



Label Terminology

4 Color Process - Printing process that uses a combination of the four standard inks: cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK) to produce full color results

Adhesive: The glue substance applied to the back as a pressure-sensitive material for adhesion to surfaces.

All-temperature: The type of pressure-sensitive adhesive designed for use at both room and colder temperatures.

Bar code: One of several machine-readable codes used at retail, manufacturing, and shipping levels.

Bleed: When the ink coverage of the copy runs beyond the cut edge of a label.

Bleed - Printing that extends beyond the edge of where the label is sliced by the cutting die.

Bond Strength - The amount of force required to separate a pressure sensitive label from the application surface

Butt cut: A label made with square corners and no spacing between labels.

C1S - Non Pressure-Sensitive Material coated on one side

C2S - Non Pressure-Sensitive Material coated on two sides

Caliper - Thickness of material construction

Carrier - Material that Face Stock is temporarily attached to for transfer

Carrier width: Measurement of the liner or backer from edge to edge of the label or roll.

CMYK/4 Color Process - Blend of Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black to create a wide gamut of colors

Cold temperature: Refers to adhesives designed for application and performance at colder temperatures above freezing.

Color changes: Refers to the wash-up and changeover of ink colors within a production run.

Color matches: Refers to the mixing of ink colors to match a specific color requirement or PMS (Pantone Matching System) standard.

Color proof: A pre-press color prototype to approve color prior to full production.

Copy: The printed image and/or wording on a label.

Coupon label: A coupon made as a pressure sensitive label which can be applied to a surface and subsequently peeled off and redeemed as a dry coupon with no adhesive to the touch. Also called an IRC (instant redeem coupon).

Cut marks: The lines on the outer edges of artwork and plates that show where the actual cut of the label will be.

Coating - A material used to form a covering film over a surface whose purpose to decorate and/or protect the surface

Cold Temp Adhesive: Refers to adhesives designed for application and performance at colder temperatures above freezing.



Color Book- PANTONE book with collection of colors

Color changes: Refers to the wash-up and changeover of ink colors within a production run.

Color matching: Refers to the mixing of ink colors to match a specific color requirement or PMS (Pantone Matching System) standard.

Color Swatch - Small swatch used for matching color

Conformable Film- Film that helps conform to non-rigid containers and used on squeezable bottles

Crop Marks - Horizontal and vertical to show label outline/dimensions

Cure - To change the properties of an adhesive or UV coating by a heat or light source

Die: The tool that cuts the shape of the label (available in our tooling inventory). A device used for cutting material to a desired shape and size

Die cut: Refers to the cut that produces a label shape. It can be a square, rectangle, circle, oval or custom shape.

Die line: The outline of the die cut; often required to match artwork properly to the finished shape.

Digital Printing - A printing method where Labels are printed directly from a file

Direct thermal: Imprinting process using heated pins to strike specially coated paper to produce an image.

Dot - The individual element of a halftone

DPI (Dots Per Inch) - A measure referring to dot resolution in images created by printers and imprinters.

Exact repeat: Usually means a label reorder to the exact specifications as previously followed without change.

Facestock - Any material, including paper, film, laminated, or solid foil suitable for converting into pressure-sensitive labels. Sometimes also called a substrate.

Films - Facestocks and laminates manufactured from synthetic high molecular weight polymers. Films are usually water, heat, and chemical resistant. Ex: polyester, polyethylene, polypropylene, vinyl.

Finish - The surface property of a paper or film determined by its texture and gloss

Flexible packaging- Usually refers to pouching and the process to make or seal pouch stock

Flexo: The flexographic process of printing that uses round printing cylinders and cutting dies and requires roll materials into the press. It runs thin, fast-drying inks and raised-surface plates at high speeds.

Foil Stamping - Silver, holographic, transparent foils that can be hot stamped or cold foiled to substrate

Four-color process/CMYK: The print combination of magenta, cyan(blue), yellow, and black in dot patterns called screens, to produce a variety of graphics, images, or photos in all the color shadings desired.

Freezer Grade - Adhesive with a freezer service range

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Gauge - Describes thickness of film stock or liner

Gloss - A shiny finish on a smooth surface

Gradient - Gradual progression from one hundred percent opaque print to zero percent

Grain - The machine direction of paper and a measurement of pressure-sensitive adhesive on an area

Halftone - A continuous tone image that has been scanned and converted into tiny dots that vary in size to create a variation in tone

Hang Tag - Fold-over labels with no adhesive that are typically used for product identification, promotions, pricing, directions, and more

HFFS- Horizontal Form Fill and Seal - Describes how pouches are filled and sealed

Holographic Label - Specialty label that is printed on holographic stock or by 'cold stamping' holographic foil onto labels

Hot Melt - Pressure sensitive adhesive applied to the liner or backing in a hot molten form that cools to form a conventional pressure-sensitive adhesive

Initial Tack - Immediate holding power of the label adhesive on contact with a specific surface

Label - Functional part of a pressure-sensitive construction comprising the face sheet and adhesive, die cut into various shapes

Label length: The label's dimension from one side to the other in the direction of the pull of the roll.

Label width: The label's dimension from one side to the other in the direction from one edge of the roll to the other.

Lamination - A thin film applied over print for added protection (Available in matte/gloss)

Laser stock: Face material, often paper, required when using heat and toner to produce an image.

Latex-impregnated: Face material with rubber additive to improve moisture and weather resistance, and flexibility.

Layflat Liner - Label material with good non-curling characteristics that make it suitable for a flat sheet

Lifting - Refers to the condition when a tape, on its own accord comes away from the surface to which it was applied

Liner: The silicone-coated base material used to facilitate release of the adhesive coated face while holding it together during printing, die cutting and automatic application.

M: Represents 1000 in the printing industry.

Matrix: The waste face material around the die cut edges of a label that is stripped away and discarded.

Matte Finish - A dull finish

Metalized Film - Plastic or resinous film that has been coated on one side with a very thin layer of metal



Micron- Describes thickness of film stock

Mils - Used in describing adhesive coat weights and thickness; thousandths of an inch.

Multi-Layer Label - Multi-panel leaflet that is laminated to a pressure sensitive label.

OD - Stands for the "outside diameter" of a cylinder, core, roller or roll of labels

Oozing: A "squeezing out" of the adhesive from under the backing, occurring when the tape is in roll form, the edges of the roll become tacky.

Opacity: That property of a paper or film which prevents "show through" of dark printing on or in contact with the backside of the sheet. This is opposite of transparency.

Opaque adhesive: Also called "greyback" or "block-out" used to eliminate any show-through of previous printing.

Opaque White – White ink used for blocking mainly on Foil & Clear Films

Overlaminating: Application of clear film to a graphic for the purpose of protection or to enhance the graphic quality.

Overlap: Wrap-around labeling of a container in which one end of the label overlaps the other.

Pattern adhesive: The application of adhesive in a striped pattern for the purpose of a specific construction.

Pattern U.V. - Process of partial printing varnish

Peel Adhesion: Adhesion strength. Peel adhesion is the force required to move a pressure-sensitive label from a standard test panel at a specified angle and speed after the label has been applied to the test panel under specified conditions.

Perforation: Series of small cuts made in labels and/or their release liner to facilitate tearing along a predetermined line.

Permanent Adhesive: An adhesive characterized by having relatively high ultimate adhesion to a wide variety of surfaces.

Piggyback Label: A special construction that is comprised of two labels – the bottom label stays adhered, and the top label can be peeled off and re-applied elsewhere. Also known as two-layer and double-layer labels.

Pigment: In printing inks, the fine solid particles used to give color, body or opacity.

Plate: The raised surface, usually of photopolymer or rubber, which transfers the ink to print an image.

Plate Cylinder: The cylinder of a press on which the plate is mounted.

PMS: Pantone Matching System of color standards and matching, indicated by a universal number given to each specific color and shade.

Positive print: Refers to any image that is created by the raised surface of a plate, like a rubber stamp. (See Reverse print)

Pouch Stock- Material used to enclose various products in a self-contained package

Pound / # - Describes thickness of paper stock or liner



Pressure Sensitive (PS) - Materials with adhesive on a liner

Pressure Sensitive Label: A self-adhesive label that is the die cut, usable part of pressure sensitive material that has been converted through roll-fed production equipment. The end product can be produced in rolls, sheets, or fan-folded stacks.

Print Resolution: The quality of print; the level of detail achieved by a printer. Measured in dpi (dots per inch).

Proof: Sent by a printer to a customer to show what will be printed. Most proofs nowadays are sent electronically but hard copies can be requested. 'Press proofs' are printed using the actual printing process that a job will be produced with.

QR Code Label: 'Quick response' codes are square graphics on labels that can be scanned with a mobile phone app which can launch a website, send a text message, enter a sweepstakes, download a file, and more.

Registration: The correct placement of all colors and copy within a label or one color to another.

Release Coat: Release lacquer. The release liner treatment material that allows pressure-sensitive labels to release from the release liner.

Release Liner: Backing. Liner lining. The portion of the label that receives the release coating. Prior to application, it protects the adhesive and provides support for the facestock during the die cutting operation and allows the label to be transported to a label applicator or through a computer printer.

Removable Adhesive: A pressure-sensitive adhesive characterized by low ultimate adhesion to a wide variety of surfaces, that can be removed without damage to either the label or the substrate.

Repositionable Adhesive: An acrylic based ultra-removable adhesive that has short-term removability so labels can be repositioned or reapplied to another item before achieving permanent adhesion.

Residue: Adhesive left on a substrate when a label is removed.

Reverse print: The reverse of Positive print (above), where the raised plate prints ink all around the desired image.

Rewind Slit: A slitting process where a roll of tape is unwound and run through a set of shear or score knives to be slit and then wound up into individual rolls.

Rewinder: A machine which takes rolls from the winder, slits or rewinds into smaller rolls.

Rewinding: The operation of winding the paper from the reel onto a core to produce rolls of the desired width, diameter and tension.

Spot Black – Printing an extra-rich black on an additional print station

Rubber Adhesive: A pressure-sensitive adhesive based on natural or synthetic rubbers.

Screens: Any dot pattern used to produce various concentrations of color such as process, halftones, or gradients.

Self-Wound: A roll material with a single liner which is coated on both sides with a release lacquer and a carrier having pressure-sensitive adhesive on both sides.



Semi-Gloss: A lightweight, coated paper that offers a balance of economy and performance.

Service Temperature: The temperature range that a PS label will withstand after a 24 hour residence time on the substrate. The range is expressed in degrees Fahrenheit.

Set: The interval of time required for adhesive bonding; relative bonding speed of an adhesive material.

Shear Adhesion: The time required, under specified test condition, to slide a standard area of pressure-sensitive label from a standard flat surface in a direction parallel to the surface.

Shear Strength: Internal or cohesive strength of the adhesive.

Sheeting: Process whereby rolls of PS base stock are converted into sheets of finished labels by cutting them to the desired length in the sheeting stations on a rotary press.

Shelf-Life: Storage life. The period of time during which a product can be stored under specified conditions and still remain suitable for use.

Short Run: Small batches of labels typically printed on digital presses. Short run labels range from 100 – 10,000 labels. For quantities over 10,000, it's typically more cost-effective to print labels on a flexographic press.

Shrink Film- Clear material used to conform to containers by heat

Shrink Sleeve Label: Commonly known as "shrink sleeves," these full-body labels are applied to containers by shrinking them with a heat, steam, or hybrid tunnel.

Shrink Wrapping: A technique of packaging in which the strains in a plastic film are released by raising the temperature of the film thus causing it to shrink over the package.

Slit Width - Material width as refereed to Shrink material is the open printed size of stock

Splice: A method of joining paper or plastic webs within a pressure sensitive roll to produce an operational continuous web. They can be placed into an incoming raw material roll by a supplier, or added in the rewind inspection process by a label converter.

Spot Color - Dedicated singular color printed to reproduce a specific color

Squeezable Film- Film that helps conform to non-rigid containers

Standard - Print sample target from a previous run

Substrate: 1) The surface to which a pressure sensitive label or shrink sleeve is applied to. 2) The primary material which other materials (such as inks, coatings, laminates) are applied.

Tack: The property of a pressure-sensitive label which causes it to adhere to a surface instantly with a minimum of pressure and contact time as measured by TLM Tester or equivalent equipment.

Tack Range: The time during which an adhesive film remains tacky.

Tag- A thicker material that may have adhesive



Tamper Proof Label: A pressure-sensitive construction made with a face material having a low strength so that attempted removal of a label made from this stock will usually result in destruction of the label.

Tear Strength: The force required to tear a specimen under standardized conditions in an instrument designed to simulate in a general way the tearing encountered under use conditions.

Tensile Strength: The force parallel to the plane of the specimen required to break a given width and length of paper under specified conditions.

Thermal Transfer: A thermal printing process using a temperature sensitive ribbon that through heat and pressure is selectively transferred to a printable surface thus creating the desired image. The ink is transferred from the ribbon to the print surface thus the term "thermal transfer."

Tints: Solid ink coverage on a label.

TLMI: Tag and Label Manufacturers' Institute. A trade organization of the pressure sensitive label industry.

Toner: Imaging material used in electrophotography. In inks, dye used to tone printing inks, especially black.

Tool/Tooling: Refers not only to cutting dies but also other mechanicals such as cylinders, sheeters, blades, punches, etc.

Top Coat: A substance coated onto a label material that will enhance the printing or the appearance of the finished label. For example, some films are top coated to ensure better ink anchorage to the surface of the material.

Transparent inks - Inks that are transparent in nature and will allow light to travel through

Ultimate Adhesion: The maximum adhesion available from a pressure-sensitive adhesive, determined by the force necessary to remove a strip of tape from a surface after an extended period of time.

Ultimate Strength: Term used to describe the maximum unit stress a material will withstand when subjected to an applied load in a compression, tension, or shear.

Ultra-Violet (UV): Zone of invisible radiations beyond the violet end of the spectrum of visible radiation.

Ultra-Violet Resistance (UV): The ability of a material to withstand extended exposure to sunlight (ultra-violet) without degradation, hardening or excessive discoloration.

Unbleached: A term applied to paper or pulp which has not been treated with bleaching agents.

UV: Ultra Violet light. UV is an important factor to consider when choosing an adhesive. UV can degrade some adhesives with extended exposure.

UV: Stands for "Ultraviolet" which is a method of curing inks, coatings and laminations by ultraviolet light.

U.V. Top Coat Varnish - Varnish that provides protection for the inks



Varnish: Over-lacquer. A solution or suspension of one or more materials forming a protective or decorative film by oxidation, polymerization, or evaporation.

Variable Data Printing: A capability of digital label presses. Using a computerized system, the operator can tell the press what pieces of variable data information – like images, text, numbers, or colors – should be printed.

VFFS- Vertical Form ll and Seal - Describes how pouches are filled and sealed.

Vinyl or PVC: Polyvinyl Chloride A tough durable plastic film having excellent resistance to oils, chemicals, and many solvents. It has excellent abrasion-resistance.

Viscosity: In printing inks, a broad term encompassing the properties of tack and flow.

Weatherproof/Weather Resistant: Relative terms applied to labels that can resist weather-related conditions (water, wind, temperature, sun exposure, etc.) for an extended period of time.

Web: A continuous sheet of pliable manufactured material.

Web Tension: The amount of pull or tension applied in the direction of travel of a web of paper by the action of a web-fed press.

Wet Strength: The tensile strength of paper after it's wetted. It measures how well the web of fibers holding the paper together can resist a force of rupture when the paper is wet.

Wicking: Tendency of a liquid to travel through a paper.

Wind Direction: The direction that labels are oriented when coming off a roll.

With the Grain: Folding or feeding paper into a press parallel to the grain of the paper.

Wrap-Around Label: Label that extends completely around a container.

Wrinkle: Distortion in the material represented by creases which interrupt the continuous, smooth nature of the web. Wrinkles can be encountered running in any direction on the web.

Yellowing: Defect manifested by a gradual color change in the original appearance of a pressure-sensitive label characterized by the development of yellowish and brownish hues.