

Embossing and foil stamping tips

Embossing and Debossing

Embossing creates a magnificent graphic element by allowing designs to be raised or depressed in the paper. A metal plate containing an image in relief is pressed into paper. Using heat, pressure and the embossing die, the paper is molded to form a raised image (or debossing yields a lowered image).

There are many considerations to take into account when specifying an emboss and preparing the artwork. Talk to your printer before you begin to help determine the right paper and the right die to meet your expectations.

Die Considerations

- > number of levels the image requires: single, multi or sculptured
- > depth of the emboss: text and cover papers on average can withstand 2.5 times the caliper of the paper, therefore a bulky cover weight can produce a greater embossing height
- > shape of the edge: flat, round, or beveled. The angle of bevel should also be specified, from 300 to 800. The depth of the emboss may depend on the steepness of the angle to prevent paper tears. The selection of a beveled, round, or flat edge will create very different effects, especially for type and geometric shapes
- > smoothness of the embossed image

Artwork Considerations

Art should be prepared slightly larger. Type size, style and spacing should be increased to compensate for the added dimension. Type should be bold without any pointed or small serifs. Rules should be at least two points thick. Line art should be prepared as if it were going to print a solid color. For multi-level or sculptured embossing dies, use color-coded layers to indicate the different levels. Your embosser will follow your multilevel suggestions as much as possible. If the embossed image is going to register to a printed image, supply the die maker with one of the dominant printing negatives. The emboss should be at least .25 inches away from the edge of an oversized sheet to avoid wrinkles and puckers. If the embossing will take place on a finished piece, allow .5 inches from the edge.

The shape of the embossed image and the length of the run determine whether a brass or magnesium die will work best. Magnesium is used for short runs and for large letters and images. Brass is used for fine lines; sculptured images; combo foil stamping and embossing; and for those images that need extensive hand tooling. Dies are made by machine or by a semi-photographic process. The image is transferred onto the metal photomechanically to use as a guide like a drawing for hand tooling.

High quality text and cover papers work best for embossing. Text and cover papers have the necessary strength to withstand the pressure and stress of the embossing process. Because the embossed area is smoothed-out, a textured paper will provide an even greater textural contrast.

continued

TYPES OF EMBOSsing

A blind emboss is not registered to a printed image or stamped in combination with a foil. The color of the image is the same as the paper.

A registered emboss is an embossed image that exactly registers to a printed or foil stamped image.

A combo emboss refers to an embossed image that is also foil stamped.

Glazing refers to an emboss that appears polished. Using a very high temperature, light colored papers can be scorched so that the paper changes color.

RESOURCES

- FSEA Foil Stamping and Embossing Association; www.fsea.com
- IEGA International Engraved Graphics Association; www.iega.org

MOHAWK

Mohawk Fine Papers Inc.
465 Saratoga Street
Cohoes, New York 12047
1 800 the mill
www.mohawkpaper.com

Embossing is a custom craft. Thorough specifications and samples will result in success. Your embosser and paper merchant can provide embossed paper samples and recommendations.

Foil Stamping

Foil stamping is a method of printing in which a heated plate or die presses a thin layer of color onto the paper's surface. The color is released from a plastic backing and transferred to the paper through heat and pressure. The foil can be pressed onto the paper to produce a flat image, or combined with an emboss to create a raised image.

There are countless foils from which to choose: glossy and dull colors, metallics, pearls, transparent colors, and various patterns and grains. There are also different types of foil, some appropriate for line work; others are better suited for covering large areas. Talk to your printer about what foil will work well for your project.

Foil Stamping Considerations

- > never foil stamp over coatings and varnishes—it will trap gases and blister
- > make sure the printer uses wax-free inks
- > printing over foil can be done with care, registration flexibility, and lots of time
- > plan carefully for registering a foil stamp to a printed knockout
- > foils tend to fill in across narrow spaces so avoid fine type and tight kerning
- > overprinting wet ink can cause the foil to pick
- > always test a sample in the laser printer to be sure it doesn't pucker or bubble

Choose your paper carefully. Foil stamping is best suited for text and cover papers and the heavier, the better. Textured papers may require additional pressure to be sure the foil doesn't "pick" in the hills and valleys of the paper surface. This extra pressure may cause an impression on the reverse side. If this isn't acceptable, choose a paper with a smoother, or more uniform, surface. Coated papers are rarely stamped because gases may get trapped and bubble between the coating and the foil. Because most foils are opaque and smooth, choosing a dark colored, textured paper provides contrast and impact. Clear and pastel foils on light color papers can create effects that cannot be accomplished on an offset press.

For more information and samples, please call your local merchant or Mohawk at 1 800 the mill. www.mohawkpaper.com