

GLOSSARY OF PRINT TERMS

A glossary of common printing terminology.

CMYK

CMYK is the standard color space for print production. It consists of four ink colors (C) Cyan, (M) Magenta, (Y) Yellow, and (K) Black to produce a wide range of colors. In Digital printing, the four CMYK colors are applied to the paper all at once. In Offset printing, the four CMYK colors are applied to the paper in successive layers one after the other.

BINDERY

The production department responsible for the cutting, folding, collating, drilling, kitting and other finishing operations used on printed projects.

BLEED

The area that extends past the trim edge of a printed page that allows the artwork to print all the way to the edge. Standard bleed is 1/8" (.125") on all sides.

COATED

Paper that contains a surface coating; typically gloss or matte. It can be difficult to write on.

COIL BINDING

(WIRE-O BINDING, SPIRAL BINDING)

The type of binding where metal or plastic wire is fed through holes drilled along the binding side of a booklet or something similar.

COLLATION

The process of organizing pages or materials in a sequenced order.

COLOR CRITICAL

The precise accuracy of color on a printed piece, often for brand identity.

COLOR VARIANCE

Slight differences in color that can occur between printed copies of the same design. Some colors may look different between print runs or at the start vs. the end of a print run.

CROP MARKS

Thin lines on the page outside the printable area that indicate where the paper will be trimmed after printing.

DEBOSS

A design or text that is pressed down into the surface of paper or cardstock, creating an indented look and feel.

DIE CUTTING

The process of using steel blades to cut unique shapes through paper or similar substrate.

DIGITAL PRINTING

The process of printing images directly onto paper. No printing plate is required. Digital printing is ideal for short production runs.

DIGITAL PROOF

A pdf file that shows how a printed project will look. It is used to evaluate overall layout, "visual" and content accuracy.

DPI

Dots per inch (DPI) refers to the number of ink droplets a printer will produce per inch while printing an image. The more dots the picture has, the more detail you will see when printed. Typically 300 DPI or larger is for printing high-quality images.

EMBOSS

A raised design or text pressed into paper or cardstock, creating a 3D effect you can see and feel.

FLOOD UV

A liquid coating that can be applied to a sheet for added protection from handling or mailing.

FOIL STAMPING

Impressing metallic foil onto paper with a heated die.

HARD COPY PROOF

A printed sample of a project for the purposes of review. They are useful for checking color and catching project errors such as position, pagination, missing elements, transparency effects, typos, and image resolution.

LAMINATION

A film applied to protect the surface of a printed piece. The two most common styles are gloss and matte.

LARGE FORMAT PRINTING

The printing of materials that are too large for most commercial printing presses. It requires the use of specialty production equipment and materials.

OFFSET PRINTING

Offset printing uses metal plates to transfer an image onto a rubber “blanket”, and then rolls that image onto the paper. Ink is not transferred directly onto the paper. Offset printing is typically the best choice for large run quantities.

PAGINATION

The process of arranging individual pages into a multi-page document.

PMS (PANTONE MATCHING SYSTEM)

A universal color matching system that is categorized by specific individual numbers assigned to specific individual color inks.

PAPER WEIGHT

The thickness of the paper.

PERFECT BINDING

A book binding method where the cover and pages are glued together at the spine. Example: a paperback book.

PLATES

A metal sheet installed into the press that indicates where the ink will transfer onto the paper. Used in offset printing.

PPI

Pixels per inch (PPI) refers to the number of pixels contained within a digital image or the set number of pixels a screen can display. The higher the PPI, the better the image quality.

PREFLIGHT

Checking a file for any issues before printing, like missing fonts, low-resolution images, or incorrect colors, to make sure it prints correctly and looks professional.

PREPRESS

The process of getting a file ready for printing, making sure everything looks right, fits correctly, and will print clearly before it goes to press.

PRESS CHECK

A scheduled time to review press sheets from an offset press as a project starts printing specifically for color-critical jobs, for the purpose of approving the color.

PRINT-READY

An artwork file, typically a pdf, that meets all the specifications necessary to produce a high-quality printed output.

PROOF

A key step in the printing process that helps ensure the client and printer agree on the final design.

IMPOSITION

The arrangement of individual pages onto press sheets to maximize paper use and reduce waste.

RASTER GRAPHIC

Raster files are images built from pixels — tiny color squares that, in great quantity, can form highly detailed images such as photographs. The more pixels an image has, the higher quality it will be, and vice versa.

RGB

RGB stands for red, green, and blue, and those three colors of light are added together in various ways to reproduce a broad array of colors on digital screens. RGB color cannot be printed on a press. It must be converted to CMYK which can result in color shifts.

SADDLE STITCH

The binding of printed materials by stapling the pages on the folded spine. The number of total pages must be divisible by four to be saddle stitched. Example: a magazine or a newsletter.

SCORING

To crease paper in a clean, straight line, making folding easier. It prevents cracking and tearing along the fold.

SHEET VS. PAGE

A sheet of paper has two pages (front and back). Even if a side is blank it is still counted as a page.

SPOT COLOR

Pre-mixed ink specified by using a PMS (Pantone Matching System) color number.

TRIMMING

The process of cutting the printed piece down to its intended final dimensions.

UNCOATED

Paper that does not have a coating (matte or gloss). It maintains a natural look and feel, and is easy to write on.

UP-SAMPLING

Taking an image file and increasing the dots per inch (DPI). (Ex: going from 150 DPI to 300 DPI). This usually results in noticeable quality loss and causes the images to look pixelated or blurry when printed.

VARNISH

A printing technique that applies a varnish coating to a paper. It can be glossy or dull and flood or spot varnish depending on the desired effect. Spot varnish is added to a specific area of a printed piece to highlight it, such as shine on a logo.

VDP (VARIABLE DATA PRINT)

A digital printing process in which elements such as text and images can be changed from one page to the next in a single print run by linking information from a data file (also referred to as merging). It is a cost effective customization often used for numbering, addressing, and QR codes.

VECTOR GRAPHIC

A vector graphic is a computer-generated image that uses geometric shapes to create lines, curves, points, and polygons. They can be scaled up or down without impacting their quality, making them ideal for certain image files like logos that are used in various sizes.