At MB Print, we specialize in low-volume printing, with a large part of our work being done manually, which requires precise file preparation by the client. Below, you will find detailed steps to help you prepare files correctly and in accordance with technological requirements.

Instructions for Preparing Token Files for Printing at MB Print

We print various elements, such as tokens, markers, and other small items made of cardboard with a thickness of 1.5 mm or 2 mm, which are double-sided laminated with printed paper. Additionally, these elements are laminated, which increases their resistance to moisture, abrasion, and adds extra stiffness.

Cutting Techniques

Cardboard elements are cut in two ways:

Laser Cutting:

- Advantages: No restrictions on token shapes.
- Disadvantages: Edges may be scorched; they need to be cleaned before use.

Cutting on a Table Plotter (oscillating knife):

- Advantages: Clean and smooth edges, ideal for simple shapes (circles, rectangles, hexagons).
- Disadvantages: Not suitable for cutting small curves or holes.

How to Prepare a File for Printing?

Before creating a sheet of tokens, prepare the individual elements, i.e., token graphics. Each token should have a bleed and a safe area inside where important graphic elements are located.

The bleed is the margin of the graphic that extends beyond the cutting line (2.5 mm on each side). It ensures that no white edges appear after cutting. The safe area is the distance from the cutting line to important elements inside the token. Key graphics and texts should be placed a few millimeters inside to avoid accidental cutting.

How to Set Up the Bleed Correctly?

- The graphic should extend beyond the cutting line – stretch the background color or pattern outward to avoid visible white edges.
- Avoid white frames as a bleed – the bleed must be part of the token's background. White bleeds are only allowed if the entire token background is white.
- The token graphic should not contain the cutting line. These lines will be added later.

Example:

- The black line – this is the intended edge where the cut will occur - it should not be present in the graphic design; it will be added later.
- Bleed – the graphic area beyond the cutting line, ensuring full edge coverage after trimming.

Once you have the graphics ready for individual tokens, you can proceed to prepare the cutting sheets.

1. Choosing the Right Graphic Software To prepare the files, use vector graphic software:

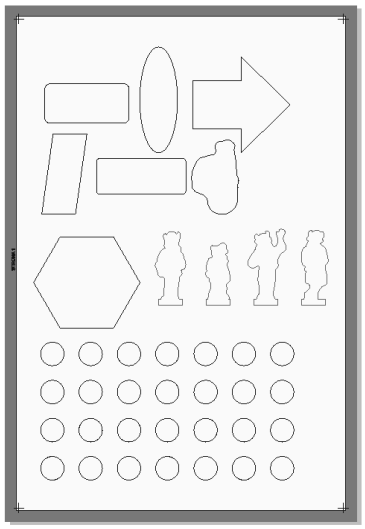
- Corel Draw (paid, demo version available)
- Adobe Illustrator (paid)
- Inkscape (free, open-source)

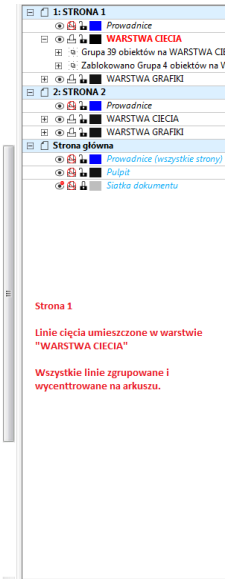
2. Download the Template and Prepare the Sheet Use the dedicated A3 template available on the MB Print website. The template will help you properly arrange the elements for printing and cutting. Template link: [MB Print Template]

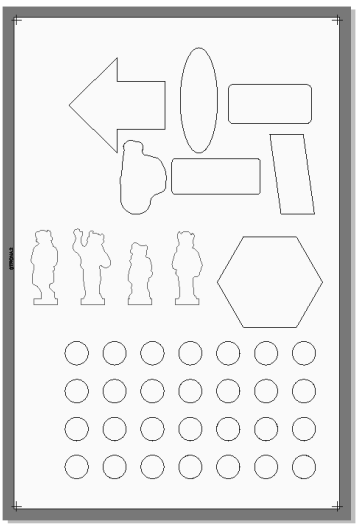
Step 1: Creating Cutting Lines

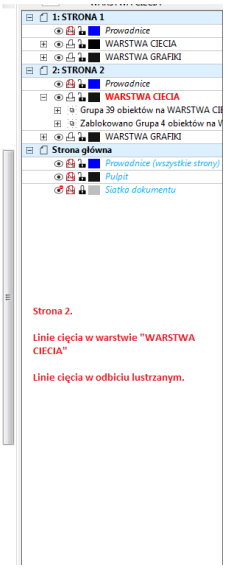
1. Applying cutting lines on the sheet:
    - Open the template in your chosen vector program.
    - Design the arrangement of tokens on the sheet, placing their shapes in the "CUTTING LAYER."
2. Spacing:
    - Keep a minimum distance of 5 mm between individual elements to avoid issues during cutting.
3. Grouping and Centering:
    - After placing the tokens, group them into one object.
    - Center the entire group on the sheet using the "P" shortcut (in Corel Draw).
4. Mirroring and Copying:
    - Copy the entire group of tokens to the other side ("CUTTING LAYER").
    - Mirror them horizontally so that the cutting lines match the other side.
5. Exporting the Cutting File:
    - Export both sides to a PDF file and name the file descriptively, e.g., Kowalski_tokens_cutting.pdf.
    - Ensure the file only contains cutting lines and elements from the master template.

As an example, it might look like this (click to enlarge):









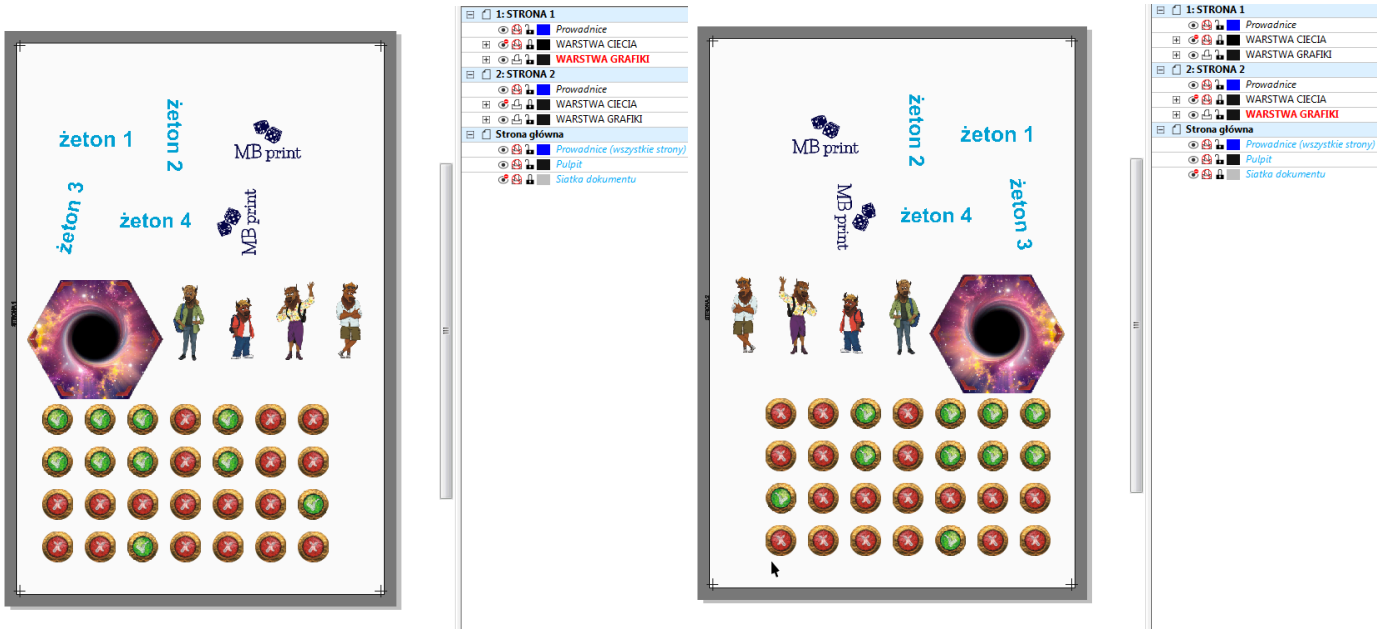
Step 2: Preparing the Front Side of the Sheet with Graphics

1. Adding Graphics:
    - On the prepared sheet with cutting lines, place your images and graphics in a new layer named "GRAPHIC LAYER."
2. Hiding the Cutting Layer:
    - Hide the "CUTTING LAYER," then disable its printing and exporting.

Step 3: Preparing the Back Side of the Sheet

1. Adding Reverse Graphics:
    - Go to the other side of the sheet and place the reverse graphics so that they correspond to the front side graphics.
    - Ensure that the graphic on the left side of the front matches the graphic on the right side of the reverse.
2. Single-Sided Elements:
    - If the tokens are to be single-sided, leave the reverse blank or fill it with a selected color.
3. Exporting the Back Side:
    - Hide the "CUTTING LAYER," then disable its printing and exporting.
    - Export the graphics to a PDF file, name it, e.g., Kowalski_tokens_graphics.pdf.

For our example, it might look like this (click to enlarge):



Step 4: Final File

1. Combine layers and export:
    - Enable visibility of all layers, enable printing and export all layers.
    - Export the final PDF file, which will contain the graphics of the chips and the visible cut lines, e.g.: smith_chips.pdf.
2. Finished files:
    - Now you have three PDF files: Use them to place your order on the MB Print website.

Additional Tips

Preparing multiple pages of graphics with the same cutting pattern can reduce the cost of the service, as one cutting die will fit multiple sheets.