

'sky blue pink + a 30% tint of yellow'



Colour guide

Unfortunately it's not enough to say you want something printing in blue. Your printer will ask you if it's spot colour or CMYK. If it's spot colour he'll want a Pantone reference... This brief guide will give you a basic understanding of the most common colour terms used in printing.

Monochrome

One colour print, usually black.

Duotone

A tinted effect produced in spot colour printing by taking a monochrome image, converting the file then printing it using two colours (usually black plus another colour).

Spot Colour

Spot colour inks are specific colours that are printed individually. Spot colour printing is commonly used for stationery. The typical design includes a special colour such as a Pantone ink along with black. The special ink is for the 'company colour' for use on the logo and the black is for text. In addition, tints of both inks could be used to produce variations of the colour and greys.

Pantone

The brand name of a colour matching system. A large range of colours are specified and identified by number to produce standard results across the industry. A reference such as PMS 280 indicates a colour in the Pantone range, in this case a dark blue. Various swatch books are available.

RGB

Abbreviation of Red, Green and Blue; the colours used for on-screen graphics. RGB files aren't suitable for printing so need to be converted first.

CMYK

Abbreviation of the colours used in full colour printing: Cyan (blueish), Magenta (pinkish), Yellow and Black. The 'K' is for black, the "key" colour.

Four/Full Colour

The most common system for producing full colour print. The inks used (CMKY) are translucent, so can be overprinted and combined in a variety of different proportions to produce a wide range of colours. The vast majority of magazines and colour books are produced using four-colour process, as are many leaflets, posters and brochures.

Special Colours

To print colours outside the range of the CMYK process it is necessary to use special inks (eg Pantone). If for example the exact colour of a company logo needed to be used on a leaflet but could not be achieved from a CMYK mix then it would be necessary to print a fifth plate with the 'special' ink. It is worth bearing in mind when choosing a colour for a company logo that sooner or later you will want to print a colour brochure using four colour process. A vivid ink which you have chosen from the Pantone book may not have an acceptable CMYK equivalent. You may be forced to change the company colour or swallow the ongoing expense of a fifth plate.



Duotone image



CMYK Colours
Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black



Pantone swatches

If you want to know more, just ask!

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