

Print made easy fact sheet

Tips and hints to make print as easy as it should be

blue
print
dynamic print services

paper selection

This sheet provides information and advice on selecting the most suitable paper for your print job, and some of the things to consider when choosing paper.

> HOW? > TIP > GUIDE

Not all papers are equal

Paper selection is potentially an enormous topic as there are literally thousands of papers to choose from and they all do different things. We have tried to simplify the process by providing some guidelines when specifying paper in your quote requests and final print specifications.

Common Stock Types

Laser/Offset/Bonds – Uncoated

Weight range 70gsm – 140gsm.
Colours – Typically white but a wide range of colours available.

These are often considered your “garden variety” stocks commonly used as letterhead papers or as text pages in manuals and other documents. Also available in board weights in the range of 200-350gsm, where they are often called “system boards”.

Art Papers – Coated

Weight range 90 – 180gsm.
Colours – Typically white or cream.

Available in various sheen levels from “gloss” through to the normally interchangeable terms of “satin”, “silk”, “dull” or “matt”, just like the terms you may use to describe paint from the hardware store. Used frequently in fliers, brochures and publications such as annual reports or magazines. Available also in board weights from 200-400gsm.

Cast Coated

Weight range 100 – 350gsm
Colours – Typically white but a wide range of colours and metallics available.

Normally coated on the front, uncoated on the back with an extremely high level of gloss coating. Often used for postcards, greeting cards, swing tickets, etc. Typically used in card weights, also available with gloss coating on both sides in a white card.

Speciality – Covers/Texts/Bonds

Weight range 80 – 350gsm.
Colours – Huge range specific to the stock variety chosen.

The sky is the limit here. Lots of manufacturers produce these ranges of prestige stocks with varying textures, colours, weights and recycled content levels. Lots of character available at a high price. These stocks are often used for those “special projects”, where there is a desire to produce a product that does not have the standard print on smooth white paper look.

Other Paper Considerations

Weight

GSM (grams per square metre) refers to the weight of the paper and is generally used as an indication to the thickness of paper. As a guide, photocopy paper is usually 80gsm and most business cards are 300gsm. Be aware that whilst a higher gsm generally indicates increased thickness or bulk of the stock, some papers thickness may vary compared to others of a similar gsm. This is due to the density or the amount of coating on a stock. For example a 250gsm uncoated board may in fact be thicker than a 300gsm coated board.

Coated/Uncoated

Refers to the finish of paper. As a guide, Reflex photocopy paper is uncoated whilst most coffee table books and magazines are printed on coated paper. Coated paper is literally coated with substances such as latex, calcium carbonate, china claycoat and starch. Paper is coated for many

reasons. Coated paper generally achieves a better print result, ink does not soak into the paper, and the paper can be polished to achieve excellent results through a printing press. Paper can be single coated, double coated and triple coated. Triple-coated papers gain up to 15% of their initial weight after being coated. So, a 150gsm coated paper, may have been only 130gsm prior to coating.

Colour

Generally, coated papers are white or cream, whilst uncoated papers are available in a multitude of colours. The most important thing to remember is that anything printed on tinted or coloured paper will look different than on screen or on the proof, which was most likely produced on a white paper. Keep in mind the effect that the background paper colour will have on the inks used on them. For example, a yellow ink will not look yellow on a red paper.

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Suggested paper types for particular jobs

As with any creative exercise, the following suggested paper specifications are only a beginning. At Blueprint, we are experienced in the choice of paper for particular uses and can advise you on all aspects of paper choice.

Letterheads and Followers

One of the main things to consider with a letterhead is that the paper you choose is compatible with your laser printer. This usually limits you to an uncoated stock in the 80gsm to 140gsm range. If you are printing on a Bubble Jet printer, you should do a few tests with an uncoated stock to see how it performs.

Another major consideration should be whether to choose a paper that is smooth or textured, watermarked or nonwatermarked.

Personal preference is the usual decider, as most watermarked and textured letterhead paper is laser printer guaranteed. It all depends on the final effect you are after.

If you print long letters or reports, you may consider ordering additional blank sheets of your chosen paper so your followers match your letterheads.

Business Cards

Business cards are ideally printed on 300gsm card, but can be printed on uncoated stocks as light as 216gsm. Coated or uncoated is entirely dependent on personal preference and the effect you wish your card to have.

Envelopes

Choosing a paper for your envelopes is often only a major consideration if you want your envelopes to match the paper you've chosen for your letterheads, or you would like something unusual for gift cards or invitations. At Blueprint, we can advise you on what is available and organise samples to choose from.

Mailer

The main consideration with a mailer should be to keep the paper weight down to reduce postage costs whilst not compromising the quality of the finished product. Large run mailers are often printed on stocks as light as 80gsm. Beware, show through becomes an important consideration on very light stocks.

Folders

Most folders would need to be printed on a 300gsm or heavier card. Remember that although a coated stock may feel slick and glossy, it may crack on the folds. An uncoated stock will be very tactile and not crack as easily as a coated stock, but may not print as sharply as coated stocks. Slow drying may also be a consideration.

To help reduce cracking on areas of large ink coverage, you may want to consider a card that is coated on one side and not the other – or have the whole thing cellosheened (plastic-coated).

Brochures and Booklets

There are no set rules when it comes to choosing paper for a brochure. You should consider the final effect you are after and weigh that against your budget.

Keep in mind that lighter stocks will have more "show through" when printed double sided.

This list shows some common brochure paper specifications. At Blueprint, we can organise a blank paper mock-up of your specified paper choice. A paper mock-up is a great help in deciding on a paper combination for your brochure.

The list below is just the beginning, and shows you that there are many variations to choose from.

Cover pages

270gsm coated card
300gsm uncoated card
270gsm coated card

Text pages

150gsm coated paper
170gsm coated paper
140gsm uncoated paper

Postcards or Greeting Cards

Ideally postcards are printed on a 270gsm-300gsm card, coated on one side and uncoated on the reverse. Like brochures and business cards, the final choice of coated or uncoated is personal choice. Bear in mind that an uncoated card is a lot easier to write on with a ball point pen and that a coated card surface is a lot easier to write on with a metallic pen.

Stickers

Like the choice of paper the choice of sticker stock is enormous. Stickers come in a myriad of colours and materials,

When choosing a stock you need to consider some of the following variables.

Gloss, matt, paper, plastic, coloured, fluro and metallic, pre-cut, split back, permanent, semi-permanent or removable and various combinations of the above

As the variables can be enormous, discuss with us the end use of the sticker and we can best advise the most suitable stock.