

How to prepare a file for output to make an ICC profile

It's important to consider what we hope to accomplish by making an output profile. In essence we wish to fingerprint our output device and insure it produces accurate consistent prints. Always keep this in mind and the process and theory of profiling and calibrating (which are quite different) will be clear to you.

The key to getting this all to work is to keep two key concepts in mind:

Never alter the data (the test file) we need to print for creating the profile

Keep consistency in how we output files with the printer after profiling

In order to make a profile, you will output the supplied file from this web page. The RGB and CMYK test forms contain hundreds of colored patches of known color value. Therefore it is absolutely critical that you do not alter these files in any way! Do not convert the files when opening them in Photoshop. Do not resize the files as the distance between patches is critical. The only function that is allowed is to alter the resolution of the file (resample up or down within reason) while keeping the dimensions at 100%.

The next concept to understand is that whatever method you use to output the file to your printer must be used after you receive the profile. The printer must remain consistently set to the settings used to print the test form. It is for this reason that it is a very good idea to set your printer defaults in a logical way. For example, if you have been altering the printer driver to alter the color to your liking, I would advice you set any such controls back to the default (None). The resulting profile will produce the desired fixes to color and density. If your printer driver has any settings over color, contrast, density or saturation, set those settings to factory default (zero or none). Never print the test form using any "Automatic" corrections in the print driver! Auto corrections virtually insure that the driver is altering the print data on a case by case basis. We want the printer to remain consistent so we can fingerprint it.

One area to keep in mind when using print drivers out of Photoshop 5.0 is "Printer Color Management" and the popup menu next to it. This is placed in the driver by Photoshop 5.0. Be sure you do NOT have Printer Color Management ON when you print out the test form. This will alter the colors! Leave the popup menu set to the default (RGB or CMYK depending on the file you are printing) After the profile is created, this check box is quite useful for specifying the source (your RGB Working Space) of the files in cause you do use a printer that can support ColorSync profiles directly (more latter).

Calibration of a printer is a good idea if your printer supports it. For example the Fuji Pictography 3000 and 4000 have an on board calibrator. A special internal file is printed and measured on the Fuji calibrator and the printer is then set to "factory spec". This is excellent because it insures we can profile the printer once placed into a known state and always bring the printer back to that state (and hence keep our profile accurate and usable). If your printer has any such on board calibration, use it! Then output the test form. Also be sure you set both the printer and software the drives the printer to a default condition prior to calibration. The Fuji printers allow the user to move sliders in the soft-

ware to alter color and density. Similar controls can be used on the control panel of this printer. Don't do this! Set all the controls to zero. Lastly, some print drivers have settings that attempt to alter (improve?) the color. Using the Fuji printer once again as an example, they have an option called "ColorMatch" in the driver. Don't be tempted to use any such settings on your printer! Try and place the printer and software into as close an "Idiot" condition as possible.

Once you get your profile back, in most cases you will leave the printer in an identical state as you placed it for printing the test form. There are exceptions. For example, in the Epson line of ink jet printers, you can select the custom profile directly in the driver (see figure). When you made the test print, hopefully you set the printer in the state known as "No Color Adjustment." Some printers will allow you to use the profile directly in the print driver, others will not. IF you get poor results, set the printer in exactly the same state as you used to make the test form and use the Profile to Profile method described in the PDF "How to use these profiles" and examine the output. Using Profile to Profile is not the easiest way to apply a profile but it's usually the safest since you keep the driver and it's color management oddities out of the loop.

FOR EPSON (MAC) USERS:

There are 3 possible ways to use the custom profiles; only use ONE.

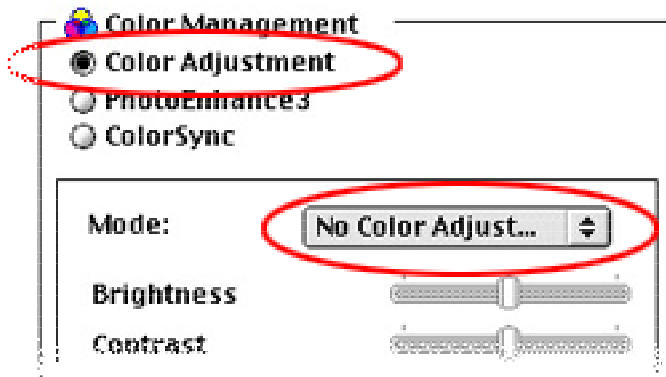
1. Profile to Profile in Photoshop (this is what I recommend see the PDF "Using These Profiles if you do not knowhow to use Photoshop's Profile to Profile feature). You then must have all settings in the Epson driver set off (Printer Color Management check box OFF), NO color Adjustments in the Advanced settings. See illustration "Method #1."

2. Profile to Profile using the driver (supplied by Adobe). Printer Color Management check box is off. What this check box does is tell us the source which is your Working Space; for example ColorMatch RGB, Adobe 1998. Since you have specified an output profile, Photoshop will access the information about the Working Space. There is no harm in having the check box on but it's not necessary in this case. In the popup menu you select the output profile. Then in the Advanced setting, you have No Adjustment set. Naturally you don't use Profile to Profile in Photoshop first. See Illustration "Method #2."

3. Using ColorSync in Advanced settings. Printer Color Management check box is on. RGB Popup is set to RGB. In the advanced setting area of the printer driver, you pick the profile in the popup menu (where the default is Epson Standard, all other RGB output profiles will show up, pick the custom profile). Naturally you don't use Profile to Profile in Photoshop first. See Illustration "Method #3."

All 3 options should produce nearly identical results. Method 3 would be the one that may be off a tad because you can't use the Adobe CMM (built in) so whatever CMM you selected in the ColorSync control panel (Kodak, Lino, Automatic) is used. You don't have access to Black Point Compensation (which should be off anyway hence the reason I recommend method 1 as it's the only method that allows you to control BPC).

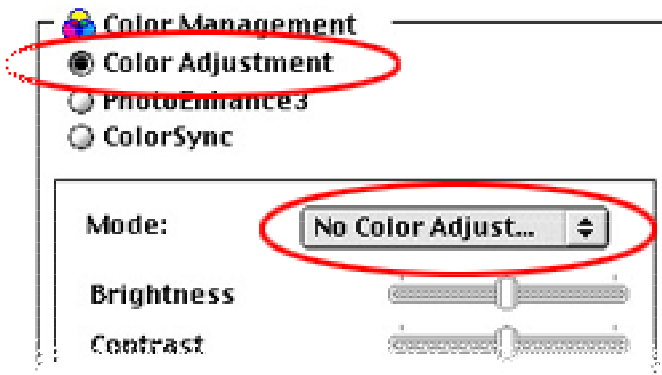
METHOD #1 SETTINGS FOR EPSON DRIVER



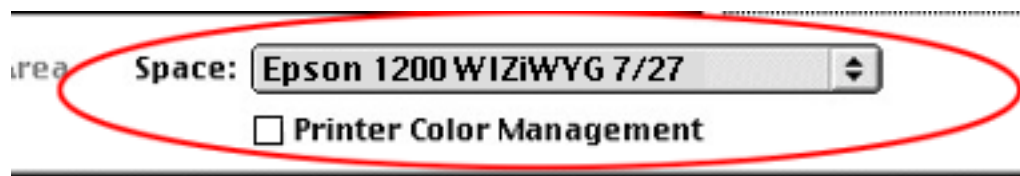
In the Epson driver, these are the settings that will produce NO color alterations to files printed for either output of the test form. Use this setting if you use Method #1 (Profile to Profile within Photoshop 5).



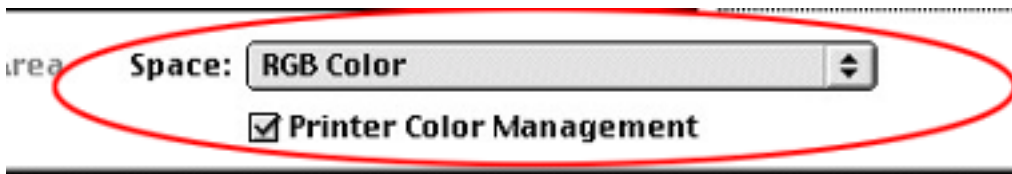
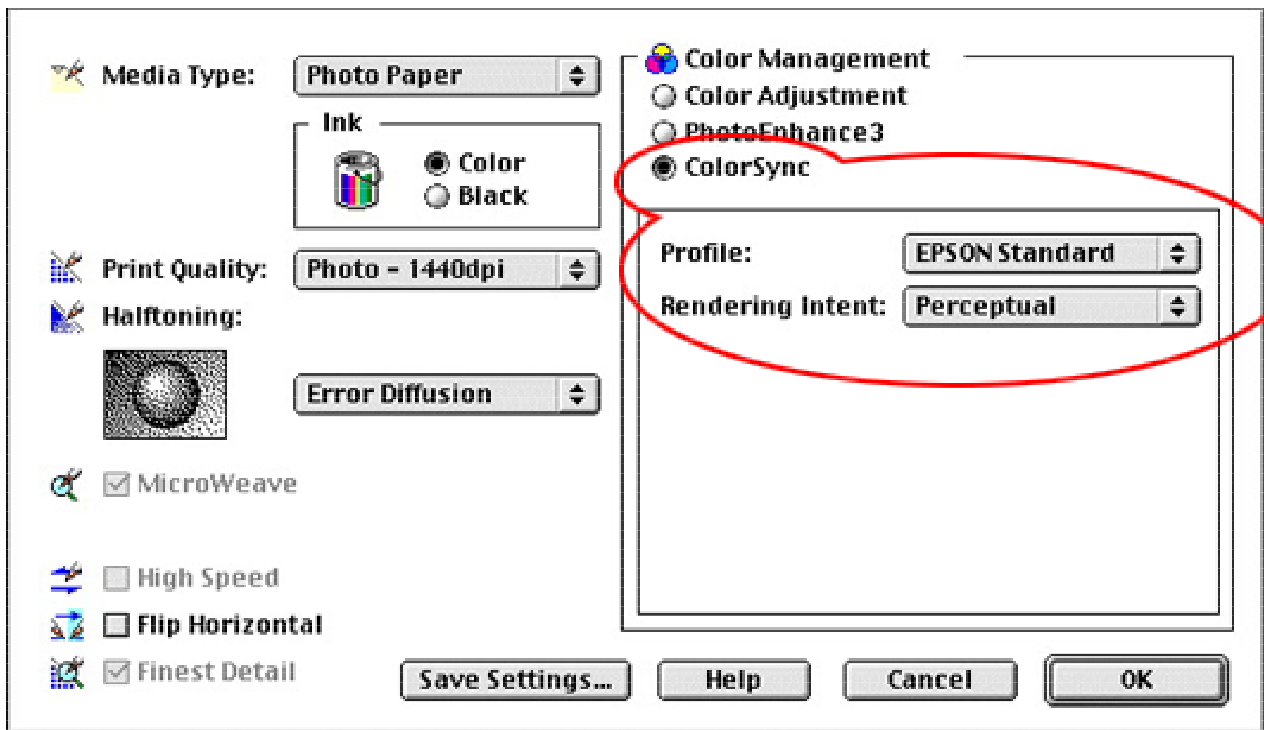
METHOD #2 SETTINGS FOR EPSON DRIVER



In the Epson driver, these are the settings that allow Photoshop 5 to use Profile to Profile *within* the driver (Method #2). Space is set in popup menu to specify the output profile as seen below. Printer Color Management check box can be off as Photoshop “knows” the RGB Working Space.



METHOD #3 SETTINGS FOR EPSON DRIVER



Here are settings you can use to apply the output profile within the Epson driver. ColorSync radio button is active. Profile Popup menu allows any RGB output profile to be selected (here the Epson Standard profile supplied by Epson is set). Printer Color Management check box is ON which specifies the RGB Working Space the file you wish to print is currently set to (other wise your monitor profile loaded in ColorSync is used, this isn't a good idea!). Space is set to RGB. Of course you would NOT use Profile to Profile inside of Photoshop first if you used these settings. Using this method #3 provides no control over Black Point Compensation nor can you use the Adobe CMM (Built in). The CMM is picked through the Colorsync control panel.

Note to Windows users. I highly recommend you use the 2nd method (Profile to Profile) to apply the profiles for output to your printers. An excellent web page for information on Windows and the use of ICM profiles is <http://come.to/digitaldarkroom>.