Frequently asked questions, making or using a bar code.

Q: Inkjet or Laser printer?

I use a Laser printer, but a high quality Inkjet printer with quality ink and paper should not be a problem. Make sure the ink doesn't smear.

Q: Bitmap image or vector image?

Vector image is the best and you will be able to adjust the vector image and still keep the high resolution (don't overdo it as your printer should also be able to print the bars in the bar code), vector is based on a point to point calculation. A Bitmap is a pixel based image, but will print high quality bar code as long as you do not resize it.

Barcode Image Maker Pro v2.00 supports the following vector image formats Encapsulated PostScript (*.eps), Enhanced Metafile (*.emf)

Q: The bar code image (bitmap) looks fuzzy, what's wrong?

Never ever stretch / resize a Bitmap image, make it the size and dpi you need. If you stretch a bitmap image you will also make it less usable as you will change the resolution (dpi), you do not get additional pixels when stretching the bitmap image. So if your bar code bitmap looks fuzzy or gray when printing it, then it has most likely been stretched / resized. If you want to stretch an image, then please use the vector image.

Q: Is it okay to use a 96 dpi bar code?

No, in a narrow (small) bar code like the UPC-E or EAN-8 at 80% size you will most likely not have all the bars included and the bar code will not scan. As no printer prints at 96 dpi, I recommend that you use the same dpi as your printer or at least 300 dpi or use a Vector image as its resolution independent. If you are only using the bar code image for design (not to be scanned) bar code then it's okay to use a 96 dpi. If you are going to use a 96 dpi bar code, then please make sure you scan the bar code to make sure it works, if it doesn't scan make a wider bar (Bar Width, x-dim). Please note that a 96 dpi is only 0.96 Pixels at 10 Mils (1 Mils = 1/1000 Inch (0.0254 mm)). A printer only prints full pixels, you will get a print out, but some bars may be incorrect or missing. At 300 dpi you will have 3 pixels at 10 Mils.

Q: Bar code is way too big for my design, but the measurements are correct.

If you use the default settings in Adobe Photoshop you will get a 72 dpi (72 Pixels/Inch) canvas and if you make a 1200 dpi bar code, you have a ratio of 16.66 to 1, e.g. the bar code is 16.66 times the size of the canvas resolution. Set the canvas to the resolution of your printer, e.g. if you are printing at 300 dpi, make the canvas 300 dpi in Adobe Photoshop or any other software you use and also save the bar code image at 300 dpi and you have a 1:1 ratio. Adobe Photoshop will be able to open an Encapsulated PostScript (*.eps), but please note that it will be converted to a bitmap image.

Included in the Help file there are some "How to…" e.g. "How to Use Bar code in design"

If you have Adobe Illustrator or any other software product supporting vector images, then you should use it as the vector image is easier to use and edit the design and bar code (vector image).

Q: I have two bar codes in my design, but they do not scan.

First make sure that your bar code scanner supports the bar code types you use, read the bar code scanner manual. Also make sure that the bar codes are not too close to each other as it will confuse the bar code scanner. If that's not the problem then make the bars in the bar code wider (Bar Width, x-dim).

Q: What's the best bar width for a bar code?

That depends on your bar code scanner and the distance to the bar code. Look in your bar code scanner manual and see what mils (1 Mils = 1/1000 Inch (0.0254 mm)). the bar code scanner supports at what distance. The wider that bars you use the further the distance you will be able to scan the bar code, but then you also have to think about the width of the scanning area of the bar code scanner.

Q: What's most important Width or Height?

The width, as the bar code scanner reads the width of the bars and spaces.

Q: Is it okay to set the height of the bar code to less than the GS1 recommended height?

GS1 doesn't recommend it, but almost all UPC or EAN bar codes are not the recommended height today as design is first priority and bar code second. It's up to you to decide.

Q: Should I always use the OCR-B font for the bar code (UPC and EAN)?

GS1 permits any font as long as it's clearly readable.

Q: Using Colors for the bar code, what are the rules?

This quote is from the GS1 manual

"The most suitable and reliable colour combination is black bars on a white background. However, as a general rule, the background of the bar code symbol can be a light, warm colour that does not contain any black (such as yellow or light orange), and the bar colour can be a dark, cool colour that has no, or low, red content (such as dark blue or dark green). It is also a recommendation to avoid high gloss inks as this can cause problems with the reflectance values."

Included in the Help file are some "How to…" chapters

How to make a UPC-A bar code

How to make an EAN-13 bar code

How to make a ISBN + Price Tag bar code

How to make a MS Excel worksheet.

How to make a TAB delimited file.

How to print on labels

How to edit the *.eps or *.emf in Adobe Illustrator

How to Use Bar code in design

If you have any questions, please e-mail info@barcodemaking.com