11 Basic Printing

Printing is one of the areas of Photoshop that causes people problems. Typically, their prints don't look like the on-screen version of the document. You have to accept that your monitor and printer reproduce colours in very different ways and that they will never be completely identical in their output. Having said that, there are a number of things that we can do to help narrow the gap.

The very best method of getting a good print output that closely resemble the version you see on your monitor, is to buy (or borrow) a calibration device. There are many calibration devices on the market. However, the best ones enable you to calibrate both your monitor and printer so that their out matches as closely as possible. This kind of device will create custom "Profiles", which Photoshop can use to display and print you documents accurately.

A good calibration device can be expensive, so let's look at how we can be better results from Photoshop if we don't have access to one.

- Go your printer manufacturer website. Download and install the latest drivers for your printer.
- Make sure that you are viewing your monitor in a colour neutral environment. Colours that are around us strongly influence how we see colours on the screen. If you have strong colours in the room that you are working in, try working in the dark.
- Check your document for out of gamut colours – colours that your printer is unable to reproduce, such as strong, heavily saturated colours.
- If you are working with images, make sure that you adjust your image so that there is good detail in both the highlight and shadow areas.
- Let Photoshop handle the printing. Turn off your printers colour management options.
- If you are making high quality photo or fine art prints on high quality paper, check the manufacturer's website to see if they have produced a custom profile for the particular paper stock that you are using.

The Photoshop Print Dialogue Box

When you wish to make a print go to the File menu and choose the Print option, fig 11.1.

Fig 11.1 the Print option, found in the File menu.

Once the Print option is chosen, the Print Dialogue box will be displayed, as shown in fig 11.2.
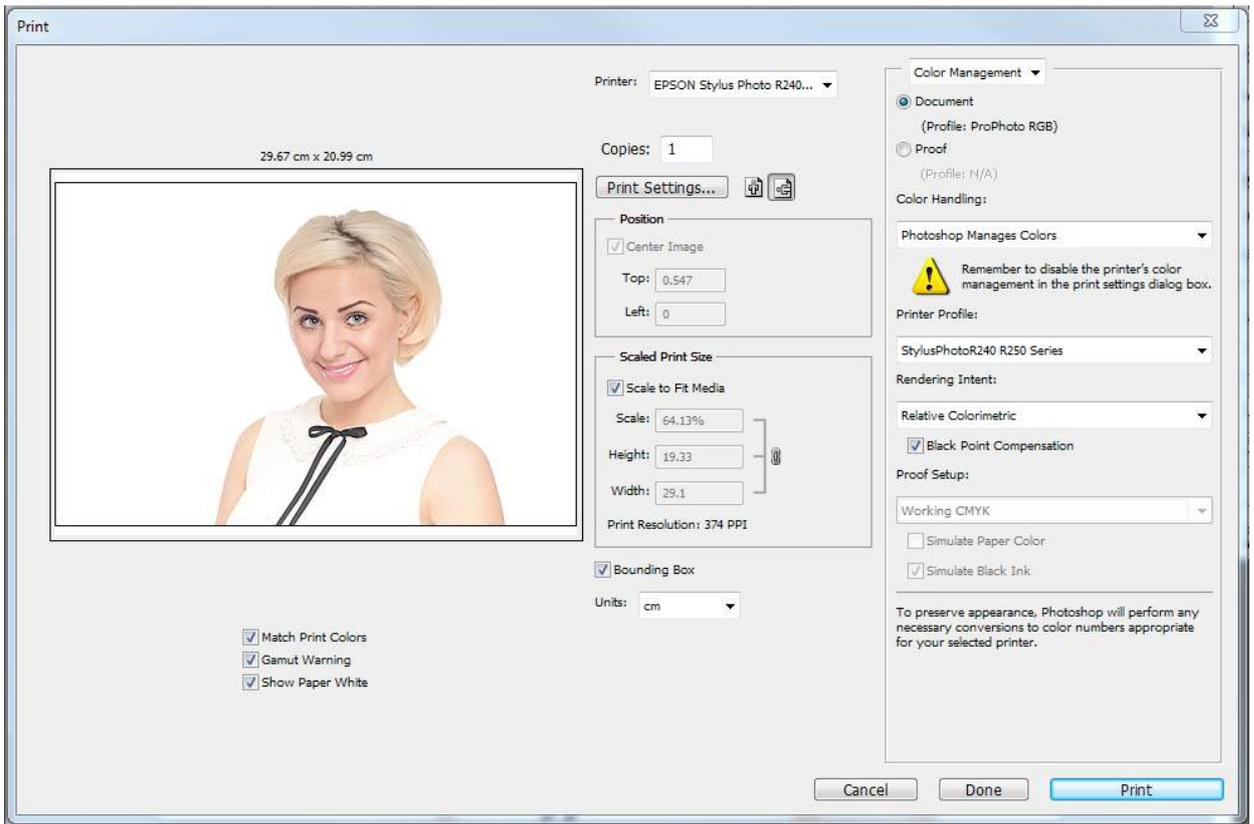
Fig 11.2 the Photoshop print dialogue box

Make sure that the following settings are made:

- Select your printer from the drop down list at the top of the dialogue box.
- Set Photoshop Manages Colors from the Color Handling drop down list.
- In the Printer Profile section, have this set to either your printer or any custom that you may wish to use.
- For photographic documents, have the Rendering Intent drop down menu set to either Perceptual or Relative Colorimetric and make sure that the Black Point Compensation Check box is ticked.
- For documents containing graphics or charts, you may use any of the Rendering Intents, but you may be able to reproduce stronger colours if you use the Saturation option.
- Click on Print Settings to open up you printers settings (this will be different for every printer – refer to your user manual for how to make the required settings). Select the resolution, paper size and paper type that you wish to use. Find the Colour Management settings for your printer and turn them off, fig 11.3.
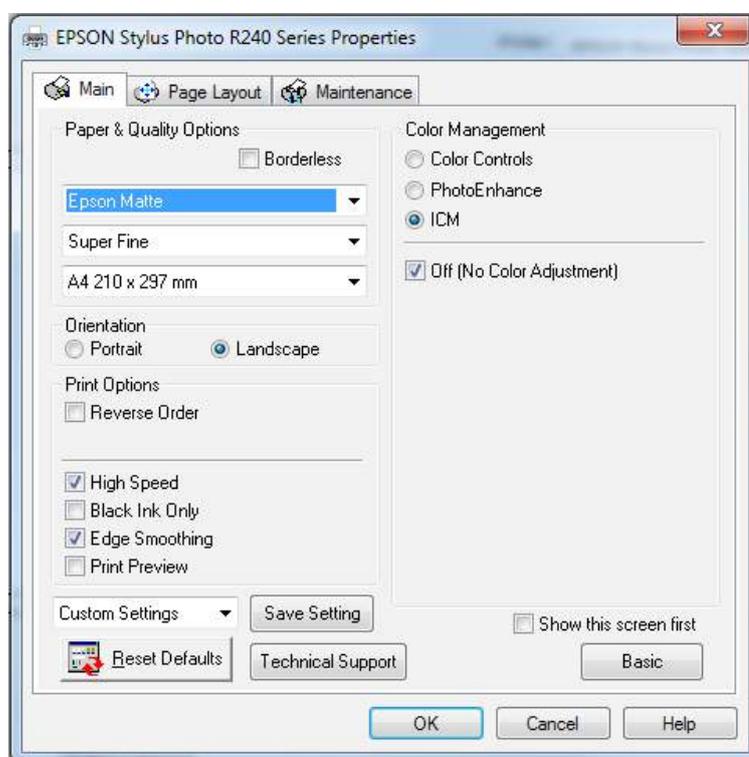
Fig 11.3 a typical Printer settings dialogue box. Turn off the printers colour management options.

If you want to produce a high quality print, it is often a good idea to use the "Scaled Print Size" option to make a smaller test print. Enter a percentage value in the Scale box (make sure that the Scale to Fit Media check box is unchecked or you will not be able to do this). This will save you ink in the long run, as you will probably have to make some adjustments to you document and make a few prints before you are happy with the results. Prints are almost always darker than their on screen versions, so it's a good idea to make a Levels Adjustment Layer (see Chapter 4) and brighten the image slightly before you print. Once you have made a print that you are happy with, you can turn off or discard the Levels Adjustment Layer.