

# Quick Start Guide

Lay out, auto-nest, and export print-ready DTF gang sheets from your browser. Plan on five minutes.

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## 1 Open the Gang Sheet Builder

Two ways to get there:

- Sign in at [tonesmith.makerfoundryco.com](https://tonesmith.makerfoundryco.com) and click **Gang Sheet** in the editor's top nav, or visit [/gang-sheet](#) directly once signed in.
- From inside the halftone editor, finish a separation and click **Send to Gang Sheet** in the export modal — the gang sheet builder opens in a new tab with your separation already placed.

**No sign-up:** the public demo at [/gang-sheet-demo](#) is fully interactive (drag, auto-nest, background removal, all of it). Only Save and Export are gated behind a trial.

## 2 Configure Your Sheet

The left sidebar has every sheet-level control. Set these once and the rest of the work flows from them.

- **Width** — your printer's roll width (typically 22" for desktop DTF, larger for industrial).
- **Length mode** — *Auto* (the sheet grows as you add items) or *Fixed* (lock at a specific length, items that don't fit are flagged out-of-bounds).
- **Margins** — safe zone around the sheet's edges. Items inside margins still print, but margin guides nudge you toward a safer layout.
- **Gutter** — minimum gap between items. Auto-nest and snap both respect it, so you never have to hand-space.

Units toggle is at the top of the panel — switch between inches and millimeters anytime; values convert automatically.

### 3 Add Images to the Sheet

Three ways to bring artwork onto the sheet, all valid:

- **Drag-and-drop** any PNG (with transparency for cleanest results) onto the canvas.
- **Click + Add images** in the leftmost items panel to open a file picker. Multi-select to add a batch at once.
- **From the halftone editor** — click **Send to Gang Sheet** after applying a separation. The image lands here automatically.

New items get smart-placed: the builder finds the first empty spot that respects margins and gutter, and rotates the item if a 90° turn fits better.

**Source resolution matters:** the canvas displays a downsampled version of large images for performance, but exports use the *full* uploaded resolution. So 4000×5000 source PNGs print at the same quality as their original.

### 4 Arrange — Manually or Auto Nest

Drag items around the canvas. Smart guides snap edges to sheet bounds, margins, the centerline, and other items (with gutter). Hold **Alt** while dragging to bypass snap. Hold **Shift** while resizing to free the aspect ratio. Click and drag the rotation handle on top of any selected item to rotate.

Multi-select by **Shift**+clicking items, or by drag-marquee on empty canvas. Multi-drag moves them as a rigid group; the entire group's bounding box snaps to sheet edges.

For automatic packing:

- **Auto Nest** in the toolbar packs every item tightly, largest-first, with rotation, to minimize wasted DTF film.
- **Tile...** in the right panel duplicates the selection ×N and then auto-nests the result — one undoable step.
- **Duplicate...** creates copies at the next free spot.
- **Re-pack** in the sheet panel re-applies the current gutter to the existing layout.

**Watch the warning banner** in the toolbar. It surfaces overlapping items, items pushed out of sheet bounds, and items that span tile boundaries (see Step 6). Click the banner to select all flagged items so you can fix them in one go.

## 5 Background Removal — Per Image

Click any item on the canvas. The right-side property panel shows a **Background Removal** section. Hit **Remove Background (AI)** and the model runs entirely in your browser — nothing uploaded, no cost. The first run downloads a ~40 MB model (cached after that).

After it processes:

- **Edge cutoff** slider — lower keeps soft edge detail; higher gives a crisper, halftone-friendlier silhouette.
- **Clean up color spill** toggle — removes the residual background color in fringe pixels (the most common AI failure mode — greens between hair strands, halos around glass).
- **Undo background removal** link restores the original.

**Solid-color background?** The panel detects this and suggests halftoning the image in the *Editor's* Knockout Color tool first — it produces cleaner halftone edges than AI matting on flat backgrounds.


## 6 Tile Boundaries — Sheets Bigger Than Your Printer

Some printers can't take a single PNG longer than ~60". When your sheet exceeds the safe length, **magenta tile-boundary lines** appear on the canvas. They show where the export will split the sheet into multiple PNGs that line up edge-to-edge in your RIP.

Auto Nest, Tile, and Duplicate are tile-aware — they avoid placing items across boundaries when possible. If an item *does* straddle a boundary, it's flagged "blocking split" in the warning banner so you can move it before exporting.

## 7 Save & Export



Two distinct outputs. Both come from the same toolbar.

**Save (.gang project)** — click **Save** (or  **S**). Bundles every source PNG plus the layout into a single  file you can re-open later. Also saves to your **Recents** list (browser-local IDB) so returning visits show your work right at the top.


**Export (PNG)** — click **Export**. Choose:









- **Single PNG** — for sheets within your printer's pass length. Output uses the full source resolution at 300 DPI.
- **Multi-tile ZIP** — for sheets longer than the safe limit. You get a zip of edge-aligned PNGs ready to print in sequence.

Whatever path you choose, the export trims empty space below your last item — you don't pay for film you didn't fill.


**Resume on another machine:** drag the saved  file onto the gang sheet's canvas (or use the **Open** toolbar button) to load it anywhere. The Recents list is per-browser; the  file is portable.

## Keyboard Shortcuts

Hit  anytime to open the shortcuts cheat sheet. The most-used:

-  **Z** /  **⇧ Z** — undo / redo
-  **D** — duplicate selection (single, no prompt)
-  **]** /  **[** — bring forward / send backward
-  **Space** + drag — pan the canvas
- Mouse wheel / pinch — cursor-anchored zoom
-  **S** — save .gang
-  **O** — open .gang

## Join the Maker Foundry Community

Real shops share their gang sheet workflows, packing tips, printer settings, and gotchas in our community. If you hit a snag, posting your  file with what you're trying to do gets you faster help than figuring it out alone.

[facebook.com/groups/makerfoundry](https://facebook.com/groups/makerfoundry)

**Less wasted film. More finished orders.**

That's what a good gang sheet pipeline gets you.

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