

## CUTTING PRINTED IMAGES WITH PRECISION ON CRICUT

**Note:** After brainstorming this idea for a quick cut I had to make, I came across the hinge method on the net. My thanks to whoever came up with it, I'll definitely be using it for projects that involve multiple printed pages that have to be cut the same way.

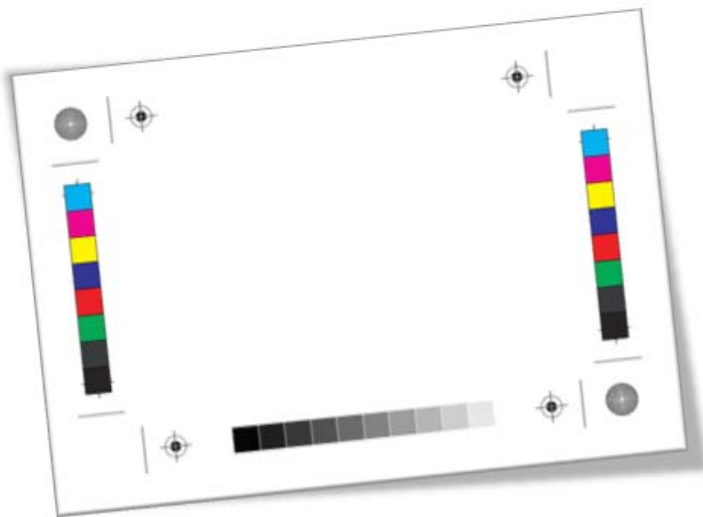
This method is more suitable for projects where only one (maybe two) sheets need to be cut, and you don't want to cut extra cardstock, or use up the blade or mat to make a template every time. (for someone like me who intends to mostly cut printed images double cutting everything does add up)

### ONE LAST THING

This also is not meant (can't be used) for the situation where you intend to use the full negative space. It's used for cutting shapes out, or if you intend to trim the paper after cutting.

### SOME BACKGROUND

You might have seen the color bar and printers marks on the edge of a paper before it's trimmed when CMYK printing is done. It looks like this:



It's used to check the color and print alignment for the multiple passes the paper has to make though the machine to apply each color.

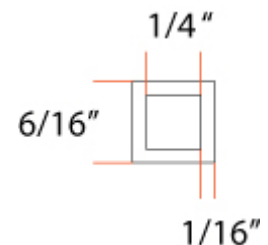
This method uses the same principle to align the print and cut.

### PREPARING THE PRINT IMAGE

The image was designed in a vector imaging program (in my case Illustrator). Once the image is positioned and ready for print, create a new layer and draw 4 squares  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch size on the edge of the page (but inside the print margin). Next duplicated the squares and scaled them  $\frac{2}{16}$  larger. This way you get a  $\frac{1}{16}$  adjustment margin.

In Illustrator I used **line thickness 0.25** for the squares. You want them to be as thin as possible. The thicker the line, less precise the positioning. [Screen shot on next page.](#)

Save, print or export file for print.



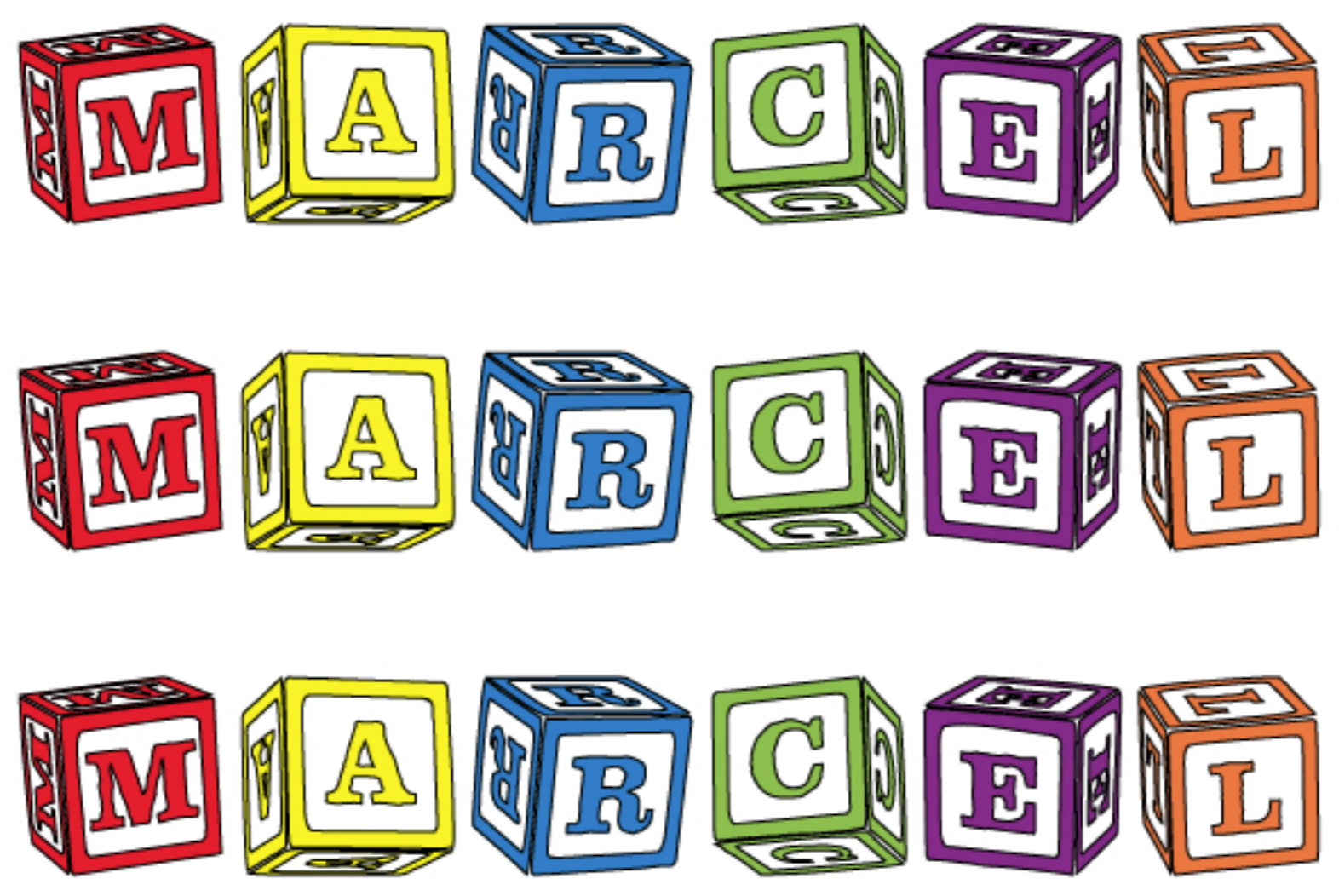
No Selection

Stroke: 1 pt Opacity: 100 %

Document Setup Preferences

anna card outside.ai\* @ 107.13% (RGB/Preview)

The reference squares  
(you can position them anywhere)



COLOR COLOR GUIDE  
C 69.76 %  
M 67.52 %  
Y 63.86 %  
K 73.96 %

SWATCH KIDS STUFF BRUSH SYMB  
Grid of color swatches

STROKE GRADIENT TRANSPARENCY  
Normal Opacity: 100 %  
Clip Invert Mask

APPEARANCE GRAPHIC STYLES  
No Selection  
Stroke: 1 pt  
Fill: [Color]  
Opacity: Default

LAYERS  
Notes  
Cut Reference  
Image

## PREPARING THE CUT FILE

Using the same file or a copy of it, create the cutting lines around the image on the same layer as the squares. Turn off all layers except the cutting layer and also **turn off** the outer square (we don't need it cut). The only thing that is supposed to be visible at this point is the image cut outline and the ¼" square cut outline.

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### ONE MORE STEP

You need to import the exact artboard (paper size) into Make a Cut. This is your scale and placement reference line.

Still on same layer draw a rectangle on the **exact** border of the artboard. It will get imported as a cut line into MTC.

Save and export file as .svg.      **Screen shot on next page.**

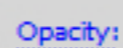
No Selection



Stroke:



Style:



Opacity:

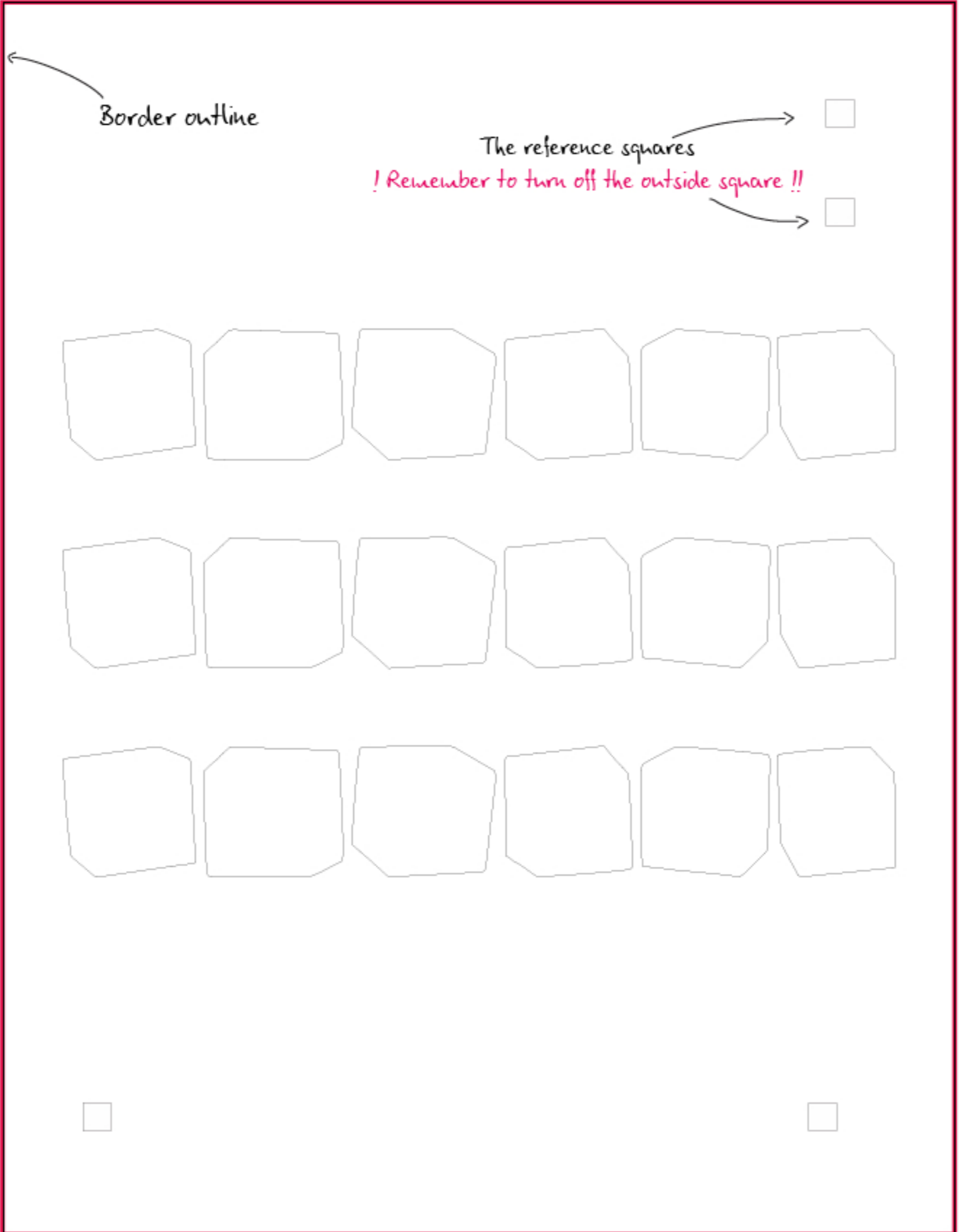
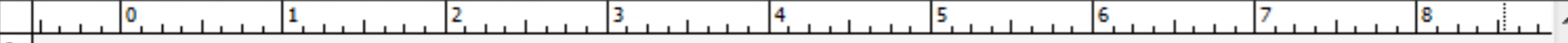
100

%

Document Setup

Preferences

anna card outside.ai\* @ 107.13% (RGB/Preview) x



Border outline

The reference squares  
! Remember to turn off the outside square !!

COLOR COLOR GUIDE

C	0	%
M	100	%
Y	40	%
K	0	%

SWATCH KIDS STUFF BRUSH SYMB

STROKE GRAD TRANSPARENCY

Normal Opacity: 100 %

Clip  
 Invert Mask

APPEARANCE GRAPHIC STYLES

No Selection

Stroke:

Fill:

Opacity: Default

LAYERS

- Notes
- Cut Reference
- Cut Layer
- Image

4 Layers

## MAKE THE CUT - SET UP FOR CUTTING

### IMPORT FILE

Import file into Make a Cut, check "Use Actual". As I found out, for illustrator "Use Actual" needs to be set at 72 DPI and for Inkscape at 90 DPI. If this is set up on import the file should import at the correct size.

Once imported make sure the paper size (that arboard outline you made) is correct. To check, make sure your "Selection Properties" toolbar is visible. You can open it by going to "View>>Sel. Prop. Bar" or CTRL+Q. If the W and H does not correspond to the paper size adjust to whatever it needs to be.

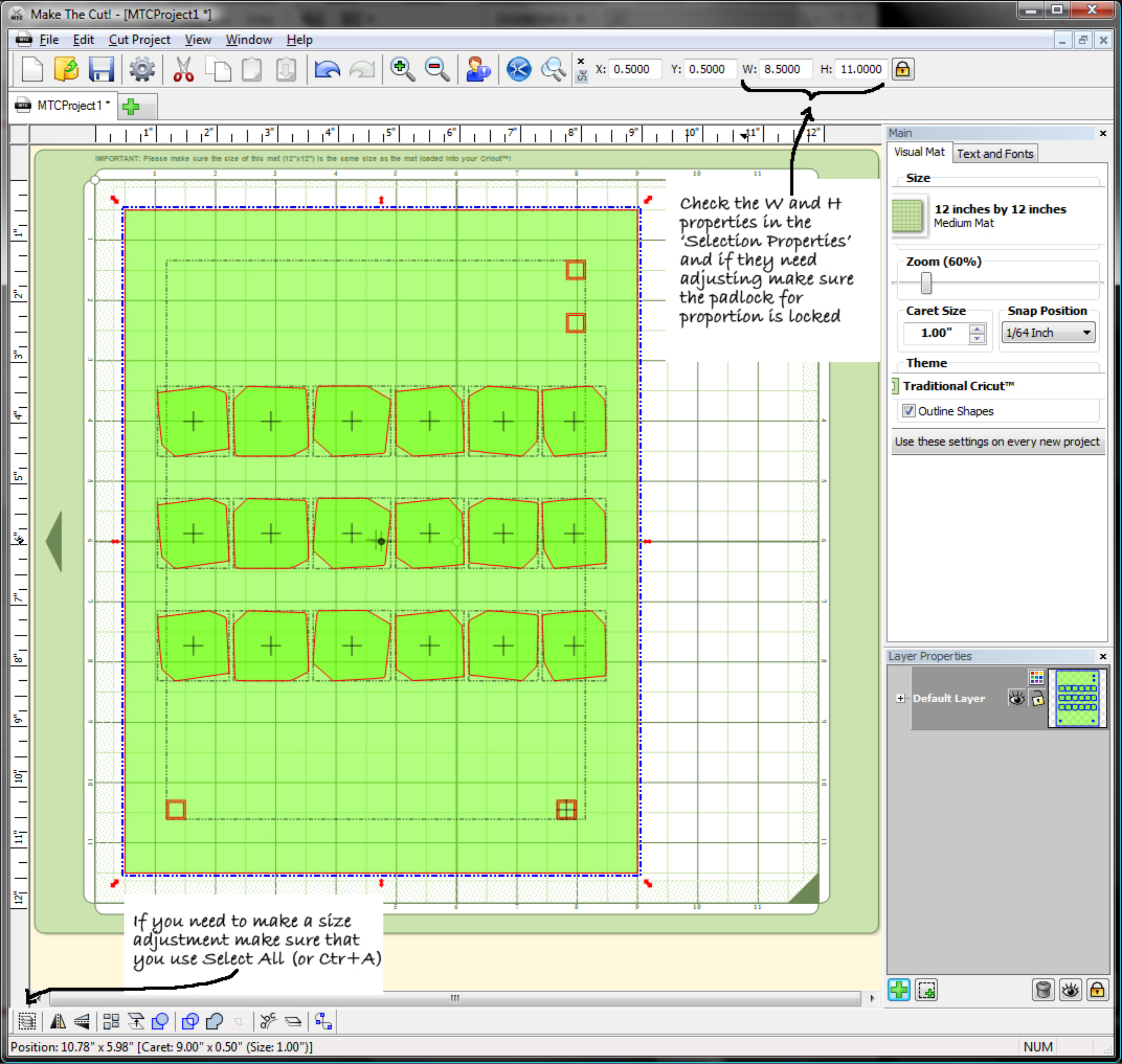
### TO ADJUST PAPER SIZE

If your paper size did not import at the right size, don't worry it's an easy fix. Just make sure you use Select All and that the keep proportion is locked (the little padlock) and change the W or H value. If you did everything right then changing one will resize the other properly.

Now still keeping everything selected position the paper on the mat. You can drag it, but since this is an accuracy project I would use the XY coordinate system on the "Selection Properties" toolbar.

The XY are easy to use. In my example I was using 8½x11 paper, my mat was 12x12. So my XY were 3.5 and 1. This will align it to the bottom left corner. You can position the paper [anywhere](#) on the mat. Just make sure that the position on your screen matches the position on the mat exactly.

We have made sure it's the right size and in the right position. Now to set everything up.

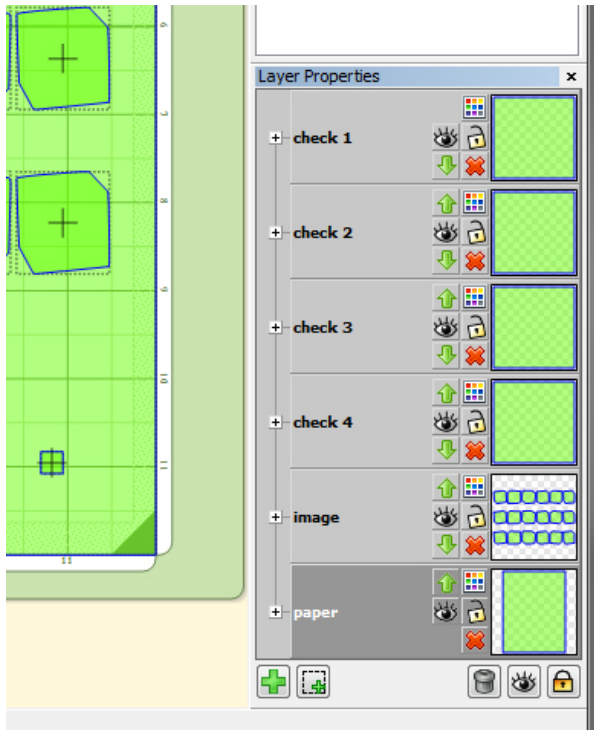


## SETTING YOUR LAYERS

You need to split the little reference squares into a layer each.

Select each and click on the "Selection to New Layer" (at the bottom of the Layers pallet).

Do the same for the artboard (paper) outline.



This is what my pallet looked like when I was done.

I tend to name my layers. A habit from long time use of Photoshop and illustrator where I can sometimes have over 50 layers... and looking through Layer 1, Layer 2 to find something becomes impossible.

It's a habit I would recommend as it makes working much easier, especially if you come back to the file a few months later. It clear and you don't have to think which layer is which.

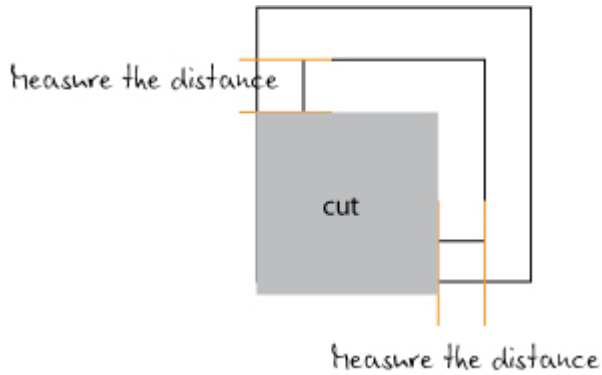
## WE ARE READY TO CUT

Take your printed paper, place it on the mat, same way as you placed on the screen, load mat.

**Turn off all layers except one square.** I left check 4 visible as it was on the bottom of the mat and the easiest to work with.

Cut. Once the square is cut, do **NOT** Unload the mat, press Load. This will move the mat into start position but keep it in place for the next cut.

Have a look at your cut square, is it in place? Is the cut overlapping the outside square line (that would be a 1/16" misalignment). Use the line of the larger outside square to eyeball or take a ruler and measure how much of an adjustment the cut needs.



I found the clear plastic ruler works best.

In MTC, turn all layers back on; Select All, and using the XY coordinates indicating the placement of the corner of the paper (artboard) adjust the cuts into place.

Figure out which direction you need to move the cut. A little thinking is involved at this point.

Turn off all layers except the second square. Cut. Once the cut is done, press Load (do **NOT** press Unload!!!) and verify if the cut is in place.

If the cut was not in place, repeat above and turn the third square layer on and cut. When it's exact go to next step.

If the cut is in place turn off the layer, and turn on the layer with the Image. Cut. You are done. The image will cut exactly.

## LAST THOUGHTS

It probably took you longer to read this than it will to set the alignment squares, split layers in MTC and make the adjustment cut, and measure.

It added less than 5 min to the overall project time to get the cut exactly where I wanted it, and three of those were probably spent on the brain exercise of : "...if it's like this do I have to move the cut left or right on my screen"

I work in Illustrator but there is no reason why this would not work in Inkscape or any other vector program.

Happy printing and cutting

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