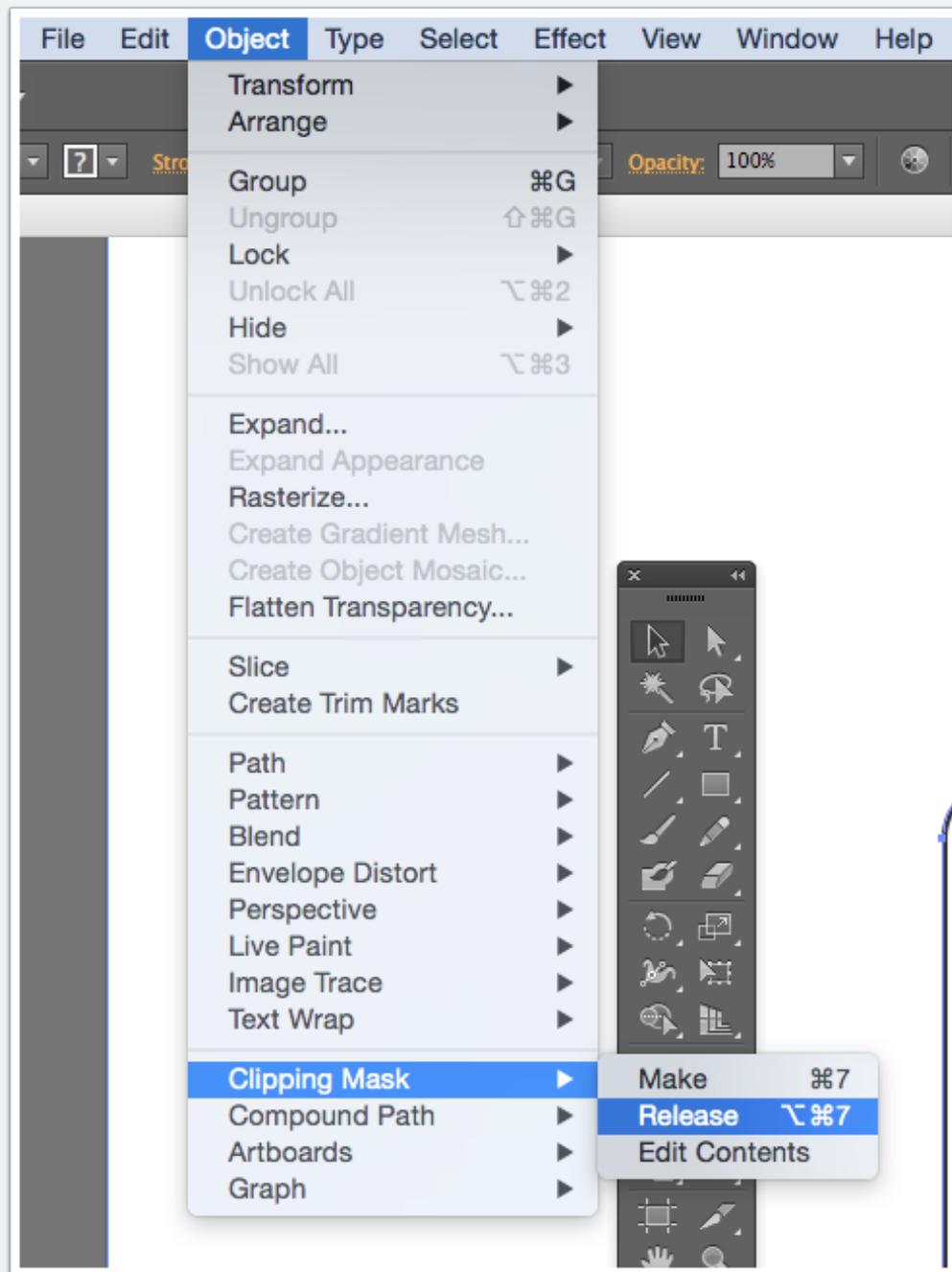
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2-a) Release Clipping Masks

With artwork selected, in the top nav goto Object > Clipping Mask > Release

You may have to do this several times to release all the clipping masks on a particular file.

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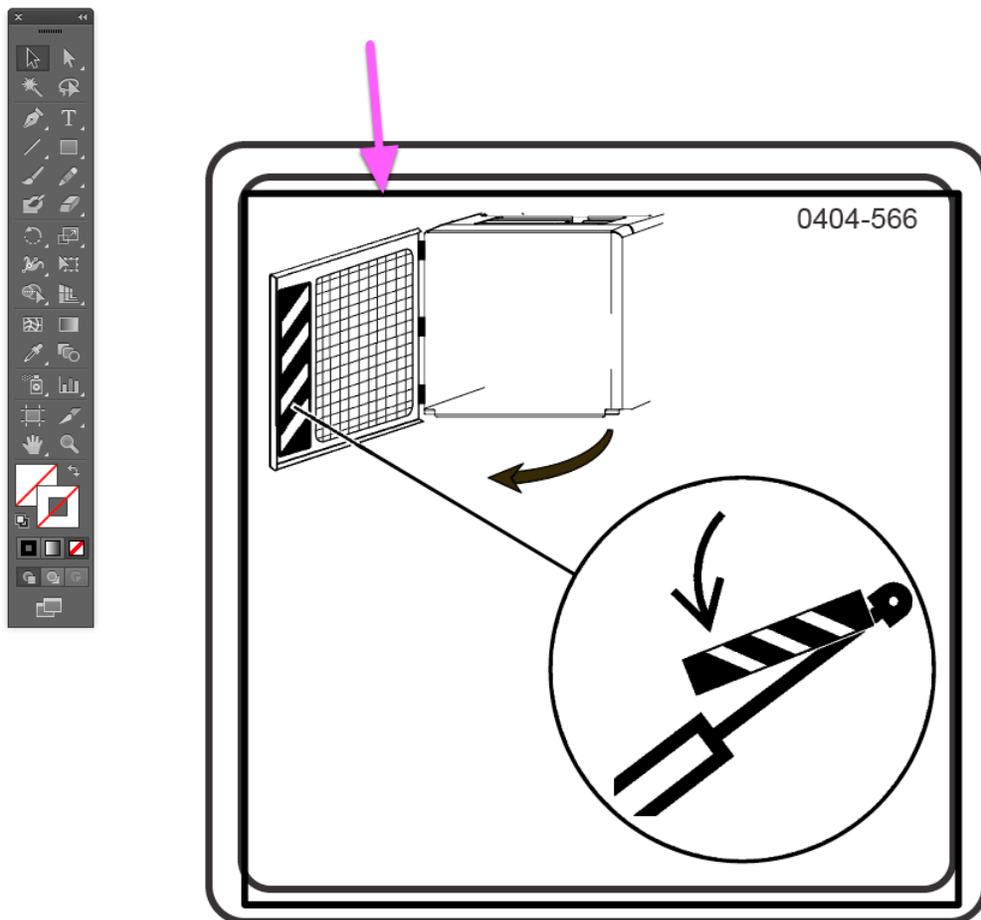
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2-b) Delete the paths

After releasing the clipping mask this is our result.

Delete the extra paths from the file.

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Background Color: White

Graphic/Text color(s): Black

Size: 3" x 3"

Material: 4mil vinyl suitable for use on construction equipment (outdoor use)

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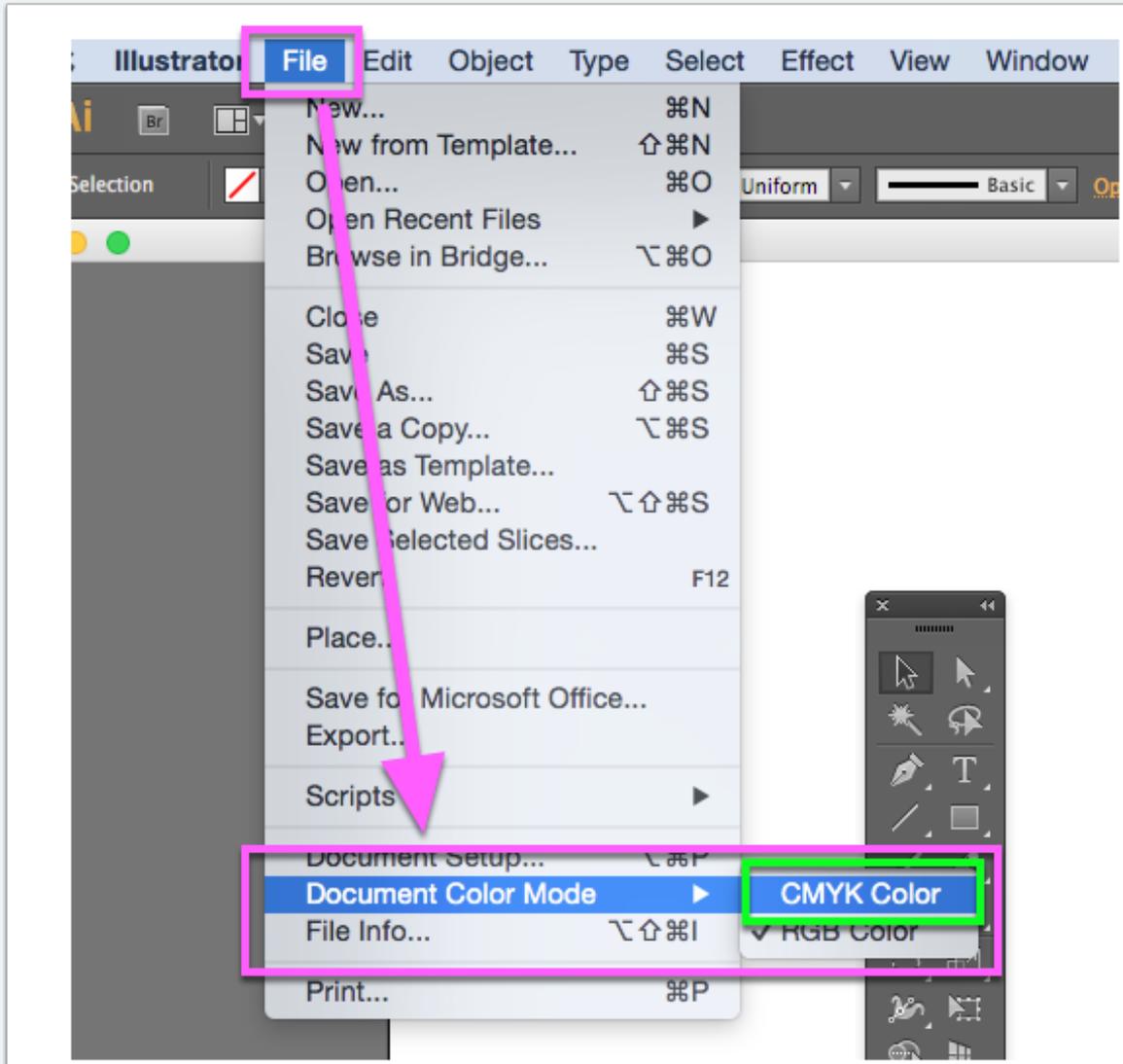
3) Unexpected Issue: Color Mode

Our next step is to add a black fill to the outer rectangle. At this point, I realized that the file was in the wrong color mode. The file was in RGB mode - we need it to be in CMYK so that our colors will print correctly and predictably when we send the file to the RIP.

This is typically something you would want to check at the beginning of working with a file.

To change the color mode to CMYK, in the top nav go to File > Document Color Mode > CMYK Color

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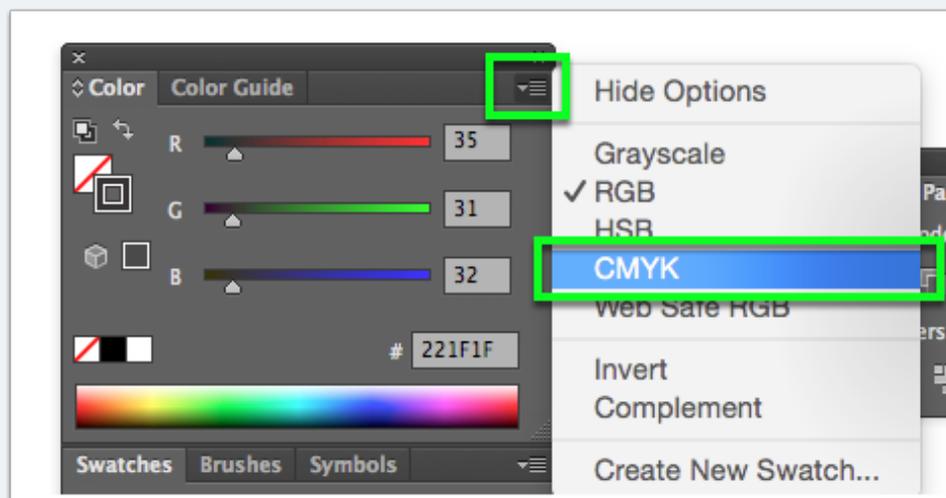
3-a) Convert color swatch to CMYK

Even after changing our document color mode, sometimes Illustrator will keep an object's color swatch in RGB mode.

To change this:

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In the Color panel, click the dropdown at the top right hand and select CMYK option



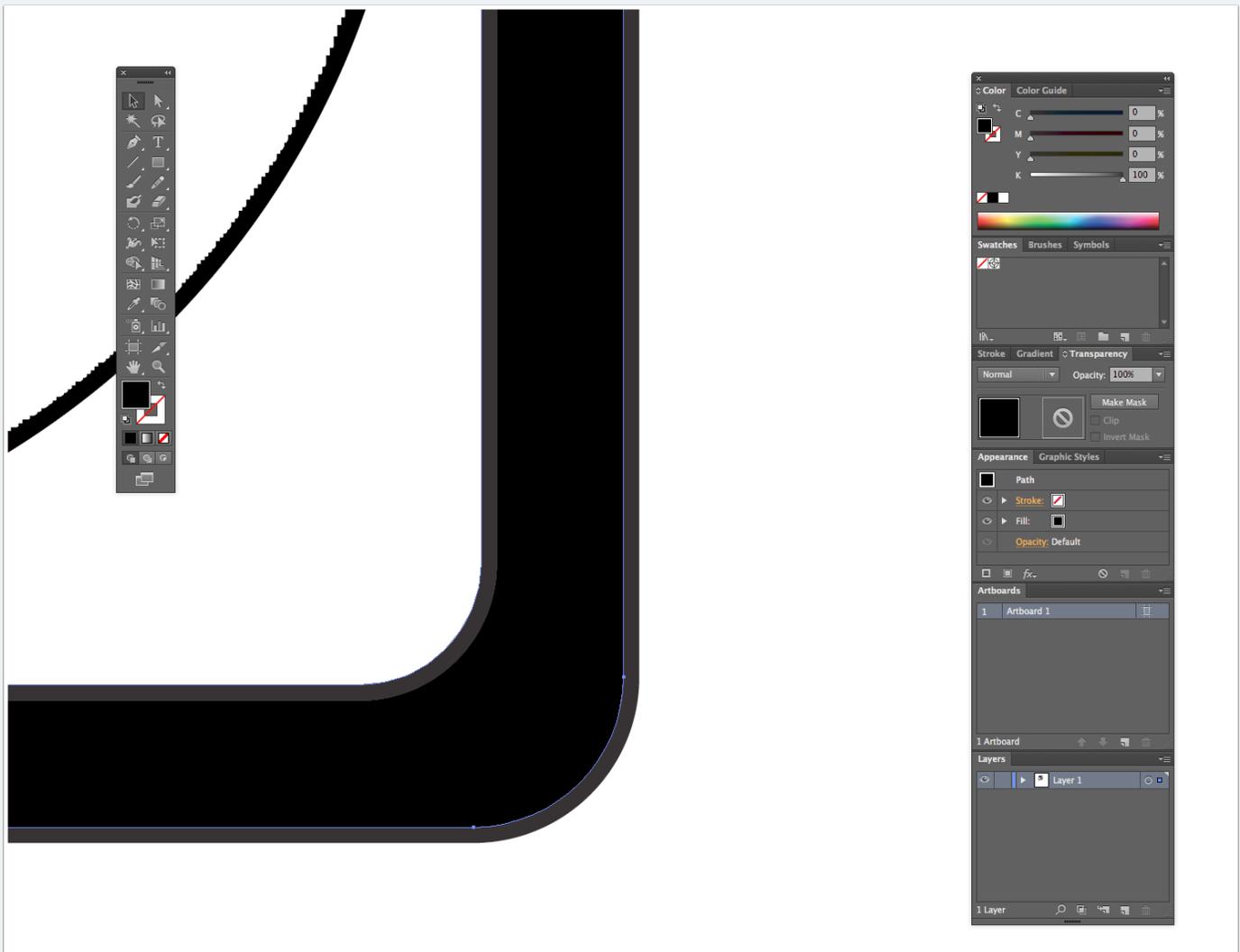
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3-b) Fix any color mismatches

Add your black fill to the outer rectangle.

Once you add the fill, notice that the stroke and the fill appear to be different colors of black. This is because of our incorrect color mode.

You'll want to change the blacks to the same color values to ensure they print correctly.

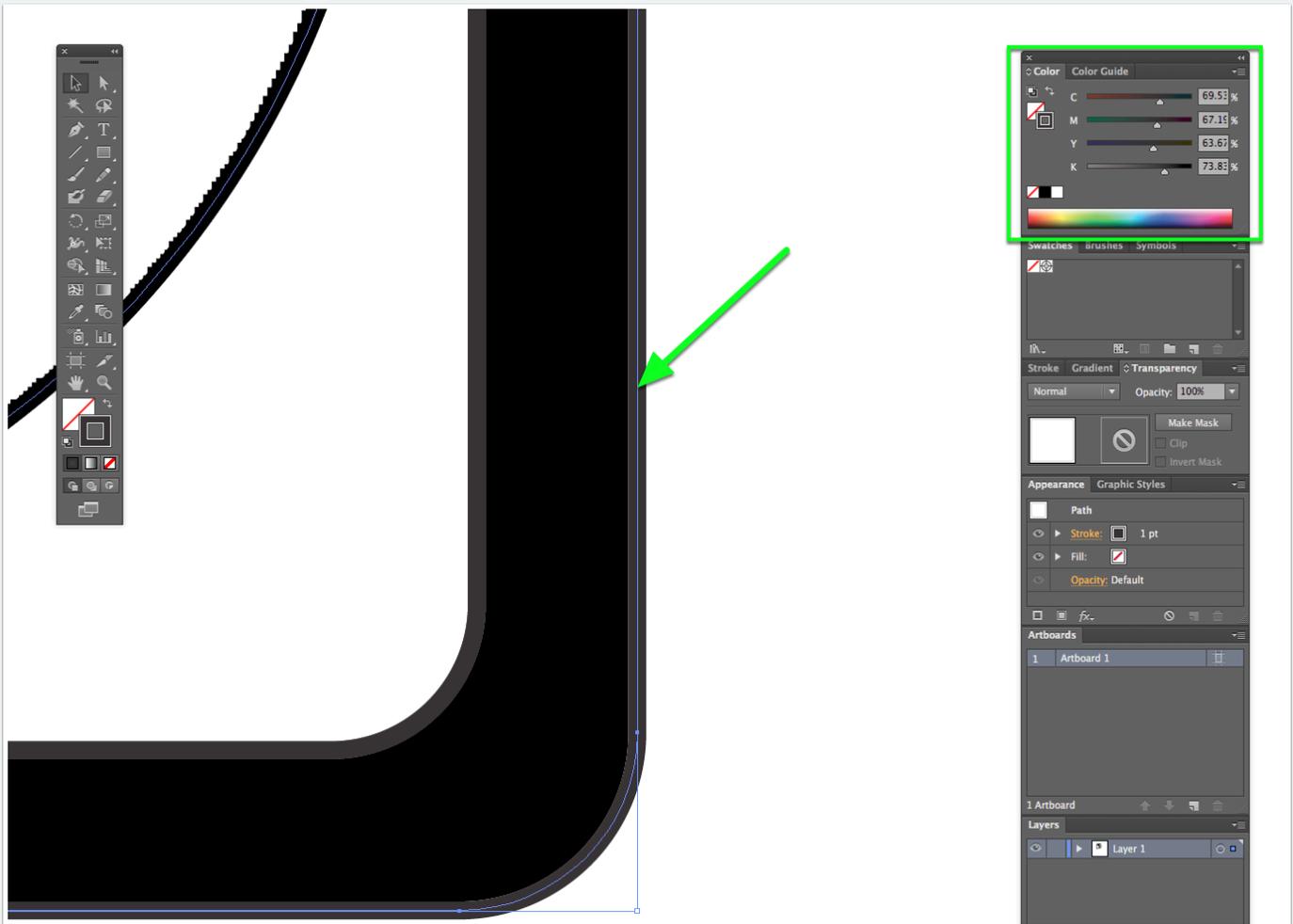


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3-c) Select the rich black object

There is a quick way to fix all the color mismatches. In this example, I will change all the rich blacks to a 100% K black.

Select one of the objects with a rich black stroke.

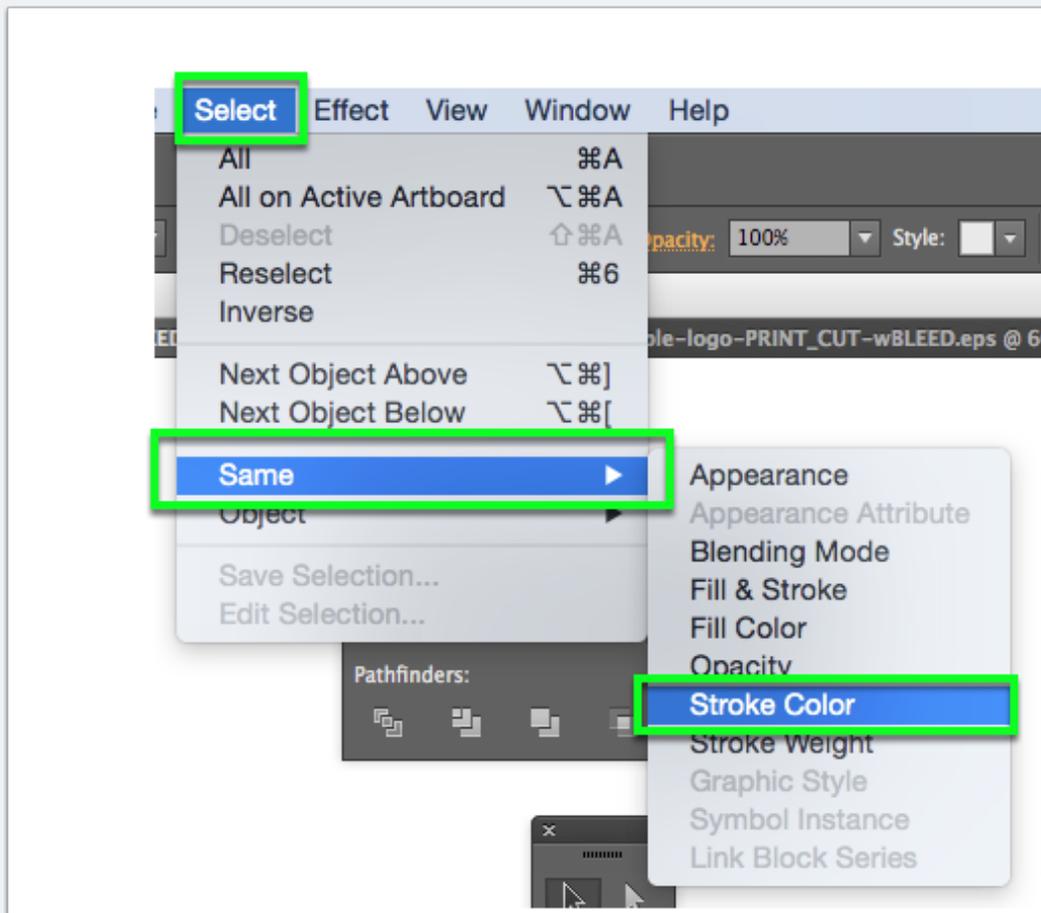


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3-d) Select objects with the same stroke color

In the top nav, go to **Select > Same > Stroke Color**

This command will select all objects in the file with the same stroke color as the selected object.

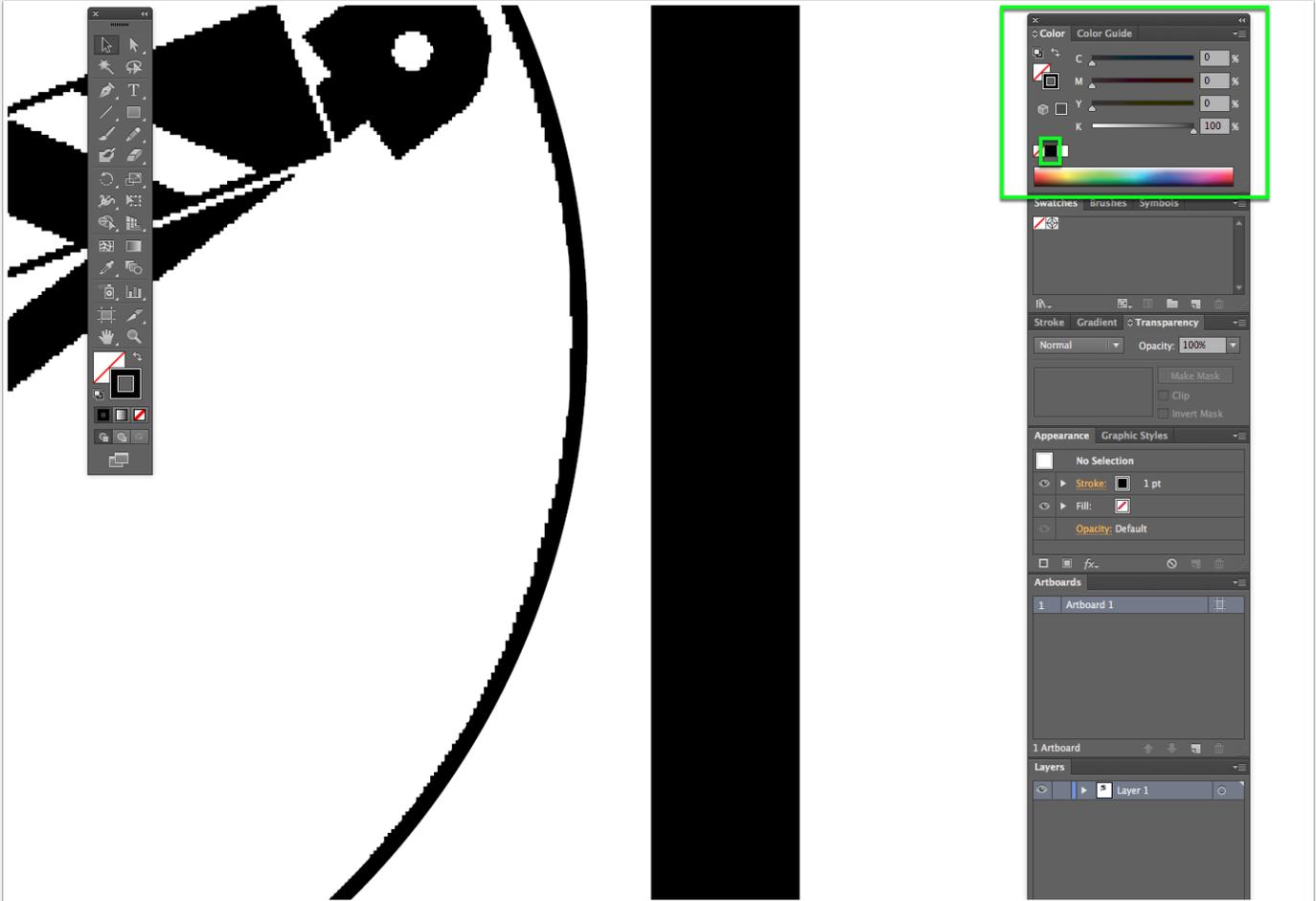


3-e) Change the stroke color to 100% K

With all the objects selected, change the stroke color to 100% K.

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This will give us the uniform blacks that we're after.



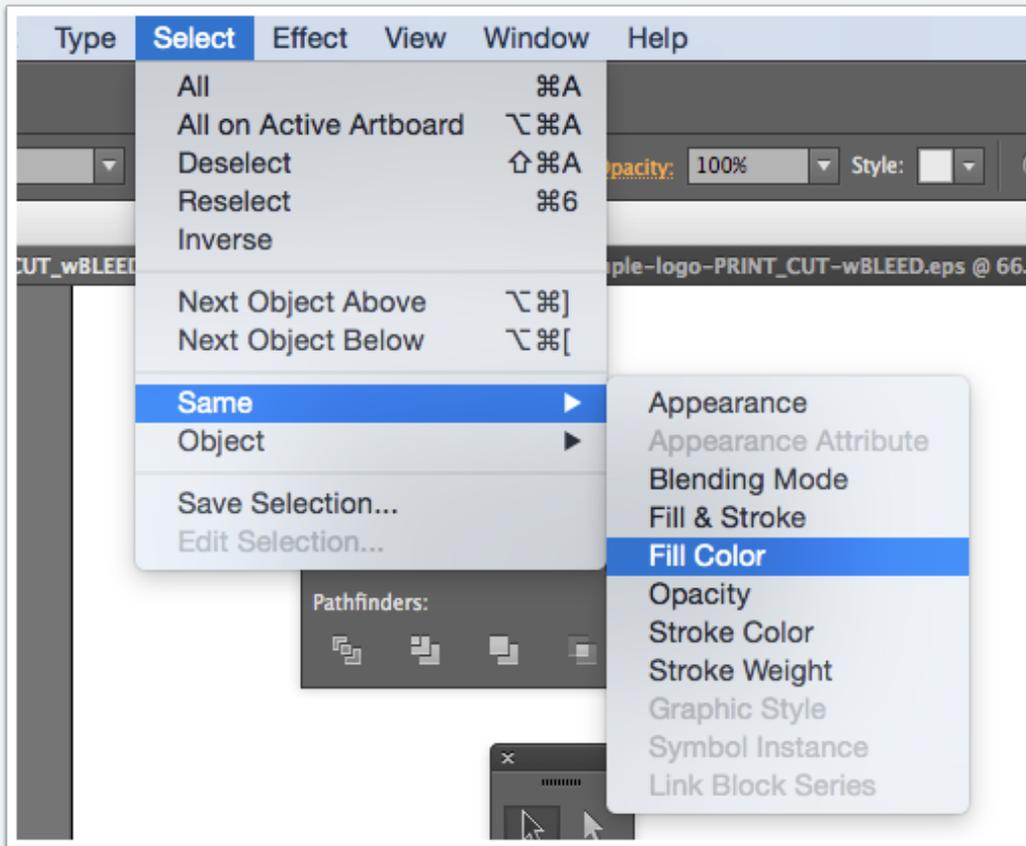
3-f) Repeat the above process for objects with a rich black fill

The process above should be repeated to remove any objects with a rich black fill as well.

Use the Select > Same > Fill Color command to select objects with the same fill color.

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Once selected change the fill of those objects to 100% K as well



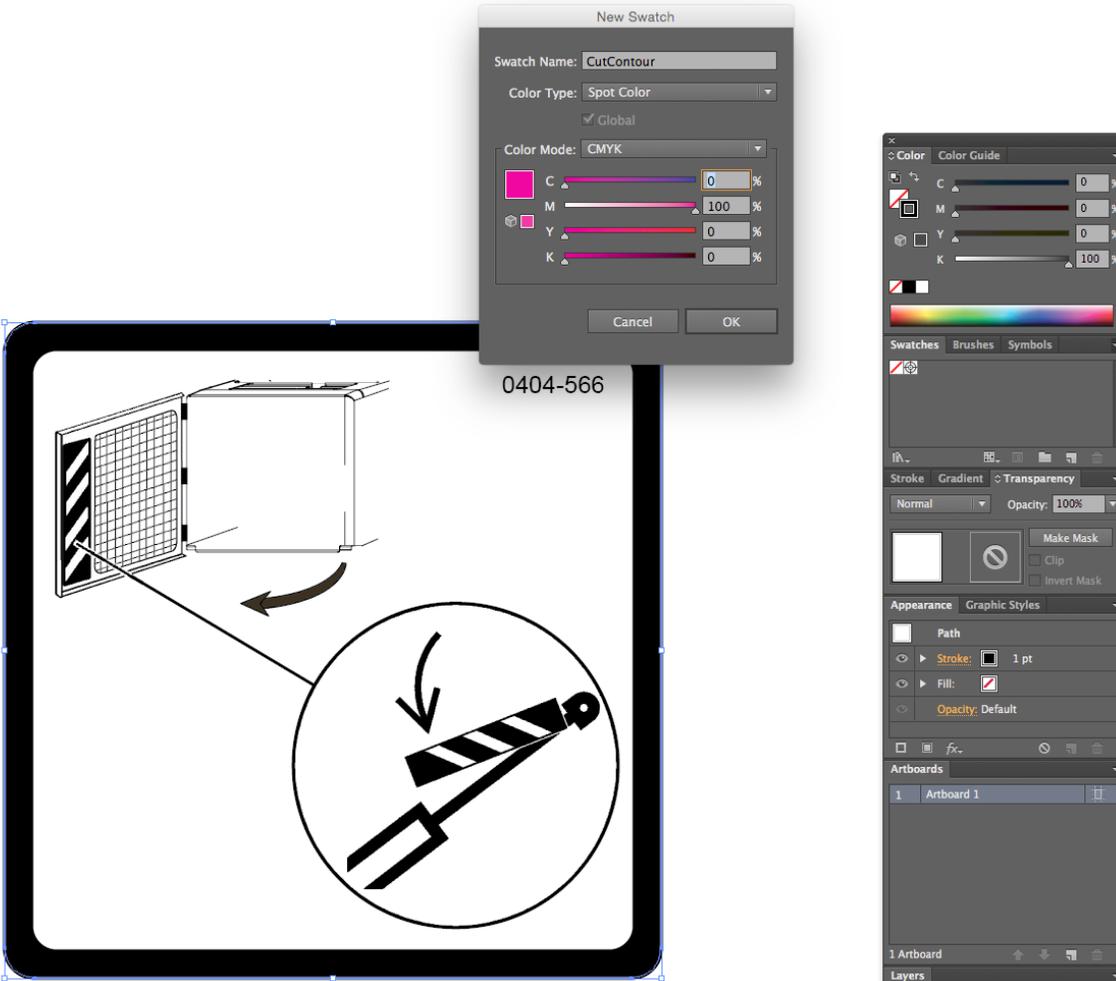
4) Add CutContour

Select the outer rectangle that you wish to use as a cutline. Add the CutContour spot color as the stroke.

If you do not already have the CutContour spot color setup:

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Click the dropdown in the top right hand of the Color panel. Select Create New Swatch and under Swatch Name: Enter "CutContour". Set Color Type to Spot Color and set the color values to 100% M. Then click OK.



0404-566

Background Color: White
Graphic/Text color(s): Black
Size: 3" x 3"

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5) Add Bleed

Next we will add our bleed to the file. ****NOTE** - This particular file has two outer objects - one for the fill and one for the stroke. Other files may have the stroke and fill on the same object.

Select the outer rectangle with the black fill.



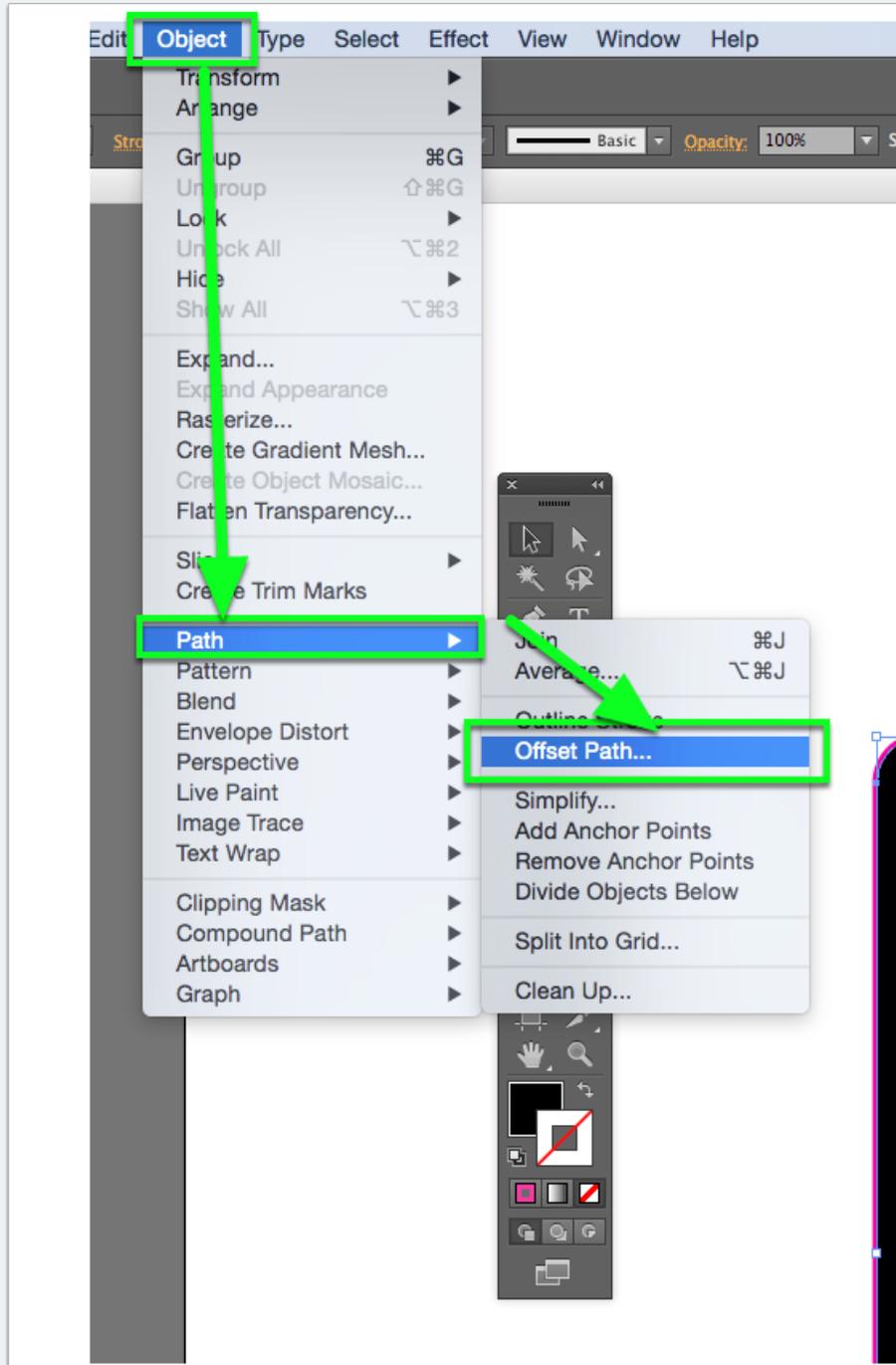
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5-a) Offset Path

I use the Offset Path tool to add bleeds to my files.

With the black fill rectangle selected, go to Object > Path > Offset Path

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5-b) Offset Path Dialog

In the offset path dialog, enter the settings you wish to use.

For smaller decals, I typically use .125 in as the offset value. This is usually enough to ensure mask enough cutter registration errors.

For larger decals, I may go to .25 in as a way to be safe.

Adjust the Joins setting as you see fit. For this example the cutline is a simple rounded rectangle, so a Miter join will be fine.

I would not change the Miter limit setting for this example.

Click OK

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5-c) The Result

Once I use the Offset Path command, while the result is still selected I will do two commands.

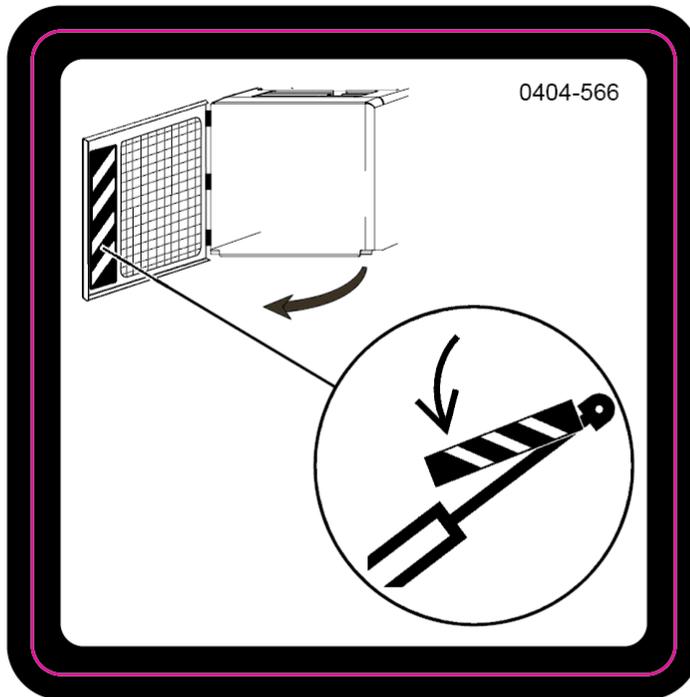
Edit > Cut (Ctrl+X; Mac Cmd+X)

Edit > Paste in Back (Ctrl+B; Mac Cmd+B)

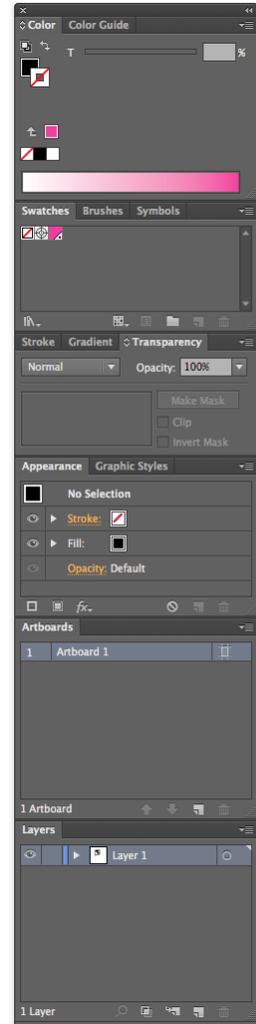
I do this because if you deselect the result, Illustrator will group the original path and the new offset path together. This is a minor inconvenience and typically will only cause you grief on complex files.

Before sending to the RIP, delete the text below the decal.

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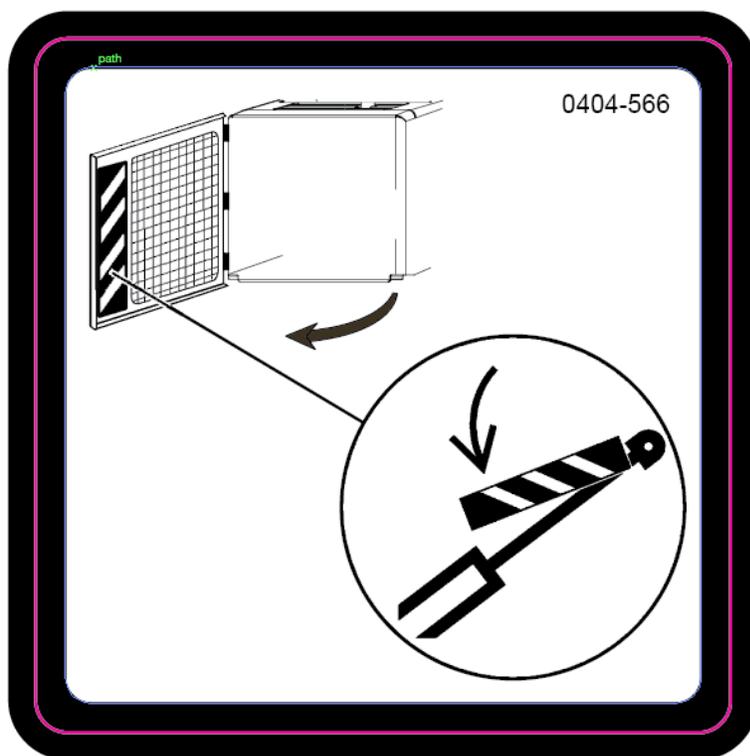
Background Color: White
Graphic/Text color(s): Black
Size: 3" x 3"
Material: 4mil vinyl suitable for use on construction equipment (outdoor use)



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6) Save the file and send to RIP

At this point, the file should be ready to rock. Save it out and send it to your RIP.



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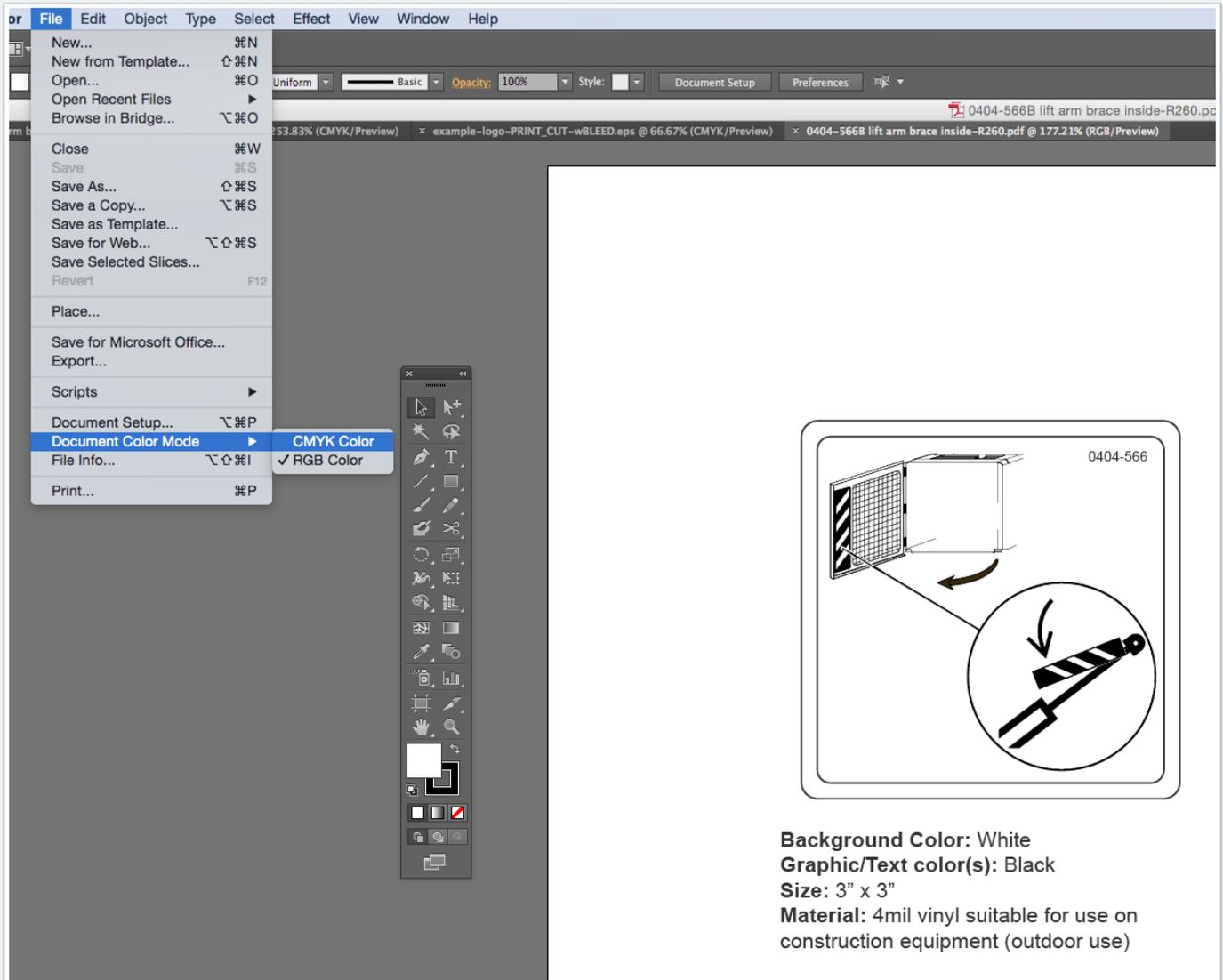
QUICK AND DIRTY: 1) Change Document Color Mode

This workflow would be a quick method for preparing this file with a bleed.

After working through this file for the first method, I know I will need to change the Document Color Mode.

After opening the file, goto File > Document Color Mode > CMYK Color

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The screenshot shows the Adobe Illustrator interface. The 'File' menu is open, and 'Document Color Mode' is selected, with 'CMYK Color' chosen. The main canvas displays a technical drawing of a lift arm brace, labeled '0404-566B lift arm brace inside-R260.pdf'. The drawing includes a circular callout showing a detail of the brace's end. Below the drawing, the following specifications are listed:

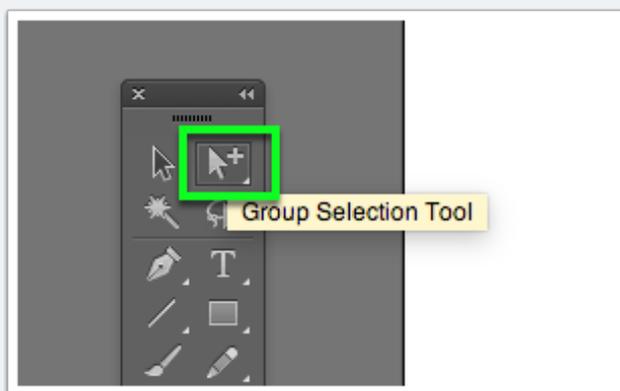
- Background Color:** White
- Graphic/Text color(s):** Black
- Size:** 3" x 3"
- Material:** 4mil vinyl suitable for use on construction equipment (outdoor use)

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2) Delete un-needed elements

Choose the Group Selection Tool.

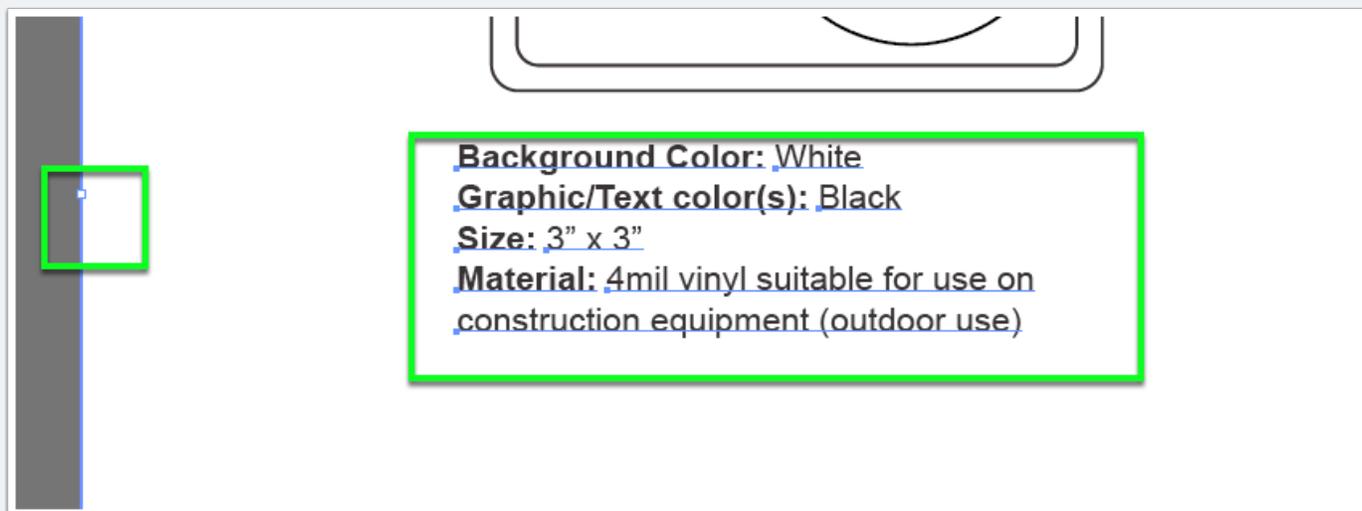
This tool allows you to select individual objects in a group, without selecting the whole group.



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2-a) Select and delete outer box and text elements.

This file does have an outer bounding box. Be sure to select and delete it along with the text.



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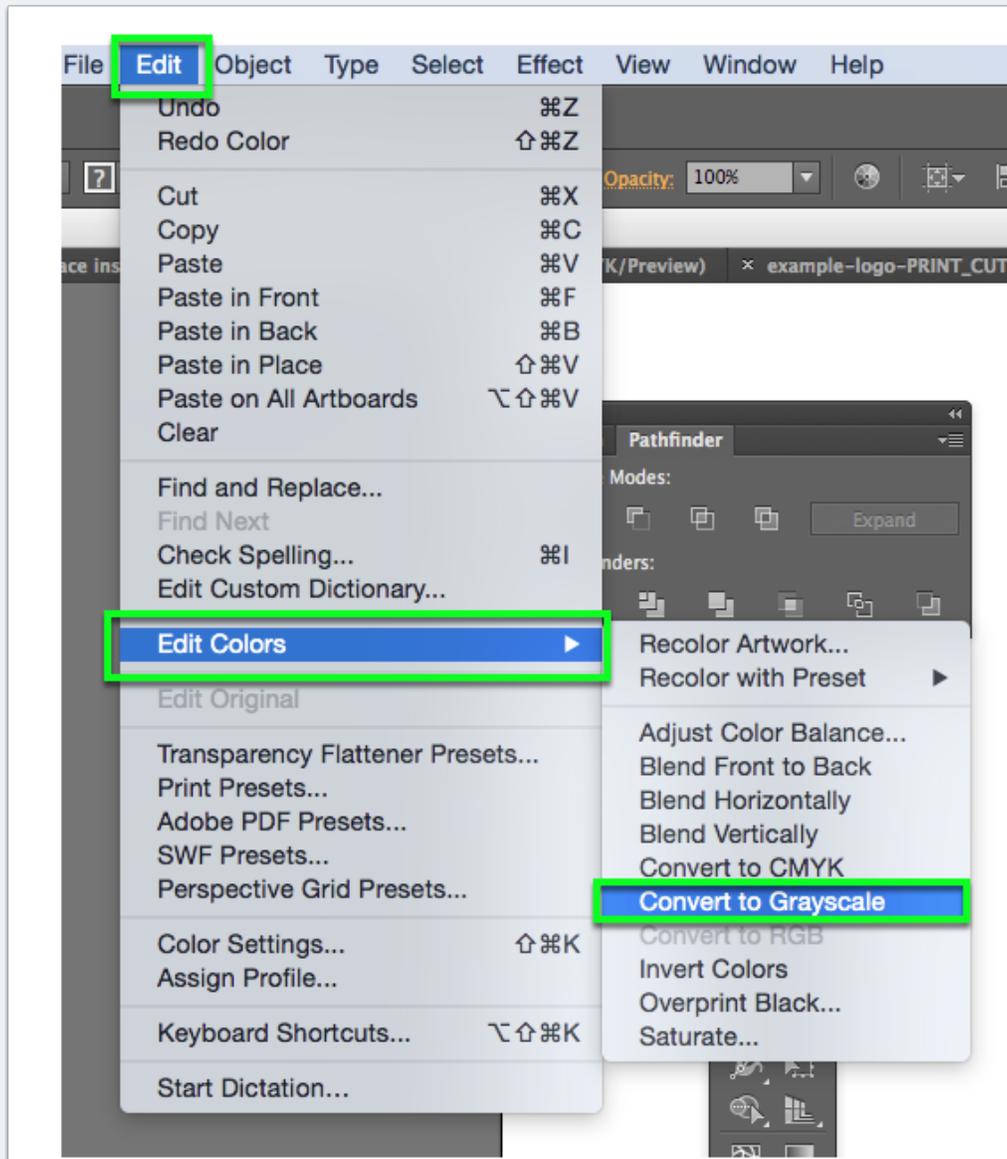
3) Convert artwork colors to grayscale

Select all the artwork that remains. In the top nav, **Select > All** or **Ctrl+A**, Mac **Cmd+A**

With artwork selected, go to **Edit > Edit Colors > Convert to Grayscale**

This will convert all my blacks to grayscale, and I will not have the rich black issue.

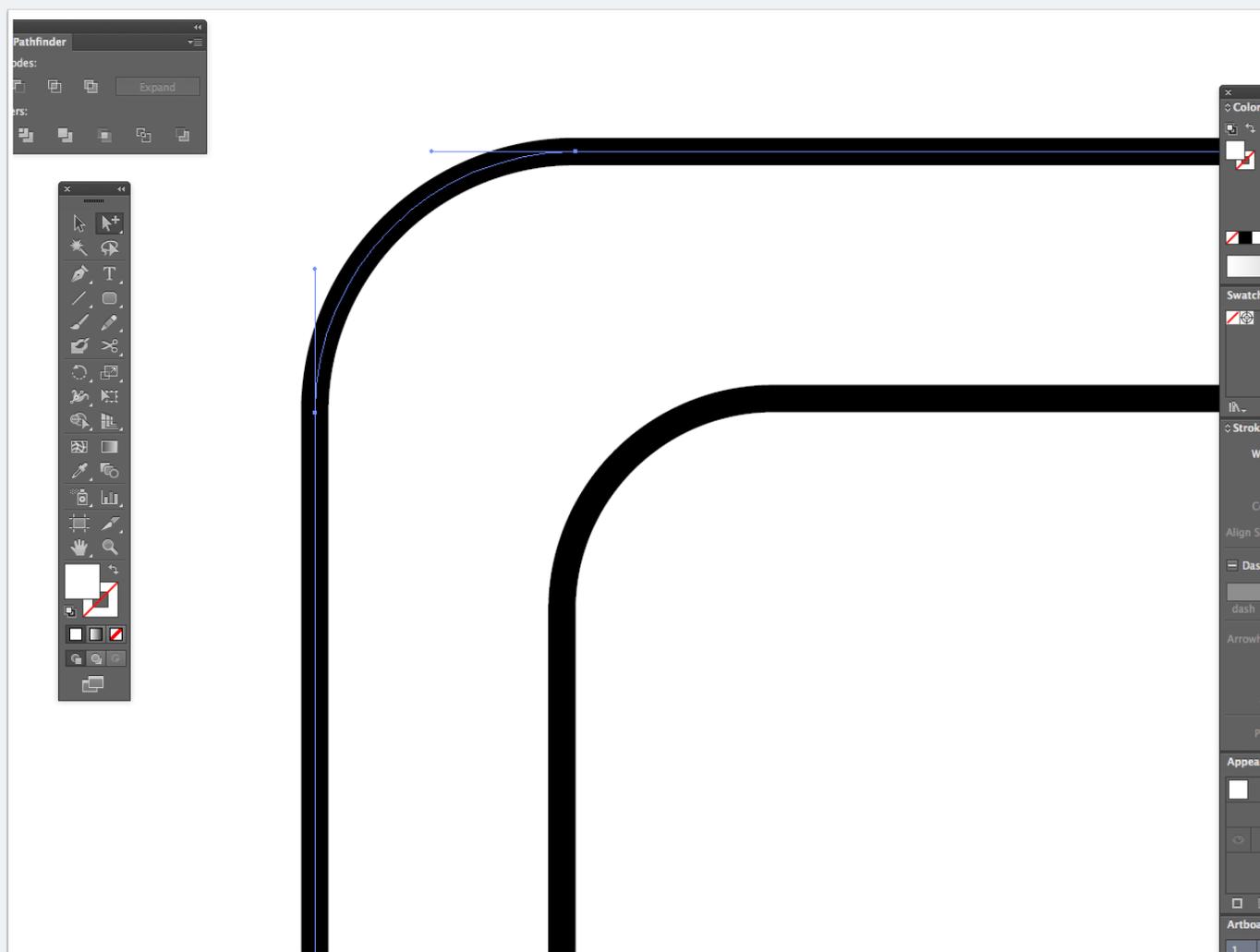
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4) Add the bleed

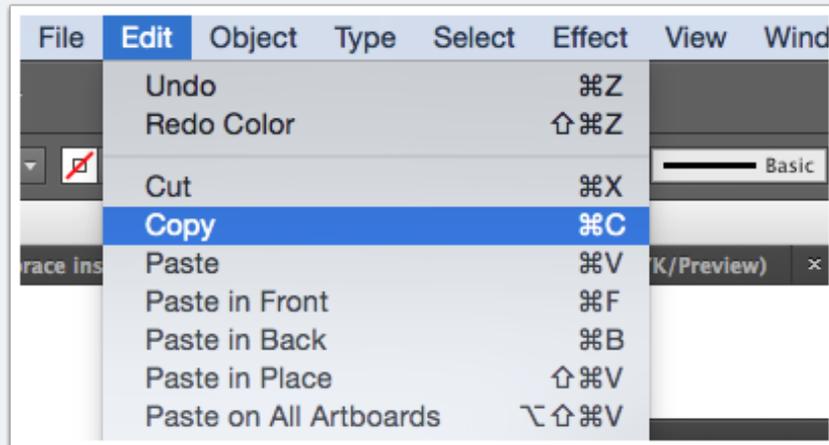
Select the rounded rectangle with the white fill.



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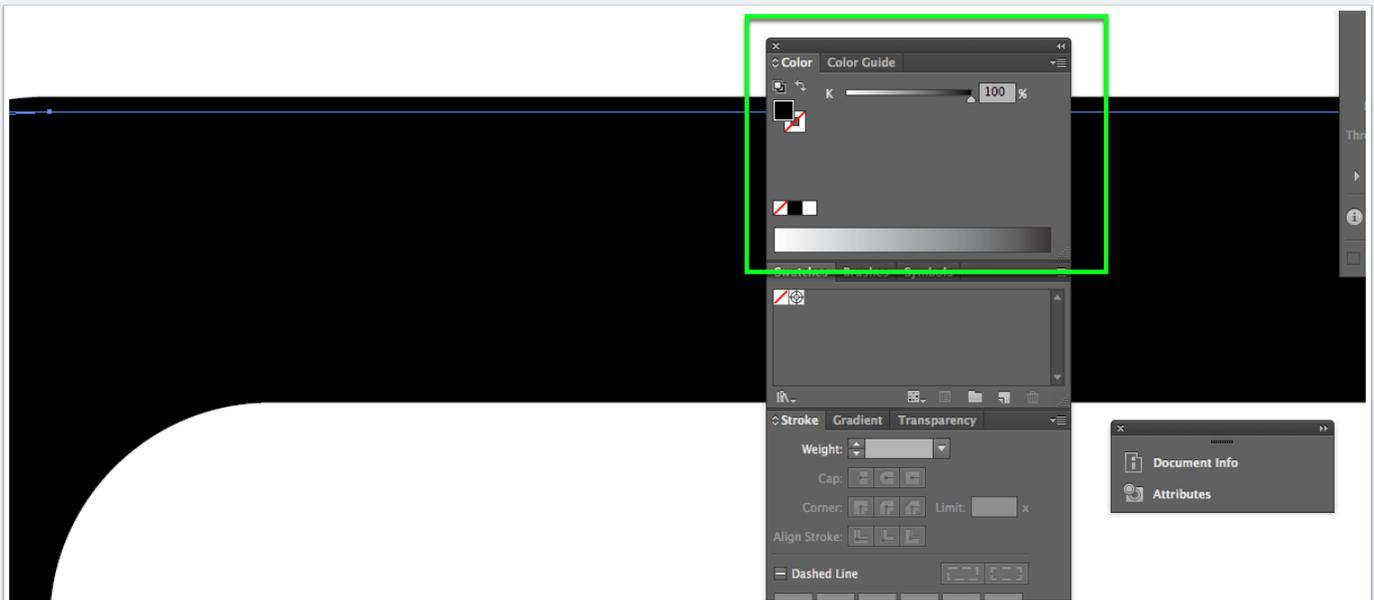
4-a) Copy the rectangle

Edit > Copy or Ctrl+C; Mac Cmd+C



4-b) Change the rectangle fill to black

In the color panel, change the fill of the rectangle to black.



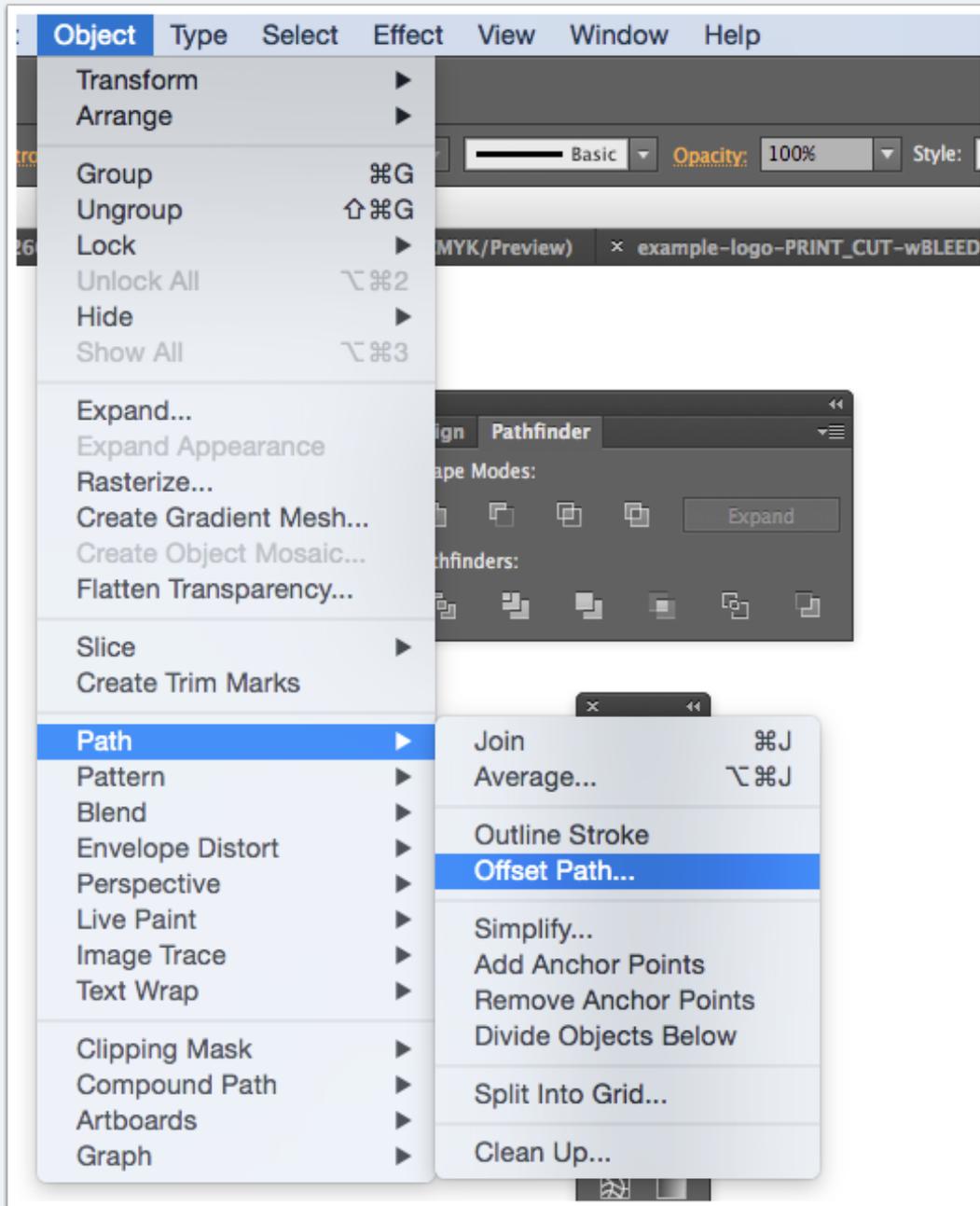
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4-c) Offset Path

With the rectangle still selected, use the Offset Path tool

Object > Path > Offset Path

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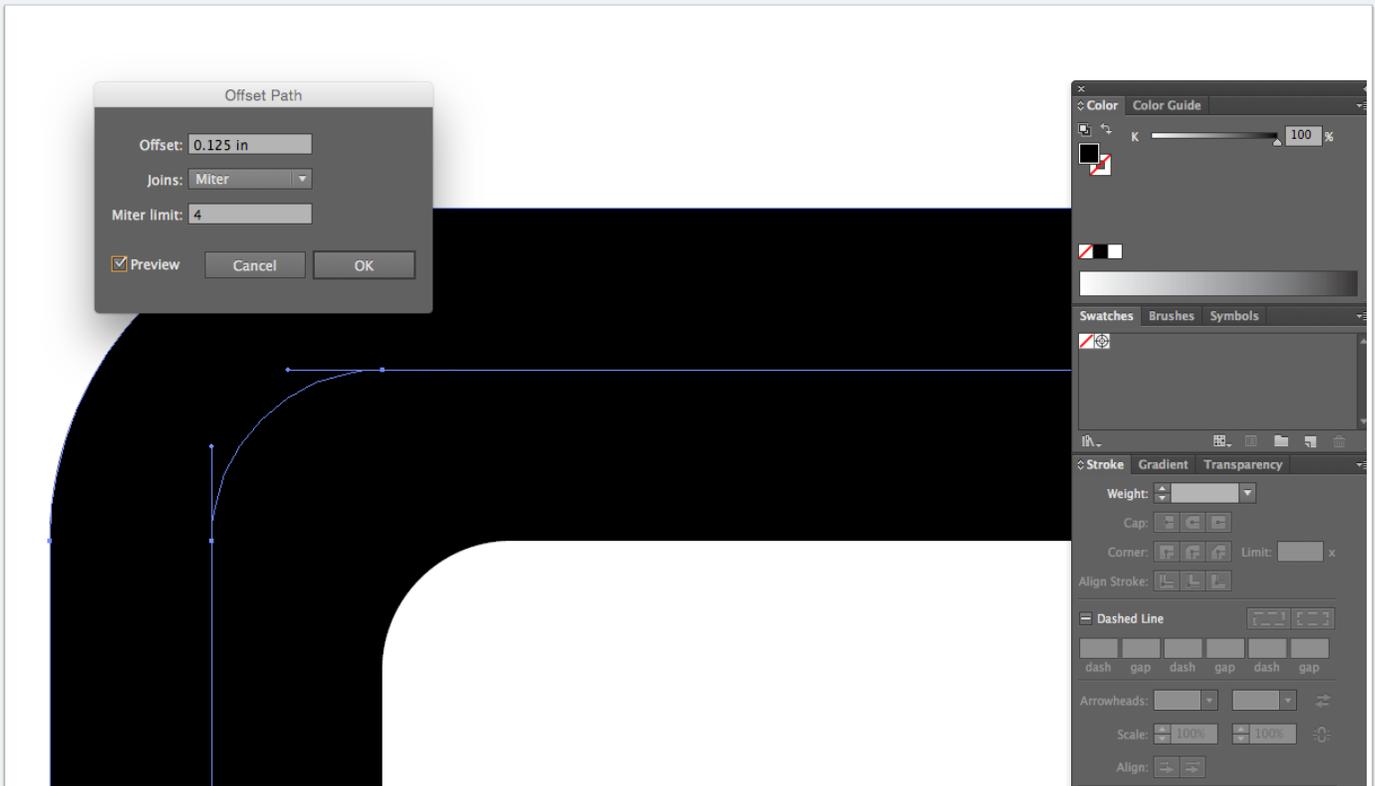


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4-d) Offset Path Dialog

Again we will use .125 in for the Offset.

Click OK



5) Rasterize the Artwork

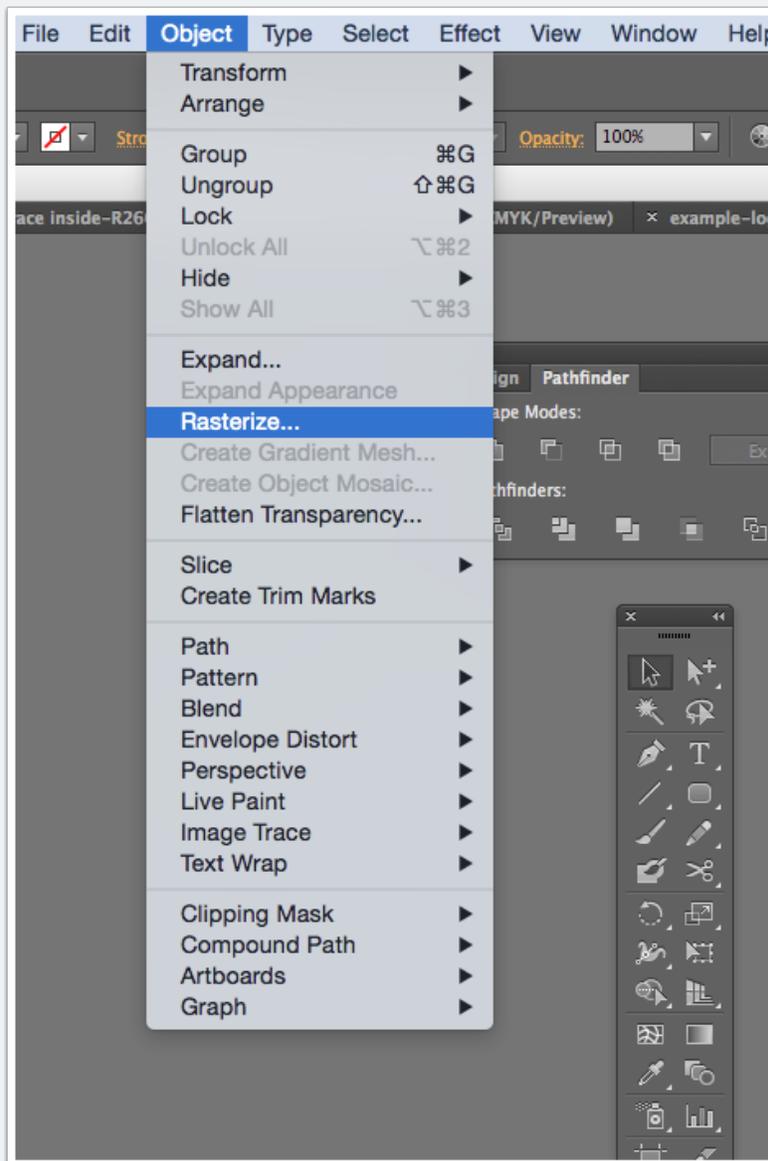
Select all the artwork once again.

Select > All or Ctrl+A; Mac Cmd+A

Then use the Rasterize command

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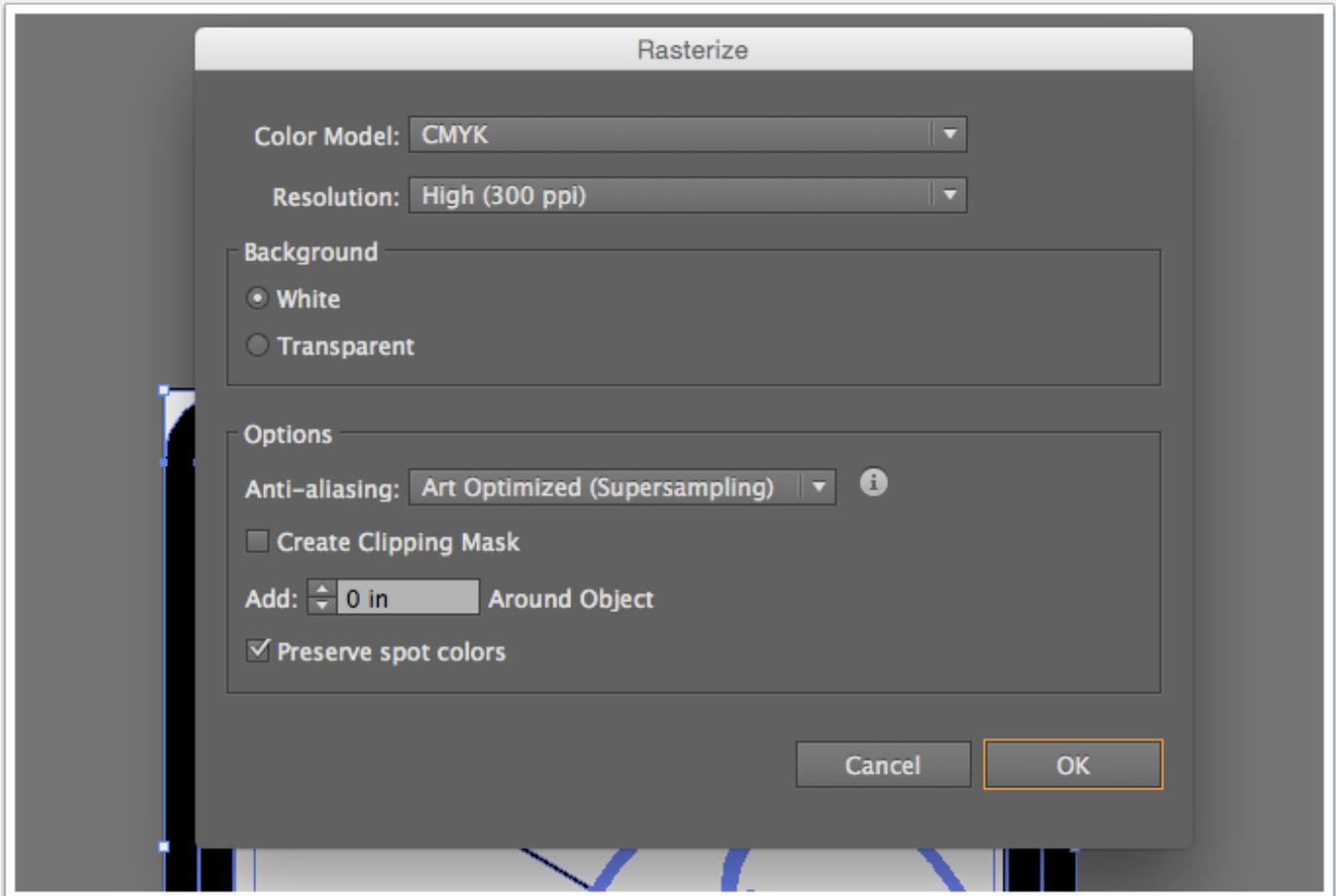
Object > Rasterize



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5-a) Rasterize Dialog

For this example, the default settings are sufficient. I would want to stay with a resolution of 300ppi to ensure I get a high quality print.

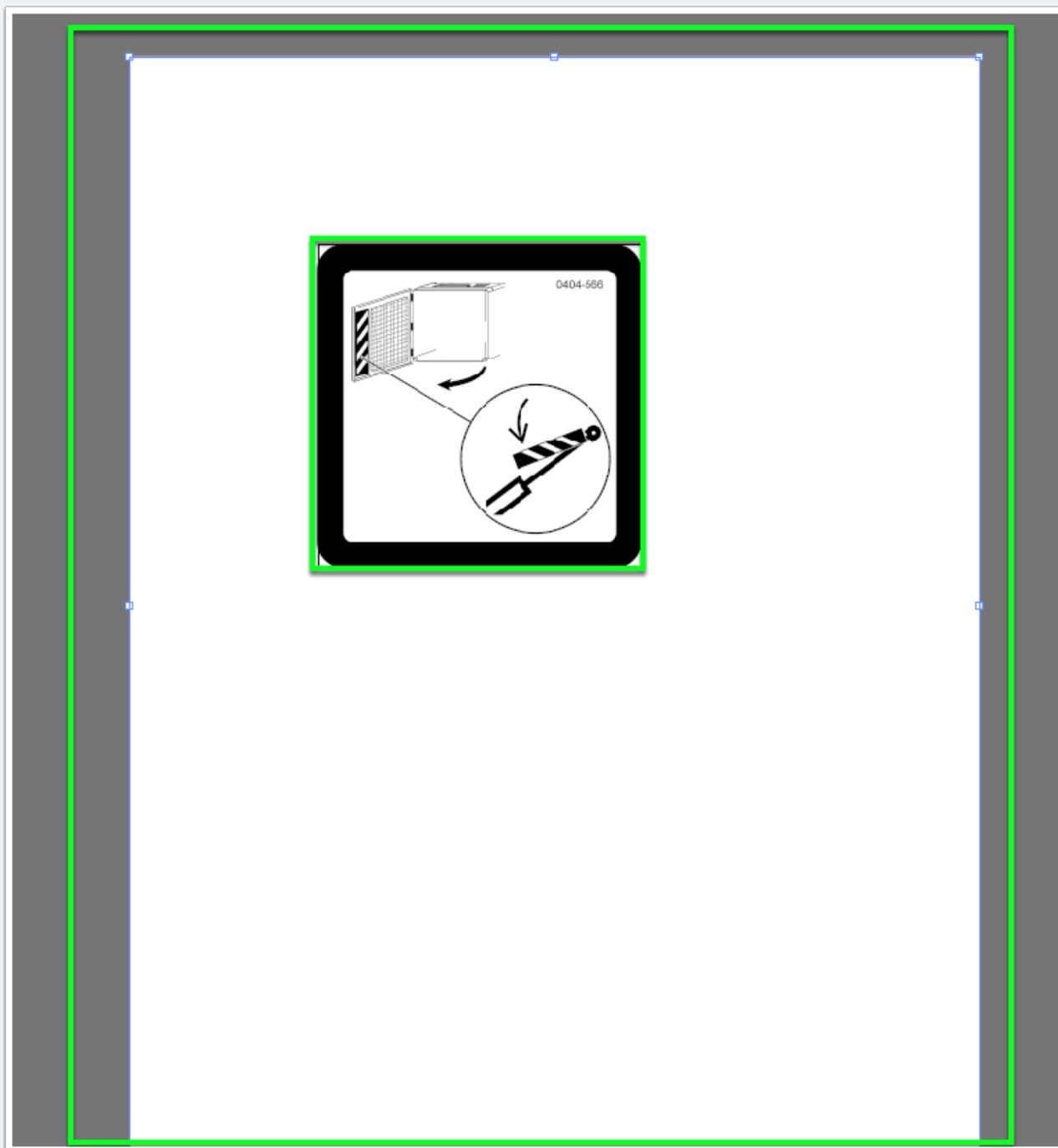


5-b) Result

Because of the clipping masks contained in the artwork, you can see it that the Rasterize command has made our image significantly large than it should.

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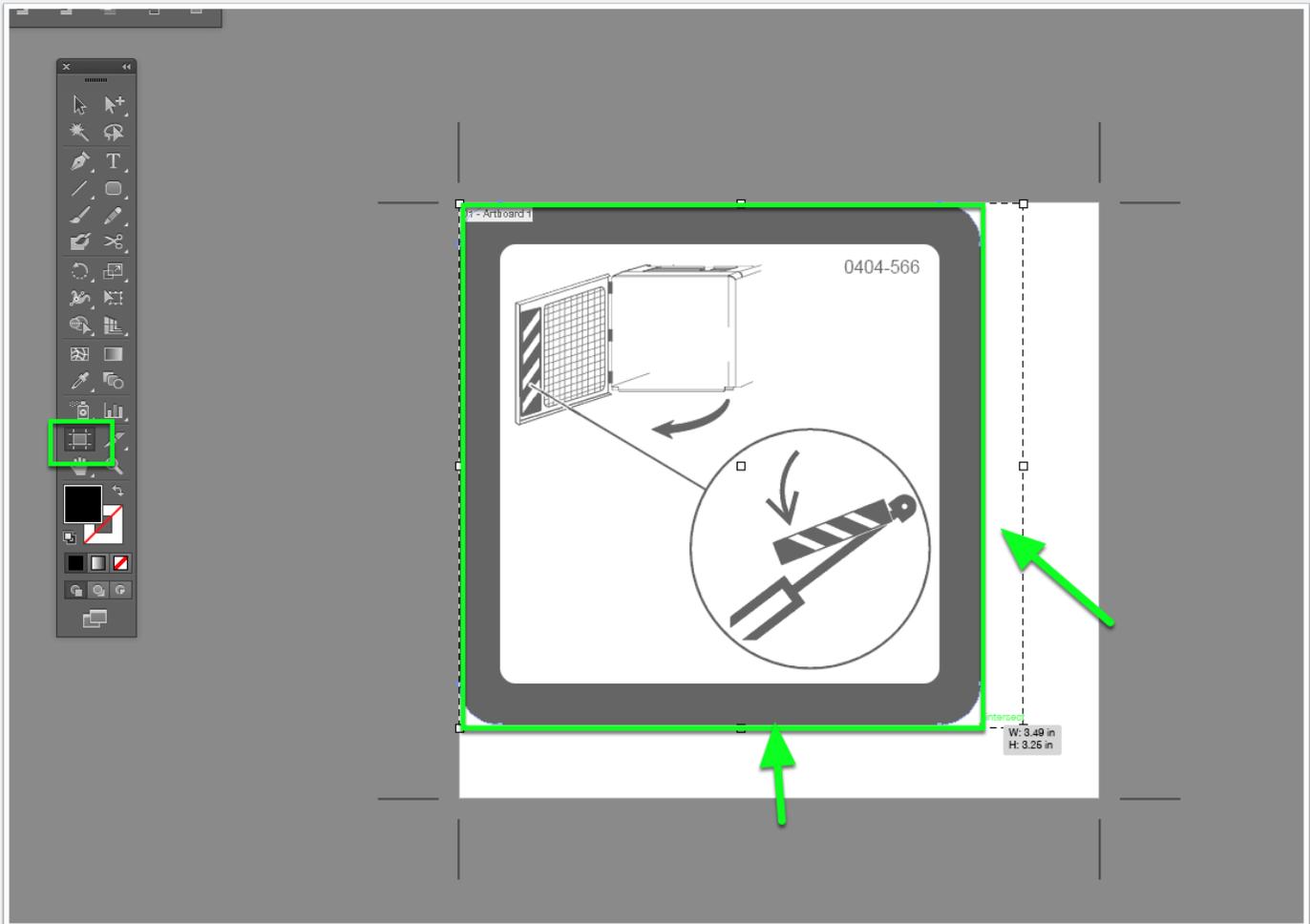
To keep this from causing size issues in our RIP we will change the artboard size and save the file as a PDF.



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5-c) Resize the Artboard

Using the Artboard tool, resize the Artboard to the edges of our bleed.

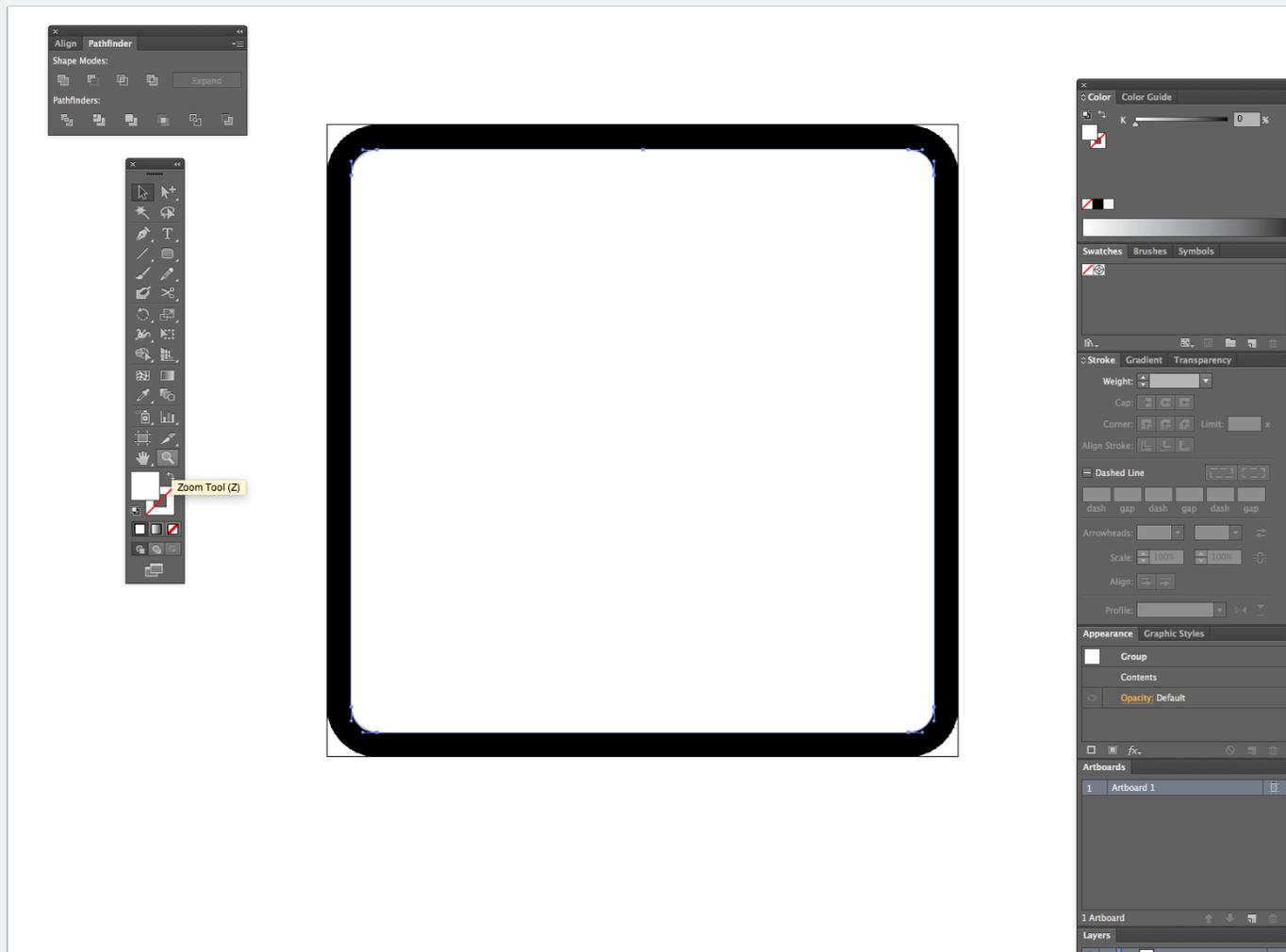


6) Add CutContour

Paste our original rounded rectangle back into the file. Use the Paste in Front command

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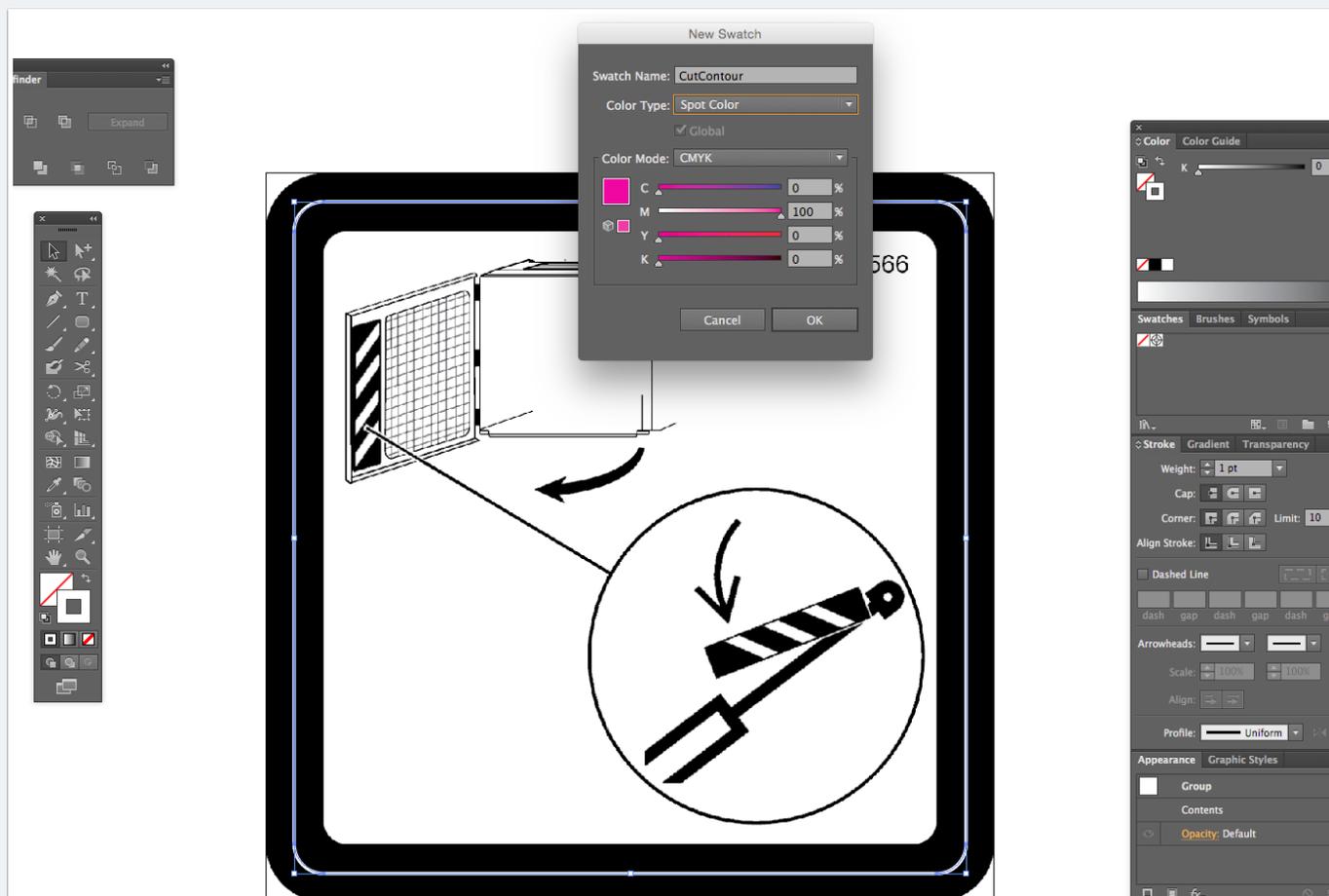
Edit > Paste In Front



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6-a) Adding CutContour stroke

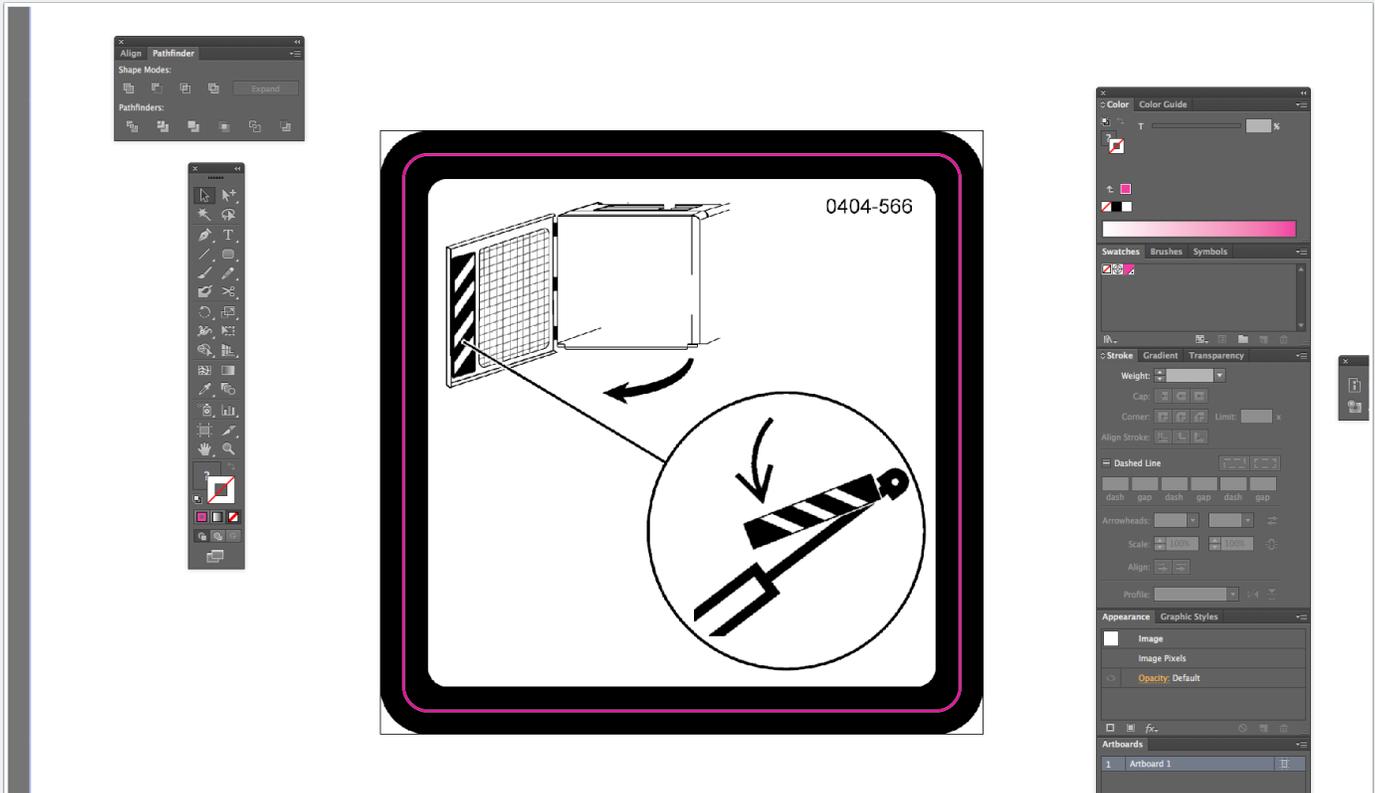
Remove the fill from the rectangle, and add the CutContour spot color stroke.



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6-b) Result

The result should look something similar to the screenshot below. Our file consists of a single image and a CutContour path.



7) Save the file as PDF

Go ahead and save the file at this point.

It is important to save it as PDF instead of EPS.

The PDF format will base the size off of the actual artboard size.

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The EPS format will base the size off of the actual artwork.

