

frogsdesign help sheet 3

guide to printing processes

Print technologies

We can arrange all your printing for you, or you can handle it yourself. Whatever you decide, it is important to select the right print process for the job at an early stage so that the design can take account of the limitations and possibilities of the process. The main methods are:

Inkjet

Used for one-off output from a computer. Inkjet printers can handle very large sizes (ours will print up to A1). Will not print to edge of sheet. Quality can be very good but depends to a large extent on the paper. Expensive and slow for more than 10 copies. Ideal for display work.

Black and white photocopy

Uses dry black powder. Quick and cheapest for small quantities (up to 200). Will not print shades of grey. Will not print to edge of sheet. Can only use uncoated paper. Sheet sizes up to A3

Colour photocopy

Uses dry coloured powder. Quick but expensive for quantities over 100. Print quality is variable. Print will rub off when abraded. Not suitable for double-sided. Will not print to edge of sheet. Limited choice of paper. Sheet sizes up to A3.

Screen printing

For T-shirts, CDs and surfaces other than paper. Lower-resolution image. Expensive.

Digital printing

Uses liquid ink. Quality almost as good as offset litho. Sheet sizes up to A3. Board weights up to 350 gsm. Quick. Ideal for quantities up to 500.

Offset litho

This is now the 'normal' print process for quantities over 500. Excellent quality. Much cheaper and better for large quantities. Not as quick as digital.

Paper

The quality and thickness of the paper can greatly affect the look and feel of the job. Standard coated paper is classified as: gloss, silk or matt. Uncoated paper has a slightly rough texture.

Paper weight is measured in grams per square metre (gsm).

As a rough guide: 100 gsm is fairly thick letter-weight. 250 gsm is thin card. 350 gsm is thick card.

For information about recycled paper, see frogsdesign help sheet 4.

