Getting Your Logo Ready for Custom Printed Staff Apparel

Why Logo Preparation Matters

When you order custom printed apparel for your team, the quality of the final print depends heavily on how you prepare your logo artwork. A blurry image or a file saved in the wrong format can lead to disappointing results, wasted time, and extra costs. Understanding what a custom print service needs before you submit your files helps you avoid common pitfalls and ensures your staff apparel looks professional and consistent.

Start with the Right File Format

Most custom print services prefer vector files over raster images. A vector file uses mathematical paths rather than pixels, which means it can be scaled to any size without losing sharpness. Common vector formats include Adobe Illustrator (.ai), Encapsulated PostScript (.eps), and Scalable Vector Graphics (.svg). If your logo was designed by a professional, you likely already have a vector version. If not, you may need to have one created from your original artwork.

Raster files like JPEGs, PNGs, or TIFFs are made of pixels. They work fine for web use but can appear blurry or jagged when printed at larger sizes. If a vector file is unavailable, submit the highest-resolution raster version you have, at least 300 DPI at the final print size. Even then, the printer may need to convert it to a vector format for best results.

Check Colours Carefully

Colour matching is one of the trickiest parts of garment decoration. The logo you see on screen, which uses RGB (red, green, blue) colour space, will not look the same when printed on fabric using CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) inks or spot colours. For solid colours, a custom print service often uses Pantone matching system (PMS) references to ensure consistency across different garment colours and print methods.

Before you send your file, confirm whether your brand colours have Pantone codes. If they do, include those codes with your order. If not, ask the printer to match the colour as closely as possible from a sample or from the digital file. Keep in mind that printing on dark fabrics usually requires an underbase layer of white ink, which can slightly alter the final colour appearance. Always request a proof before production to review how the colours look on your chosen garment.



Consider Print Placement and Size

The placement of your logo on a garment affects both visibility and durability. Common options include the left chest, centre front, full back, sleeve, or hat front. Each placement has its own size limitations. A left chest logo is typically around 3 to 4 inches wide, while a full back print can be 10 to 12 inches wide. If your logo includes fine details, small text, or thin lines, it may not reproduce well at smaller sizes.

Think about how the garment will be worn. For staff who move around a lot, a logo placed high on the back or on the sleeve might be more practical than one directly on the chest where it could crease or stretch during movement. Also consider the seam placement and any pocket or zipper that might interfere with the print area. Provide the printer with the exact dimensions you want and let them know if you have a preference for centred or offset positioning.

Review Your Brand Guidelines

Your brand guidelines should specify how your logo should be used in different contexts. This includes minimum size, clear space around the logo, acceptable colour variations, and whether the logo can be placed on a background. If your guidelines exist, share them with the custom print service so they can follow your rules. If you don’t have formal guidelines, at least decide on a few key rules yourself: how much space should be around the logo, whether it can be printed in one colour instead of full colour, and whether a white version is acceptable on dark garments.

Ignoring brand guidelines can lead to logos that look stretched, cropped, or placed too close to a garment edge. A little planning upfront saves you from receiving a batch of shirts that do not reflect your brand consistently.

Understand Print Methods and Their Limits

Different print methods work best with different types of artwork. Screen printing, for example, is excellent for bold, solid-colour logos and large quantities. It uses separate screens for each colour, so your logo needs to be separated into individual colour layers. Halftones and gradients are possible but require more screens and can increase cost.

Direct-to-garment (DTG) printing works like a high-end inkjet printer and can handle detailed, full-colour images with gradients and subtle shading. However, DTG prints on cotton and cotton blends better than on polyester, and the colours may not be as vibrant on dark fabrics without a white underbase. Heat transfer vinyl (HTV) is good for small runs and simple designs, but it can feel stiff and may crack over time. Embroidery is another option for logos with limited colours and moderate detail, but it adds thickness and may not suit very small text.

Each method has trade-offs in durability, cost, and appearance. Share your artwork with the printer early so they can recommend the best technique for your logo and garment type.

Clean Up Your Artwork

Before you send your files, take a moment to clean up the artwork. Remove any hidden layers, stray points, or unused colours that could confuse the printer’s software. If your logo contains text, convert it to outlines or paths so that the font does not get replaced or misaligned. Flatten any transparency effects and ensure all elements are within a single artboard or canvas area.



Check that your logo does not contain embedded images or linked files that the printer cannot access. A clean vector file makes the printer’s job easier and reduces the chance of errors

during setup. If you are unsure how to prepare the file, many printers offer artwork review services for a small fee or even for free before you place your order.

Test on a Sample Garment

If you are ordering staff apparel in bulk, it is wise to request a single sample print first. This lets you see how the logo looks on the actual fabric, check the colour accuracy, and assess the print durability. You can also test the logo placement to make sure it sits where you expected. A sample run costs a little extra but can save you from a costly mistake on a large order.

When you receive the sample, examine it under good lighting. Check for any misregistration, where colours do not align properly, or for any areas where the ink did not adhere well. Look at the back of the fabric to see if ink bled through. If everything looks good, you can authorise the full production with confidence.

Communicate Clearly with the Printer

Good communication is essential. Tell the printer exactly what you want: the garment style, colour, size range, print placement, and any special instructions. Provide your artwork in the preferred format and include your Pantone codes if available. Ask about turnaround times and request a digital proof before production begins. A proof shows you exactly how the print will look on the garment, including size and placement, and allows you to make last-minute adjustments.

If you are ordering for a team that wears corporate uniforms, consistency across all items is crucial. Make sure every garment in the order receives the same print quality, placement, and colour. A reliable custom print service will keep records of your artwork and settings so that reorders are easy and consistent.

Plan for Long-Term Use

Think beyond the first order. If you plan to add more staff or replace worn-out apparel later, keep your original artwork files organised and accessible. Store them in a folder with a clear naming convention and note any special instructions the printer used. This way, you can reorder without having to re-specify everything from scratch.

Also consider how the logo might need to adapt for different garment types. A logo that works well on a cotton T-shirt might need a different treatment for a polyester jacket or a cotton hoodie. Talk to your printer about how different fabrics affect ink adhesion and durability. Some fabrics require a different ink formulation or a pre-treatment to ensure the print lasts through many washes.



Final Checks Before You Submit

Before you hit send, run through this quick checklist:

- Is your file in a vector format like .ai or .eps? If not, is it at least 300 DPI?
- Have you converted text to outlines and removed unused elements?
- Do you have Pantone codes for your brand colours?
- Have you specified the print placement and size clearly?
- Have you requested a proof or sample before full production?

Taking these steps ensures that your custom print service can deliver exactly what you envision. Proper logo preparation is a small investment of time that pays off in a polished, professional look for your team.

Whether you are outfitting a small crew or an entire company, the same principles apply. A well-prepared logo leads to a better final product, fewer revisions, and a smoother experience overall. And when your team wears those shirts with your logo printed cleanly and consistently, it reinforces your brand identity every day.