

## Printing Terminology | Industry Glossary

### **A4 paper**

Standard ISO paper size format, measuring 210mm x 297mm.

### **Artwork**

All original type, photographs, illustrations, and digital files intended for publication.

### **Author's Alteration (AA)**

A code name for a change made by you, the buyer, once a job is already at the printer's. You can be charged for these changes.

### **Base color**

The first color used as a background on which other colors are printed.

### **Blanket**

The blanket is a rubber printing pad which is fixed to the cylinder of an offset printing press. The printing plate transfers ink onto the blanket which, in turn, applies the image to the substrate.

### **Bleed**

Pictures or text that extend to the edge of the page without leaving a margin. To get a "bleed," you have to print the image on a larger paper and then trim the paper down to size.

### **Blueline**

A proof where all colors, perforations and scorings show as blue images on white paper. Used to evaluate image and page geometry inexpensively.

### **Board**

Heavier printing paper. The exact grammes per square metre (GSM) that mean a sheet is referred to as board, as opposed to paper, appears to vary between suppliers and printers. Over 200gsm - 300gsm, is a safe starting point.

### **Bond**

A writing or printing paper that weighs 50 grams or more and is treated with a glue-like substance to make it stiffer and shinier.

**CMYK**

Refers to the basic printing process colors - cyan, magenta, yellow, black - with K standing for black.

**Camera-ready art**

Artwork or type that is fully ready to be printed, especially according to the technical requirements of the printing process being used.

**Character**

All the letters, punctuation marks, accent marks, and numbers in a particular font or type.

**Complementary colors**

Colors directly opposite each other on the color wheel, such as blue and orange, or red and green. Such pairs contain one primary and one secondary color (made up of two primary colors), so together each pair has all three primary colors.

**Clipping region**

As set by the printer, this is the unprintable space around the edge of the paper.

**Coated paper**

A paper treated with clay to give it a smooth and 'coated' look and feel for quality printing. Finishes can be gloss, matte and silk, amongst others. Designated as C1S for coated one side, or C2S for coated two sides.

**Color separations**

The division of a multicolored original into the basic printing colors of yellow, magenta, cyan and black.

**Copy**

The written text to be printed. Sometimes also used to refer to the artwork.

**Cover stock**

A term used by paper manufacturers for a heavy paper that is suitable for catalogs and other folders. Cover stock can come in "coated" which has a smooth surface, or "uncoated" in its original rough surface.

**Crop marks**

Crop marks are printed cutting lines on a printed sheet of artwork or completed print job. They are there to indicate where the publication should be trimmed.

### **Cropping**

Taking out parts or edges of an image so you can enlarge or better frame the rest of the image for printing.

### **Deboss**

Debossing involves pressing an image into the sheet of paper to create an impression. Also known as tooling.

### **Die cut**

Die cutting is the process whereby shapes are cut out of paper, or other substrates. Designers will generally have to specify a cutting grid, in their page layout or vector drawing program, that the printer will use as a guide for making the Die.

### **Digital Printing**

A new kind of printing process particularly good for short-run jobs that need fast turnaround times. Digital printing does not use film but digital imaging technology instead. It's still working its way into the mainstream.

### **Dot gain**

Dot gain is where the halftone dots of an image print larger than the size they were on the films or printing plates. This results in some loss of detail. Some degree of dot gain is an unavoidable part of the printing process and there are settings in a number of desktop publishing tools to allow for this. Adobe Photoshop, in particular, has settings to allow for dot gain under its color settings preferences.

### **Dots per inch (dpi)**

The measurement of resolution for page printers, photo type setting machines and graphics screens. Graphics screens usually reproduce 60 to 72 dpi, most page printers 300 dpi, and typesetting systems 1,000 dpi.

### **Dummy**

A mock-up of a proposed publication design including all the pages fastened together, and often containing art and type taken from other printed materials.

### **Electrostatic printing**

Similar to photocopying, electrostatic printing is good for very short printing runs.

### **Embossing**

Using a special printing process to make a physical impression into thick, cover stock over printed type or a design. Blind embossing is pressing the design in an unprinted surface.

**Emulsion**

Emulsion is the light sensitive chemicals used on films and printing plates.

**Engraving**

A type of printing process that produces the sharpest images of all. The image feels indented if you run your fingers over the back of the sheet.

**Finishing**

The final steps of the printing process after the actual printing is complete. Includes folding, collating, hole drilling, scoring, and binding.

**Flexographic Press**

A process used to print materials such as plastic bags. These presses use rubber plates with printed areas raised in relief.

**Flop**

Reversing the direction a picture or typeset word is facing. Sometimes called a “reading turn.”

**Flush left**

Aligning copy along the left margin.

**Flush right**

Aligning copy along the right margin.

**Foil blocking**

Foil stamping, or foil blocking, is a printing process whereby metallic foil is applied to the printing substrate via a heated die.

**Folding**

Please visit our [Folding Examples](#) page for paper folding thumbnails.

**Four-color process**

Printing in full color using four color separation negatives in the basic printing colors of yellow, magenta, cyan and black. Separating and screening the primary colors red, yellow, blue and black from full-color originals, and printing magenta (for red), cyan (for blue), yellow and black to create the illusion of full-color.

**Ganging**

When a printer runs a variety of different jobs together for more efficient production.

### **Gate fold**

Finished sheet where both sides are folded, overlapping, towards the gutter.

### **Giclee (zhee-klay)**

Giclee (pronounced zhee'klay) is a French term meaning to spray or squirt, which is how an inkjet printer works. In giclee printing, no screen or other mechanical devices are used and therefore there is no visible dot screen pattern. The image has all the tonalities and hues of the original painting.

### **Gravure Printing**

A high-quality printing technique that uses direct contact between an etched copper plate and the paper. This technique is rather expensive because the plate has a relatively high cost. However, it is the best way to print high quality, large volume materials such as brochures and annual reports.

### **Gripper margin**

Unprinted space allowed for the printing press to grip the sheet. This should be a minimum of 3/8 inch.

### **Gutter**

The inside margins or blank space between two facing pages of a magazine or book is called the gutter.

The gutter space is allowed due to the space lost during the binding process, especially during perfect binding. In saddled-stitched publications the gutter is adjusted to allow for a process called 'creep', in which the outer pages of a section appear to bunch up and the inner pages protrude more.

### **Half tone**

There are two common definitions for the term halftone, as far as prepress and printing is concerned;

1. Traditionally, a halftone screen is a piece of film with a grid of lines (line screen). It is used to break down continuous tone images, such as photographs, into half-tone images for printing. The halftone screen breaks down the image into a symmetrically aligned series of dots - known as halftone dots. Nowadays, this process is generally done digitally, via an imagesetter.
2. A continuous tone image that has been commercially printed, using the halftone process, is also referred to as a halftone image.

## **Imagesetter**

Digital output device for creating films for offset-litho printing. Digital files are output in a similar way to normal laser printing, but printed as separations for high-quality reproduction.

Imagesetters can have output resolutions of up to 5000dpi although 12000 dpi is more the norm for mono printing and 24000dpi to 36000 is generally acceptable for basic CMYK color work.

## **Impressions**

The total number of printed pages produced by the printer.

## **Insert**

A printed piece designed to be placed into an already printed magazine or newspaper.

## **ISO paper sizes**

European paper size standard. The most common of which is the 'A' series. The aspect ratio of ISO paper sheets is 1 to 1.414. This means that if you cut a sheet into halves they will be the same proportion as the original. In other words a sheet of A3, when cut in half, will give two sheets of A4.

There are also B and C size papers and the larger RA and SRA paper sizes, which allow printers to print oversize sheets that can be trimmed to 'A' size for commercial use.

## **Jogger**

A machine with a high vibration rate that is used in the finishing process to even up large stacks of printed sheets.

## **JPG or JPEG**

A type of compression format for photographs that use full color, although some detail can be lost in the process. Short for Joint Photographics Experts Group.

## **K**

The 'K' out of CMYK printing inks refers to the black printing ink. 'K' stands for 'Key' colour.

## **Laid**

Paper which shows thick and thin lines at right angles to each other, made by the wires used in the paper making process. Usually considered high quality.

**Landscape**

An image or page in which the width used is greater than the height. Also refers to the orientation of pages, tables or illustrations that are printed horizontally or “sideways.” Also see portrait.

**Large Format Printing**

A printer that prints on large paper, which can range from two to more than 15 feet in width. Such printers typically use ink jet technology to print on a variety of output, including premium glossy-coated paper for signs and posters.

**Layout**

Shows how text and illustrations will be printed in relation to each other on the page.

**Lithography**

Method of printing utilising oil and water to enable the ink to produce a printed image. Image areas are covered with oily ink and non-image areas use water to repel the ink.

In combination with the offset printing technique - offset-litho - this is by far the most popular method of printing.

**Logo**

A specially designed company name that’s considered part of a corporate image.

**Makeready**

The combination of activities that comprise the preparation of a printing press to print a job.

One of the reasons that a conventional printing job can be so expensive to keep repeating is that the makeready process is very time consuming and, therefore expensive. Obviously the shorter the print run, the larger the percentage of the price is attributable to the makeready process. Something that designers and their clients often overlook.

**Margins**

The non-printing areas of the page.

**Matte finish**

A dull surface.

**Mechanical**

A board or paper containing all camera-ready elements.

**Nudge**

To make small, precise adjustments in the placement of objects on a page.

**Offset Lithography**

A popular printing method offered by almost every printer. Used to print any variety of different textured materials, this process uses ink economically and requires little time to set up the press.

**Overprinting**

Printing over a previously printed impression, such as printing type over a halftone screen image.

**Pantone Matching System (PMS)**

A popular color matching system used by the printing industry to print spot colors (colors that can be reproduced with only their own ink) but not for process colors, which need a combination of the four inks, CMYK. Each PMS color has its own name or number that helps you make sure that your colors are the same each time you print, even if your monitor displays a different color or if you change printing services.

**Perfect Binding**

Perfect binding is the process of binding sheets of a document by roughing the edges at the spine and bonding them with glue to an external cover.

Paperback books and thick documents, such as brochures and larger news-stand magazines are generally perfect bound. Thinner publications, such as trade magazines and journals, are generally saddle stitched.

**Perforating**

Creating a line of punched dots on a printed sheet so that a part of a sheet can be detached by a user at a later date.

**Perfecting press**

A printing press that is capable of printing both sides of the sheet in a single pass through its rollers.

**Pica**

A unit of measurement, approximately 1/6 inch, used in commercial art.

**Pixel**

The basic square unit of screen images. Screen images usually have 72 pixels per inch.



**Plates**

Printing plates are molds or cylinders used by the printing press to imprint materials with ink. They can be made in a variety of substances, ranging from metal to rubber or paper.

**Portrait**

An image or page in which the height is greater than the width. Also refers to the orientation of pages, tables and illustrations that are printed vertically or “upright.” Also see landscape.

**PostScript**

A type of high quality language developed by Adobe Systems to describe pages independent of their resolution. The current standard in the industry, it is widely supported by both hardware and software vendors.

**Primary colors**

Cyan (blue), magenta (red) and yellow. These three colors when mixed together with black will produce a reasonable reproduction of all other colors.

**Printer’s Error (PE)**

A code name for a mistake made by the printer while typesetting or correcting your copy. You shouldn’t get charged if the copy needs to be changed as a result of printer error.

**Proof**

A page of typeset copy to check for corrections.

**Ragged**

Lines of type that don’t start or end at the same position as the rest.

**Register**

When a printed sheet is ‘in-register’, it means that all the plates - Cyan, Maganeta, Yellow and Black, in the case of a four color process job - are lining up accurately on the printing press and producing a clearly defined color image.

If a job is out of register, there will be a blurring at the edges of images that are made up of more than one color.

**Registration marks**

Cross-haired lines that help visually ensure that a set of films or printing plates are in register, to produce a sharp registered result. Many modern printing presses have sensors which can automatically detect registration marks and ensure registration.

## **Resolution**

Measured in dots per inch (dpi), resolution measures the quality of output in typesetting. The greater the number of dots per inch, the smoother and less jagged the appearance of the typeface or the image.

## **Saddle stitching**

A printed document is saddle stitched by stapling its sheets at the fold of the spine, over a mechanical 'saddle'. Saddled stitching is used for thin magazines, brochures and journals.

Thicker documents often have to be perfect bound.

## **Scale**

The ability to reduce or enlarge an image. To avoid distortion, some programs can maintain the ratio between width and height when you scale the image.

## **Scoring**

This process involves partially cutting through cardboard so it will fold more neatly.

## **Screen Printing**

A printing method often used for non-flat goods. This method is best equipped to print on items such as mugs and clothing. Also known as silk screening, this process forces ink through a screen, like a stencil pattern.

## **Show-through**

Showthrough happens when the printed image from one side of a sheet of printed paper shows through to the other side. Usually occurs on thin newspaper or magazine printing paper. An 'off-white' sheet is often used to help reduce this in thinner paper stocks

## **Signature**

A group of images that appear on a printing plate. The signature is arranged in such a way that the pages will appear in the right order after they are folded and trimmed.

## **Spot color**

A spot color is an 'extra', or 'special' color that is used in addition to the CMYK four color process. The extra ink is added to its own roller on the printing press, so as to more accurately print certain colors that are hard to reproduce with CMYK inks. There are a number of companies that manufacture and specify spot colors, most common of these is the Pantone color matching system.

Spot colors are often also used in predominantly black and white publications, where it would be too expensive to add a CMYK graphic element. Advertising is often sold this way and a charge is made for each extra spot color. It is for these reasons that companies often have several versions of their company logo as part of their corporate identity, full color, mono and a spot color version.

**Substrate**

Any material or surface that is to be printed on. For example, paper is a printing substrate. Other printing substrates can include plastics, card and even metals.

**Tagged Image File Format (TIFF)**

A common format for interchanging digital information, generally associated with grayscale or bitmap data.

**Typeface**

The complete set of characters that form a family in a particular design or style. Originally referred to the raised surface.

**Typeset**

The type style and size of words must be set and composed into columns and pages.

**Typesetting**

Words must be typeset before they can be printed on a commercial printing press, that is, their type style and size must be set and composed into columns and pages. Traditionally done manually or mechanically, typesetting is now mainly digital.

**Uncoated paper**

Paper that has not been coated with clay to give it a shiny, or 'coated' finish.

**UV coating**

A UV varnish is a shiny coating that is applied to the printed sheet and fixed with an ultraviolet light. It can be used to cover the complete sheet of paper, or just applied to areas of the printed sheet, such as photographs.

**Web Printing process**

Designed for large volume jobs of over 200,000 impressions, web presses use a continuous roll of paper. They tend to be difficult and expensive to set up, but are very fast once they are running. Web printing doesn't use sheets of paper. Instead, large rolls of paper are fed through a printing press.

**Weight**

The degree of boldness or thickness of a letter, font or paper. For paper, it's usually given in terms of grams per square meter.

**Widow**

An undesirable layout where the last line of a paragraph is carried over to the next column, or a single word carries over to the last line of a paragraph.

**Wove**

A finely textured paper with a cloth-like appearance and no visible wire marks, unlike laid paper.

**WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get)**

(pronounced “wizzywig”) A term used to describe systems that preview full pages on the screen with text and graphics. The final result can vary slightly because of differences in the resolution of the computer screen and the page printer.

**X-height**

The height of the main body of a typeface, measured by the height of its letter ‘x,’ without measuring any ascending or descending elements. Also called body height.