

Understanding Paper Options

Overview

Paper choice can make a significant difference in the look and feel of your print communication piece. Commercial printing paper is divided into two broad categories -- Coated and Uncoated. Within each of those categories are sub-categories by weight -- Text and Cover stock. Text stock is the lighter weight paper used most frequently for the inside or body of a book or catalog. Cover stock is a heavier and more durable paper used for the outside cover of a book or catalog. The heavier the paper's weight, the more upscale the look and feel that will be achieved.

Coated Paper

Gloss, Matte, Dull and Silk stocks are all coated papers. Gloss stock is a coated paper with a shiny or highly reflective finish. It is most often used in four color printing to have full color photographs, images and graphics appear more vivid, real and appealing. Most brochures are printed on 80# or 100# gloss text stock but 70# and 100# gloss text may be appropriate based on your needs. For an even more upscale look and feel, you might choose 80# gloss cover stock instead.

Matte, dull and silk coated stocks have a flat, unreflective or dull finish. These types of paper are frequently used to make text or numbers intensive pages easier to read. The choice is dependent on your objectives and how the piece will be used.

Uncoated Paper

Offset is today's most commonly used stock as it is the paper used in most desktop printers, copiers and books. The body or text pages for books are usually printed in black ink on white offset stock. The most commonly used weights are 50#, 60# and 70# white offset text.

Bond paper was originally used to print bond and stock certificates. Today it is most frequently used for letterheads and envelopes and is sometimes referred to as fine paper. The most common weights are 20#, 24# and 28#. Weights are based on the weight of 500 sheets (a ream) of the 17"x 22" size of the respective stock.

When choosing paper for the body of a book, consider 60# if you have heavy ink coverage. Another important consideration is the number of pages in your book. Several different choices are available for the cover of a book. For self-cover books (where the cover paper is the same as that used for the body) 50#, 60#, and 70# offset text is frequently used. For perfect bound books where a heavier stock is required (usually above 60 pages) or for saddle stitched books where a more durable offset stock is needed, 65# white uncoated cover is a good choice. For an upscale look or when using full color, you might use 80# or 100# gloss cover.