

INK 101

At first glance ink seems simple. You determine what colors are best for your design, pick them, and they're automatically converted onto your paper, nice and simple. In truth- inks are far more complicated. Ink is only one piece of the whole "puzzle" that is the printing process. Many factors will affect how the colors/ink will look and interact with your final printed material.

How Paper Effects Ink

Inks appearance on any paper is affected by: the Paper's Stock, Surface Coating and Brightness. Ink will look differently when used on different type(s) of paper and when applied to sheets with different types of coating(s). If you're putting together an integrated package that uses "glossy" stock for some elements and Dull, or Matte for others, even if you use the exact same PMS color on all pieces, chances are, the color on the glossy stock will not match the dull or the matte.

Prior to printing, you should discuss this issue with your printer. He will advise you on the best options available to deliver the result you desire.

Ink Characteristics

The type of ink will affect its final appearance and if you're printing something for a specific use consideration of inks for that use is also important. Here are some more characteristics of inks that you should know about.

Make sure to discuss these with your printer when planning a job.

DRYING PROPERTIES:

Different inks require different drying times. Reflex blue ink , for instance, takes a long time to dry. Many say it never dries completely. If your project is needed with rush delivery, you will need to specify an ink that will dry in the timeframe you have available (or suffer offsetting, marking, smudges, etc.). Talk to your printer- let them know when the finished product is needed and ask them for suggestions on inks that will fit that timeline without adverse effects.

DURABILITY for SPECIAL USE:

Are you printing a letterhead or envelope that will put into a laser printer? Not all inks can withstand the heat in a laser printer. You will need to specify a wax-free laser ink that will not melt from the heat. If your final product will have a special use, you need to tell your printer and let him give you advice about the options available.

If you plan to apply a coating (UV or aqueous) to an ink, let your printer know, wax-free inks will be needed in this case as well.

OPACITY:

Some inks are transparent (ie. Process colors) , and some are opaque. An opaque white ink will need to be added to the ink formulation if you're printing an opaque in on colored stock (or else the paper's color will affect the ink color). Being aware of the opacity of your ink and how it will affect your final printed material is another factor to discuss with your printer prior to printing.

ENSURING FULL COVERAGE:

If your project requires a heavy-coverage background (black or another color), you may need to have a “double-hit” of the color or an “undercolor build” to avoid uneven ink coverage (your printer can determine the percentages/color you need so you can set up the files accordingly). This will provide a rich, solid background. This will cost more since two printing units will be needed, so talk to your printer.

USING FLUORESCENT INKS

If you are printing a particularly bright color (especially on a colored stock), consider using fluorescent inks. There are some printers that will add fluorescent inks to CMYK mixes to make the color more intense. Talk with your printer early to determine if fluorescent inks will accentuate your project, they are not the same as regular inks and may change other aspects of your project.

USING METALLIC INKS

Metallic Inks also add interesting effects to your printed materials. There are issues that arise (such as tarnishing and scuffing) which you should be aware of. Talk to your printer about varnishing metallics to avoid tarnishing and mixing all inks at the same time for coordinating pieces that will use the same mix.

Ask your printer or inquire to a paper company or ink company about more information on how different inks, papers, coatings, etc. work together.