

Glossary of Printing Terms

Acetate - A thin flexible sheet of transparent plastic used to make overlays.

Artwork Rough ideas in a print-ready form.

Backing up Printing on the second side of a sheet.

Binding Fastening papers together.

Bleed The printed image extends beyond the trim edge of a sheet or page.

Blend A smooth transition between two colours, also known as a graduated tint.

Bond paper A grade of paper suited for letterheads, compliment slips etc.

CMYK Abbreviation for cyan, magenta, yellow and key (black), the 4 process colours, which combined together in varying proportions, can be made to produce the full colour spectrum.

Colour separation Process by which a continuous tone colour image is separated into the four process colours (CMYK) for print production.

Concertina fold A method of folding in which each fold opens in the opposite direction to its neighbour, giving a concertina or pleated effect.

Crease To mechanically press a rule into heavy paper or board to enable it to be folded without cracking.

Crop marks Lines near the margins of artwork or photos indicating where to trim, perforate or fold.

Clipping path An outline, embedded into the file, that tells an application which areas of a picture should be considered transparent.

Crop To trim the edges of a picture or page to make it fit or remove unwanted portions.

Deboss Image pressed into paper so it lies below the surface.

Die-cutting Process of using sharp metal rules on a wooden block to cut out specialised shapes such as pocket folders or unusual shaped flyers etc.

Digital printing Benefits are for very short runs or for personalised print, as generally the cost is cheaper than lithographic print.

Digital proof Proof using a digital printer



DPI Dots Per Inch; A measure of the quality of an image from a scanner or output resolution of a printer.

Duotone A method of enhancing a mono image using two colours.

Dummy A mock-up made to resemble the final printed product which uses the proposed grade, weight, finish and colour of paper.

Embossing A process performed after printing to stamp a raised (or depressed) image into the surface of paper, using engraved metal embossing dies, extreme pressure, and heat.

Foil stamping A metallic finish, or other embossed finishes applied by specialist equipment.

Font One of a range of styles/typefaces in which lettering can be produced during the type setting stage

French fold Two folds at right angles to each other.

Full colour Or 'four colour process' using the four basic printing colours: cyan, magenta, yellow and black.

Gloss Lamination A shiny coating added to printed material. This is often used for magazine and booklet covers.

Guillotine A machine in which a vertical blade between two parallel uprights descends to cut or trim stacks of paper.

GSM Grams per Square Metre; the weight paper is measured in.

Greyscale Shades of grey ranging from black to white; in printing, greyscale uses only a black halftone plate.

Halftone Picture with varying shades of tone created by varying size dots.

Hickey Spot or imperfection in printing.

Image area Portion of paper where ink appears.

Import To bring a picture or text file into an application ready for editing or design work.

JPEG Joint Photographic Electronic Group; a common standard for compressing image data.

Justified Text which is flush to both the left and right margins.

Kerning The adjustment of spacing between certain letter pairs, A and V for example, to obtain a more pleasing appearance.



Knockout A shape or object printed by eliminating (knocking out) all background colours.

Lithographic printing A printing process based on the principle of the natural aversion of water to grease. The areas to be printed receive and transfer ink to the paper, the non-printing areas are treated with water to repel the ink.

Metal plate A metal sheet with a specially coated 'emulsion' on its surface which when exposed through a film mask or by CTP process will produce an image. When the plate is loaded onto a printing press it then reproduces this image using inks onto the paper.

Micrometer Instrument used for measuring the thickness of paper.

Matt Lamination A coating added to printed material which isn't shiny. This is often used for business cards

Origination A term used to describe all of the processes which prepare a job for the printing stage.

Offset printing A method in which the plate or cylinder transfers an ink image to an offset or transfer roller, which then transfers the image to stock.

Perfect binding A bookbinding method in which pages are glued rather than sewn to the cover. Used primarily for paperback books.

Point A measurement for the size of type, distance between lines and thickness of rules. One point equals one seventy-second of an inch (0.3515mm).

Pre-press A term used for all the pre-printing processes.

Process colour Colour specified in percentages of cyan, magenta, yellow and black. When superimposed during printing the four colour printing process, their separate plates can recreate millions of different colours.

Proof: A representation of the finished print produced for customer inspection for errors to be corrected prior to mass printing.

Registration marks Crosses or other marks placed on artwork which ensure perfect alignment ('registration').

Reversed-out Type appearing white on a black or colour background, either a solid or a tint.

Resolution The number of dots per inch (DPI) in a computer-processed document. The level of detail retained by a printed document increases with higher resolution. ppi (pixels per inch) for an image.

RIP Raster Image Processor; A computer used to create an electronic bitmap for actual output. this may be built into an imagesetter or may be separate.



RGB An acronym for red, green and blue. RGB is a colour model used for computer monitors and colour video output systems. Colour separations for litho printing can not be made directly from RGB files and need to be converted to CMYK first.

Saddle stitch A binding process in which a pamphlet or booklet is stapled through the middle fold of its sheets using metal wires.

Scanning The process of converting a hard copy into digital data ready for editing and design. The quality of the scan is dependent on the quality of the original, the scanning equipment and software as well as the experience of the operator!

Seal A machine seal is required for some print, specially where there is heavy ink coverage, A seal prevents the ink from rubbing off.

Stock A term for the material any project is printed onto.

Spot colour Spot colour is not made using the process colours. Instead the colour is printed using an ink made exclusively. Each spot colour therefore requires its own separate printing plate. Spot colours do not apply to digital printing as the printing devices can only reproduce from the four process colours; cyan, magenta, yellow and black.

Spread Two or more adjoining pages that would appear in view on sheet.

Solid An area on the page which is completely covered by the ink.

Stationery Term used for letterheads, continuation sheets, compliment slips and business cards.

Tint An area of tone made by a pattern of dots, which lightens the apparent colour of the ink with which it is printed.

Trapping A slight overlapping between two touching colours that prevents gaps from appearing along the edges of an object because of misalignment or movement on the printing press.

Typesetting To set type neatly and logically.

UV varnish A liquid laminate that is bonded and cured with ultraviolet light.

Varnishing/Sealing The application of a varnish/sealant to a surface to offer protection against marking and improve its overall appearance.

Wiro binding A method of wire binding books along the binding edge that will allow the book to lay flat.

X height The height of lower case letters without their ascenders or descenders, which is the height of the letter x