

GLOSSARY OF PRINTING TERMS

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 larger paper and then trim the paper down to finished 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.

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 cyan, magenta, yellow, 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 lines, printed as part of the layout, that 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.

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.

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.

DOTS PER INCH (DPI)

The measurement of resolution for printers. The DPI specification indicates the number of dots per inch that the printer is capable of achieving to form text or graphics on the printed page. The higher the DPI, the more refined the text or image will appear. Printers prefer artwork to be prepared at 300 dpi or higher.

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.

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.

FINISHING

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

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 STAMPING

Foil stamping 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 uses four color-separated negatives in the basic printers colors of cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK). Each negative prints it's corresponding color as it passes through the press. When all four colors are printed, the finished image creates 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. See Folding samples page X

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.

HALFTONE

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.

Hanging indent

A paragraph that has all lines but the first indented. A hanging indent is also known as a hanging paragraph.

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 1200 dpi is more the norm for mono printing and 2400dpi 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.

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 full color photographs. Short for Joint Photographics Experts Group.

K

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

KNOCKOUT

The process of removing image details that lay underneath other objects in a layout. Knockout is the opposite of overprinting.

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 utilizing 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.

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 created without screens or dots. These are colors that can only be reproduced with their own ink. 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.

PICA

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

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, polyester 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 page description language used in electronic and desktop publishing - developed by Adobe Systems to describe pages independent of their resolution. It is the current standard in the industry and 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 digital reproduction of your page layout used to check for corrections/changes. PDFs are commonly issued as proofs of clients jobs.

RAGGED

Lines of type that don't start and/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 lined 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. 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. The greater the number of dots per inch, the smoother and less jagged the appearance of the layout elements.

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

The process of creasing heavier papers to achieve a cleaner fold.

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 silk screen that has been treated and exposed to create an image area.

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 placed on a printing plate in such a way that the pages will appear in the right order/orientation after they are folded and trimmed.

SPOT COLOR

A spot color is an 'extra', or 'special' color that is used in addition to or instead of 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. See Pantone 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. Examples of other printing substrates include plastics, textiles and metals.

TAGGED IMAGE FILE FORMAT

(TIFF) A common format for interchanging digital information (images), generally associated with grayscale or bitmap images. Printers generally prefer photos to be saved as grayscale or CMYK TIFFs.

TYPEFACE

In typography, a typeface is a set of one or more fonts, in one or more sizes, designed with stylistic unity, each comprising a coordinated set of glyphs. A typeface usually comprises an alphabet of letters, numerals, and punctuation marks; it may also include ideograms and symbols, or consist entirely of them, for example, mathematical or map-making symbols.

The term typeface is frequently confused with font; the two terms had more clearly differentiated meanings before the advent of desktop publishing. The current distinction between font and typeface is that a font designates a specific member of a type family such as roman, boldface, or italic type, while typeface designates a consistent visual appearance or style which can be a "family" or related set of fonts. For example, a given typeface such as Arial may include roman, bold, and italic fonts.

TYPESETTING

Typesetting involves the presentation of textual material in graphic form on paper or some other medium. 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. See also coated paper.

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.

WIDOWS & ORPHANS

An undesirable layout where the first or last line or word of a paragraph is in a separate column from the rest of the paragraph. Orphans are the first line and widows are the last line.

WOVE

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