

CASE STUDY • DESIGN SYSTEMS & PRINT

# TCG card template system

Seven card types in two orientations, built as print-ready, script-driven InDesign templates for a German fantasy trading card game



Card artwork supplied by the client

Josh Palmer • [jpalmdesign.com](http://jpalmdesign.com)

# Seven card types, one visual system

Design, finish, templates and print files, delivered stage by stage

7

card types

2

orientations

88 × 63 mm

trim, 3 mm bleed

PDF/X-4

FOGRA51 · 300% ink

BASE + FOIL

spot plate for titles

Script-ready

labelled frames



## My role



### Layout design

Horizontal family from two concept directions to approved production layouts



### Material system

Aged-bronze finish built as reusable texture layers, applied to every template



### Print production

CMYK conversion, ink limits, bleed, foil separation and preflighted PDF/X-4



### Template interface

Script labels, styles, type limits and a written spec for the client's automation

# Five stages, each approved before the next

Decisions locked early, so the build never re-opened design questions

1

## Material study

Three CMYK finish directions,  
one approved



2

## Vertical family

Four templates, swatch families,  
spec v1



3

## Horizontal concept

Two directions, one refinement  
round



4

## Reference cards

Populated cards, full finish, print  
PDFs



5

## Production build

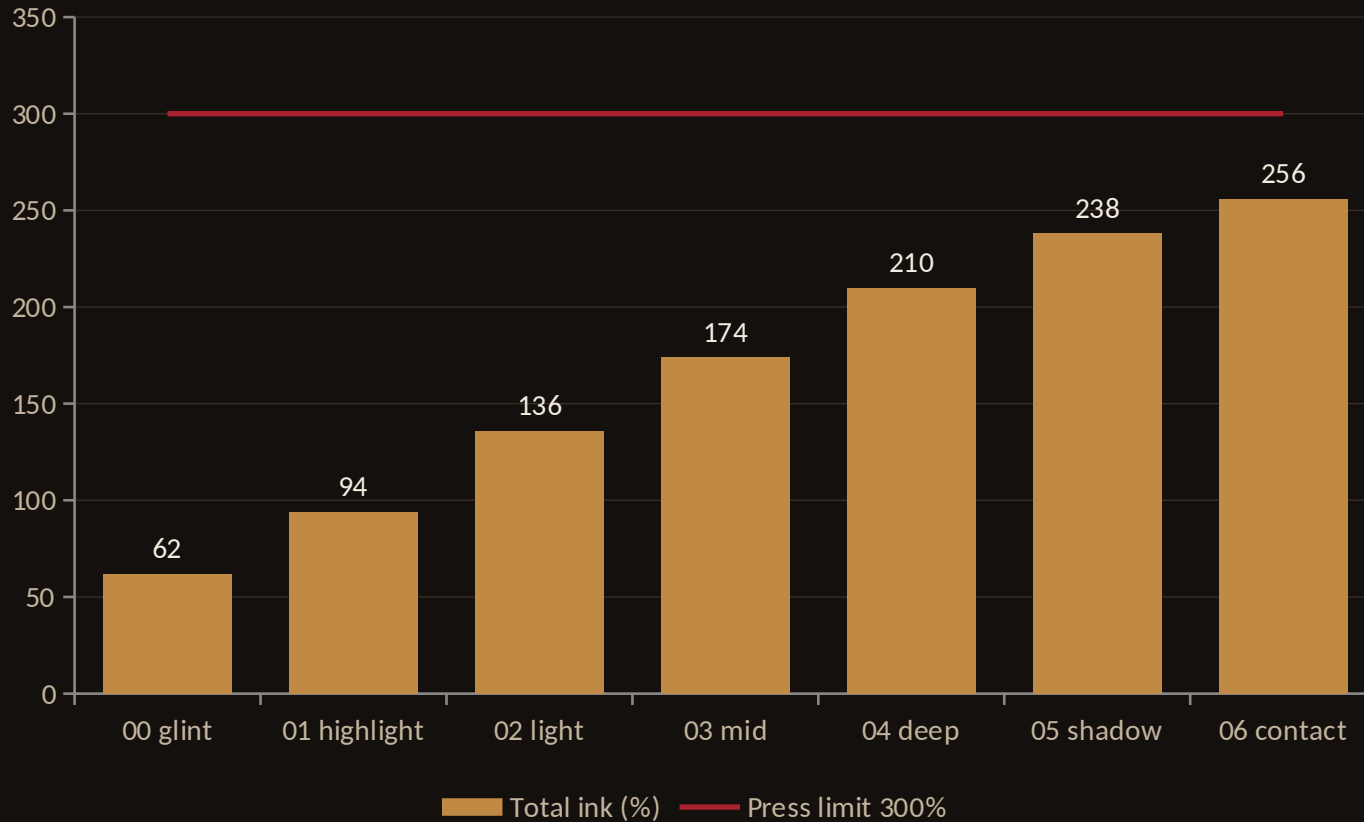
Script-ready templates, audit,  
package



# Aged bronze, held under a 300% ink limit

Chosen from three CMYK studies: aged bronze, weathered copper and dark patina

Total ink per step of the approved bronze ramp



## The approved ramp



Seven steps, glint to contact shadow (screen approximation of CMYK)



The same construction for Spell: blue frame family, bronze ornaments kept

# Vertical family: one construction, re-coloured by type

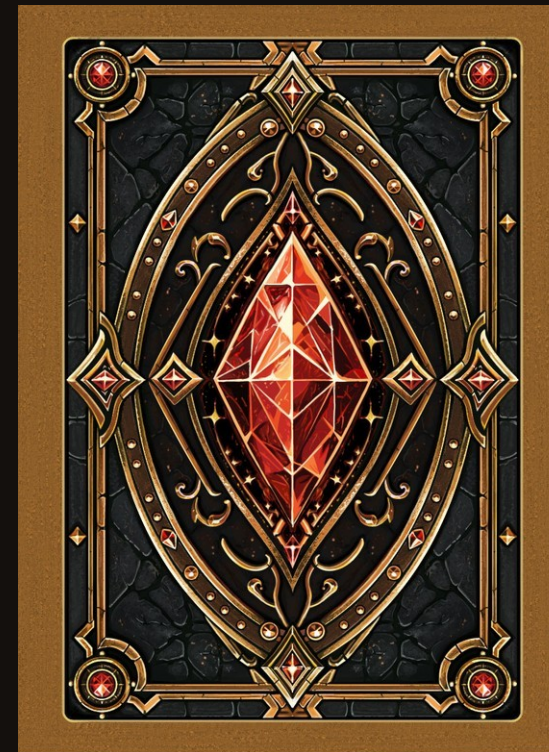
Attack Creature, split Attack Equipment, Spell and Retaliation share one frame build



Attack Creature



Attack Equipment (split)



Card back, shown with bleed

## Swatch architecture

FRM

Frame family; changes per card type

ORN

Ornaments; bronze on every card

GEM

Gems, shared

NEU

Dark neutrals, shared

*One swatch edit updates every template*

# Horizontal family: a panorama window for 16:9 art

New layouts for Defender Creature, Base and split Defender Equipment



Ruby at the rail crossing



Value cartouche, lining figures

# 72%

of a 16:9 image left as a clear window,  
after the panorama layout beat a column  
layout in concept review

- Split Equipment keeps two complete half-cards on one frame, with a shared divider
- Every title, value and label tested against the longest real names and rules texts

# Templates the client's database can fill

Fixed frames, stable labels and documented limits turn a data export into print files



| Script label               | What it controls                      |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| IMG_ARTWORK_LEFT / _RIGHT  | Artwork frames, fill proportionally   |
| TXT_CARD_NAME_BASE / _FOIL | Title twice: ink plate and foil plate |
| TXT_LEVEL · TXT_ARCHETYPE  | Level badge, archetype plate          |
| TXT_RULES                  | Rules text, normal and minimum size   |
| TXT_STAT_LABEL / _VALUE    | Value housings, labels live           |
| TXT_COST_AMOUNT / _TYPE    | Two-line cost field                   |

## Delivered with every template

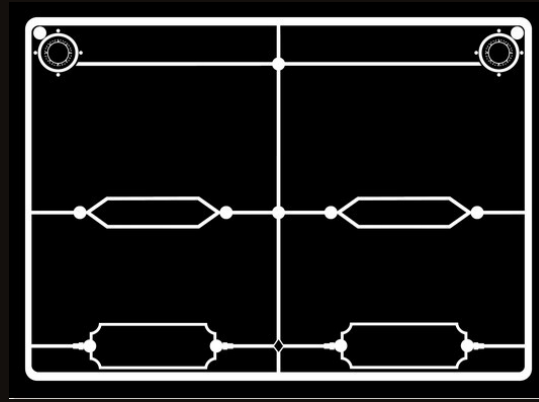
- ✓ Interface spec: labels, styles, type floors, maximum lengths
- ✓ Data model for split cards: two records linked by group id
- ✓ ExtendScript audit that checks labels and preflights output
- ✓ 16:9 artwork guide so new art drops in without crop surprises

# Print production: masks, separations, checks

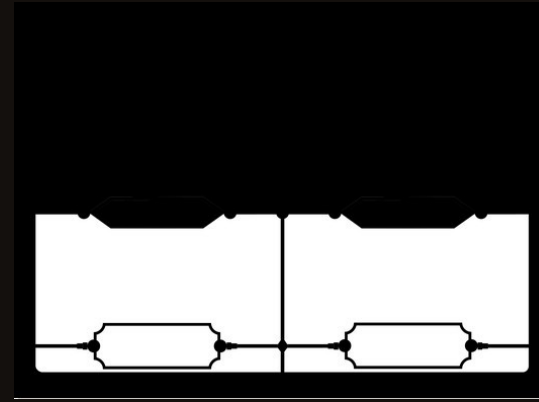
The finish is driven by masks generated from the vector geometry, and every file is checked before it ships



Vector reference



Gold mask



Stone mask



FOIL plate, titles only

Share of card surface receiving the metal finish (%)



## Checks before delivery

- Mask audit: every texture mask compared with the vector; the vector mask covered 76% more frame
- Separations and ink in Acrobat Output Preview on every BASE and FOIL PDF
- Bleed, trim, embedded fonts, links and preflight clean

# What I'd bring to your team



## Production-ready from day one

Files built to the printer's spec, preflighted, with no rework at press



## Systems that scale

Templates, styles and swatches that let one edit carry across a whole product line



## Clear documentation

Specs and guides your team, developers and artists can follow

**[jpalmdesign.com](http://jpalmdesign.com)**

Josh Palmer · Print production, design systems and illustration

