

# Choosing Colors

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**Inks change color on different papers:** Inks are transparent and take on the color of the paper. What does blue ink look like when printed on yellow paper? Green! What does red ink look like when printed on light blue paper? Maroon! While inks print truest on white paper, some white stocks are creamy, some are grayish, and some are blueish, so ink colors can vary on “white” paper, too.

**Many ink colors don't photocopy or fax well:** Stay away from pastel colors, yellows and oranges when designing stationery, forms, data sheets or other pieces that are likely to be faxed or photocopied. These colors disappear. Conversely, some muted background colors like wedgewood blue or lilac go through the fax much darker than expected, interfering with readability. How can you test a piece before printing it? Before you decide on a color, photocopy a Pantone® color chip AND fax the chip to a friend or co-worker to see the results. The next test? Get a color proof of your piece before printing; fax it and photocopy it to see the results with your own eyes.

**Inks fade:** For storefronts, window displays, or anything exposed to direct sunlight for more than a week, you should request fade resistant inks. These inks are more expensive, but will resist fading for a few weeks. Reds and yellows fade the fastest. (Ever notice how many storefront posters seem “blueish”? Blues and blacks hold up to the sun longer.)

**Inks melt:** Inks are made with wax, and wax melts when heated. That's why stationery can “bleed” when run through a laser printer. When ordering stationery, you can request heat-resistant inks that have Teflon® instead of wax. Heat-resistant inks cost a little bit more than regular inks, and need to be special ordered. Most printing companies don't run heat-resistant inks unless requested. Designers should specify wax-free inks for anything that will be foil-stamped or embossed, because heat is used during these processes. Foil will not adhere to regular inks, and inks can bleed or run when heated during the foil stamping process.

**Metallic inks are very flaky:** Gold, silver, copper, and bronze inks are made of varnish, pigments, and metal dust or flakes. To protect the metal flakes from flaking off of pieces that will be used and re-used, you can overprint varnish. Be aware however, that gloss varnish can change the appearance of metallic inks, often making them look duller! Morgan Press has a metallic ink selector to show you varnished and unvarnished samples of various metallic ink colors. Metallic inks look shiniest on coated, glossy papers.

**Reflex blue, bright green, forest green, and bright red may smudge:** These colors are notorious for smudging when passing through folders and mail processing



equipment. When printing solid blocks of these colors, you may want to request a varnish to overprint the solid areas of color and thereby minimize the smudging. Some large presses are equipped with special coating and drying equipment that can also minimize the smudging.

**Varnish is an ink color:** Varnish is clear ink. **Gloss** varnish adds shine when printed on top of another ink color. However, ink colors will shine even without varnish, especially when printed on coated paper. As a result, some people choose to overprint ink with a **dull** varnish to give the ink color a matte look. Varnish also “seals” an ink color, providing an inexpensive layer of protection against smudges. The cost of printing a clear varnish is nearly the same as printing any other ink color.

**You can't eat vegetable and soy inks:** Most inks today are environmentally-friendly. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved certain inks for printing items that come into contact with food. These inks, while very expensive, can be special ordered in hundreds of colors.

**Yellow type is hard to read:** Yellow adds spark to anything you print, but it's best when used as an accent color for graphics, not for text. Same goes with gray type – it's hard to read. Before you print anything in a new combination of colors, especially pastels, ask for a color proof to test colors you've selected.

