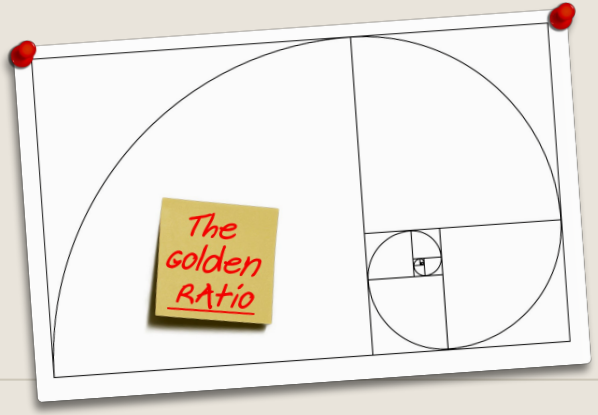
MAKING ART FOR TRADING CARDS

ASPECT RATIOS



Just like any design work there are rules when creating art specifically for print board & card games. These dictate where the action should be to make the most impact, highlight subjects, and make the art striking whilst not distracting from game elements.

Example: A potential rare miss from Pokémon - Chien-Pao has fantastic art, following the golden ratio as above, the action is well positioned, but the art is very busy making text difficult to read.

SIZE AND LAYOUT

There are many different trading card game layouts, each requiring varying levels of artwork. Yu-Gi-Oh! uses a Japanese card size with a boxed layout, while Magic: The Gathering uses a standard size with a similar boxed design. These formats prioritize gameplay elements over visuals, reflecting the design trends of the 1990s. Modern card games, however, tend to feature full-art designs that emphasize visual storytelling and world-building. For TUN35, we aim to showcase the world through the artwork, using each card to tell stories from the broader universe.

Yu-Gi-Oh!

Magic: the Gathering

One Piece

Riftbound

An early prototype concept of a full art TUN35 Trading Card.

PRINT FILE SIZES

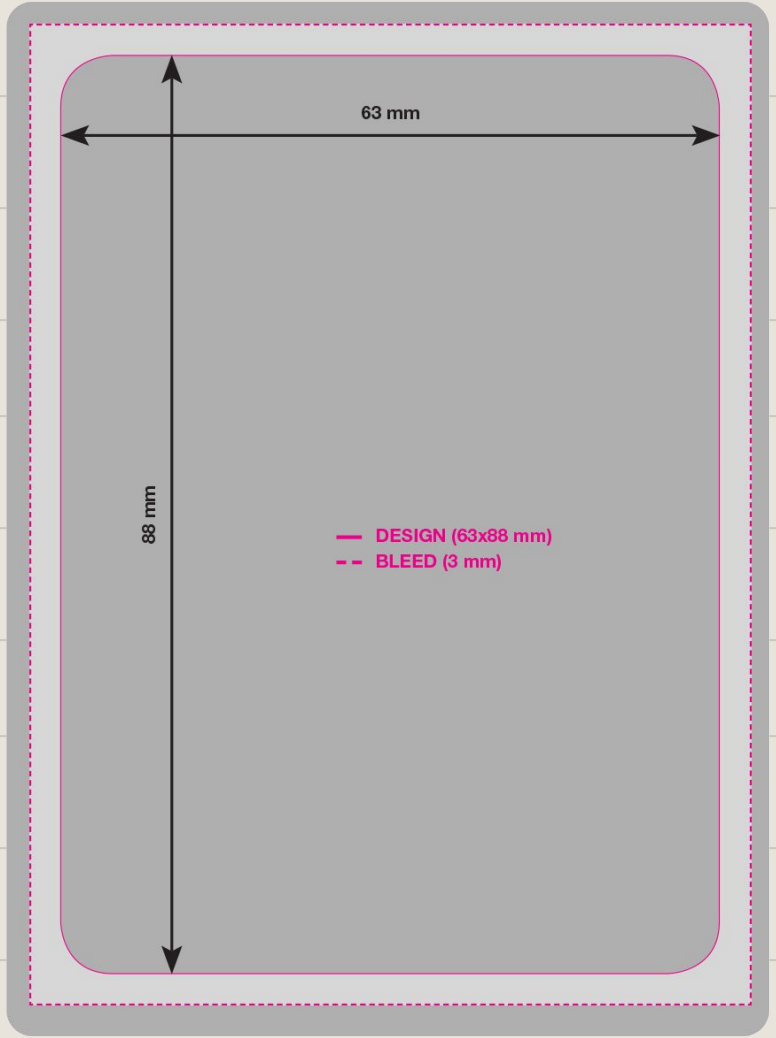
When designing cards it's good to look at a card whilst you're doing it.
Consider what artwork will look like at this size.

"DESIGN" AND "BLEED"

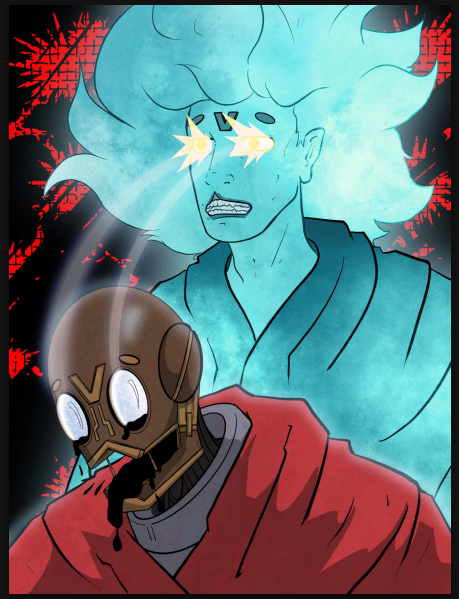
The light border shown in the image to the right is known as the 'bleed', this is where the card is cut, and is usually black in case the card slips causing a misprint. Think of the inside of this bleed as a safe zone for art.

PIXEL ASPECT RATIO

You should work in 300 DPI, but a print file for a card will usually be cut to 815x1110px including the bleed and around 750x1045px without.



EXAMPLES OF HOW ART CAN BE USED



Here's an example of art that not designed originally to be for a trading card, but can still be used - this is because the action and focal point can be seen clearly through game components.

EXAMPLES OF HOW ART CAN BE USED

Here's an example of art that can be used with reframing, and the original piece can be used for promotional or other media.

EXAMPLES OF HOW ART CAN BE USED

Larger pieces can be used for multiple cards, like above, so that players can put the cards together. This can be used for visual storytelling, and larger pieces can be used in promotional material or accessories, like game mats.