

SELECTING PAPER:

The paper can be as important as the information that is printed on it.

A fine artist will go through a painstaking decision process in selecting just the right canvas, on which his or her masterpiece will be presented. Graphic designers should take similar care in selecting the paper.

The varieties of paper available today are just about endless, and paper manufacturers are constantly coming out with new papers, some incorporating radical new technologies or unusual characteristics. Keeping up with these changes gives a graphic designer an edge on the competition.

There are four basic **types** of paper used in the printing industry:

- Newsprint - A thin, lightweight paper used in manufacturing newspapers
- Offset - A good, less expensive paper which is widely used for general printing
- Matte - A denser, generally smoother paper used for higher quality print products
- Gloss - Popular for its richness and ability to hold detail in full-color print pieces

Within those four types of paper, manufacturers produce a variety of **grades**. Grades of paper generally refer to their thickness, weight or finish:

- Book - A range of thicknesses to accommodate books, magazines and flyers
- Coated - Finished with a substantial coating (either gloss or dull) that holds ink well
- Cover - Thicker papers, ranging from just heavier than book weight to very stiff card stock.

Considerations when selecting paper

The best paper for any given print project depends on the number of inks, the amount of ink coverage, the type of press, bindery considerations, the public image to be projected, and of course the budget.

Following are some examples of typical print projects and papers they might be printed on:

- Standard 1-color letterhead: 50 lb. Offset (Book weight - equivalent to 20 lb. bond)
- Standard business envelope: 50 lb. Offset (Book weight)
- A one-color flyer, printed on both sides: 50 lb. Offset
- A four-color flyer printed on one side: 45 lb. Gloss Book
- A four-color flyer printed on both sides: 60 lb. Gloss Book
- A four-color poster: 70 lb. Gloss Book
- A four-color magazine cover: 80 lb. Gloss Cover

- The text of a four-color magazine: 60 lb. Gloss Book
- A two-color newsletter: 60 lb. Matte (Book weight)
- A corporate quarterly report to stockholders: 80 lb. Gloss (Book weight)
- A picture postcard: 100 lb. Coated Cover (C1S - Coated 1 Side)

The examples above show generic types and grades of paper. Different paper manufacturers produce different characteristics in their particular brands. For example, in the general type of paper, Gloss Cover, there are a wide variety of choices that affect color, brightness, thickness, smoothness, and a host of other factors.

You may note in the examples above that four-color pieces print best on glossy or coated stock. Pieces printed on both sides need heavier paper than pieces printed on just one side. A competent sales person is familiar with most papers, and can help steer you in the right direction. But, be aware that human tendencies may come into play, and a sales person may develop a habit of recommending only a limited range of papers. We recommend that you ask for paper samples in the general quality range of paper that you have in mind. You might find a more obscure paper that fits your job or budget better than "standard" papers.

Lastly, a word of caution: Don't get married to any particular paper. Often, a particular paper is on back-order with the manufacturer, has been discontinued, or is just not available in the proper size. For example, many specialty papers available for sheetfed printing aren't available in rolls for web printing.