



Inka-Dinka Doos (and Don'ts)

Answers to Your Most-Often-Asked Printing

By Dana Kader Robb

Printing is a centuries-old process that still manages to mystify many people. Hiring a professional desktop publisher allows you to avoid having to deal directly with a printer. Still, it makes sense to know something about how they work so that you know which questions to ask!

How Much is that Brochure in the Window?

First and most hardfast rule: Please do not ask a printer for a "ballpark" quote if you don't at least know the quantity, number of colors, some basic information about the paper stock and how the artwork will be produced. The more you tell the printer, the more accurate your quote will be.

One of the questions we hear a lot is, "What's the least I can print?" If you really want to, you can print one copy. However, it generally does not make sense to print less than 100 pieces, as most of your cost is set-up. After that, the price per piece goes down as the quantity goes up. Order extra materials upfront so that you won't have to pay for an additional short run later.

Services that commonly add to the cost of printing include: shooting films, scanning photos or graphics, making changes to artwork, extra ink colors, folding, collating and mailing. Printing never includes postage unless you specifically ask.

You Want it When?

Schedule an appropriate amount of time for pre-press, printing, drying and bindery. It is almost unheard of to get next day print service – so plan for at least a few days. If you're unsure how long you'll need, ask the printer. Don't cut corners here after all the effort that went into creating the piece.

Did You Say PMS?

Here are some printing terms that often confuse people:

PMS(Pantone Matching System):

A color matching system used industry-wide to assure that ink colors are consistent – a lot like selecting paint chips.

DPI (Dots Per Inch):

Dots of color in each inch of printed space. Used when outputting artwork or scans. More is better. Guidelines: 300 minimum for text, 600 for graphics, 1200 for photos.

Camera Ready:

Black and white output of artwork that is completely ready for printing – what you see is what you'll get. Colors are separated onto different sheets of paper. Photo scans are in place. Nothing else needs to be done. You *can* create camera-ready art from your desktop inkjet printer, but the quality after printing will be very low.

Can't I Just Print it at Kinko's?

I find myself saying this often, so I think most people don't understand, Kinko's is basically a copy-shop – albeit an incredibly convenient one with lots of other services. They are not a printer and have never claimed to be. Copying is fast and cheap for small quantities. Printing is more effective for higher quantities and using color. When I want a high-quality black and white job, I still turn to the printer. If you're unsure which process is better for your project, ask.

Other Stuff You Should Know

When asking for one- vs. two-color, keep in mind that black is a color. So black and teal is a two-color job.

- ✓ A black and white scan *can* be done from a color picture
- ✓ Generally speaking, letterhead is on "writing" weight, newsletters are on "text" weight and business cards are on "cover" or "card" stock papers.
- ✓ Carbonless forms must have at least two pieces – don't ask for one part carbonless!
- ✓ For most small businesses, one- or two-color printing makes sense, but not always. If you think you might need full-color, you might!
- ✓ Ask, ask, ask. Printers deal with "amateurs" all the time. They would much rather answer your questions up front than have you unhappy with the finished product.

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