



LAMINATION TIPS & TRICKS

Laminating is a skill that takes practice. When laminating, use the following tips and tricks for best results. These tips should help you properly finish your prints.

TEST YOUR APPLICATION:

- It is always best to pretest your application prior to performing the actual job. Discover the strengths and weaknesses of your system before it gets into the customer's hands.
- Decide what type of laminate will be best suited for your application: heat-activated, pressure-sensitive, or liquid laminate. Pressure-sensitive laminates offer a more aggressive bond and are compatible with a wide range on imaging media.
- For increased durability, choose a laminate with UV protection and encapsulate with a 1/4-1/2 inch border around the edges of print to prevent moisture and other airborne pollutants from reaching the image. A UV laminate can extend the product life by 3-4 times. Dye inks, even if laminated, will fade significantly faster than pigment inks. Use pigment inks for longer lasting images.
- Match the overlaminant to the product. Vinyl to vinyl, polyester to polyester.

FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR LAMINATE:

- Obtain a technical data sheet of the particular laminate you are using from the manufacturer website.
- Check your laminator to be sure that the proper temperatures, tensions, and pressures can be achieved and used.
- Different laminator models have different capabilities. Temperature set points may have to be set higher than recommended temperatures due to laminator heating coil age, or the size of the rollers.
- Cloudy lamination is a result of insufficient heat. If there are bubbles in the laminate, this could be a result of too high of heat or the image is not completely dry.
- Silvering is caused by the adhesive not wetting out. This can be solved by either increasing the temperature or slowing down the speed. Sometimes you need to do both. This will promote better adhesive flow out. Adding low heat when using pressure-sensitive also helps to wet out the adhesive.
- Overlaminating one side with too much tension can cause the product to curl toward the laminated side and the edges to lift.

IMAGE PREPARATION:

- It is recommended to leave some unprinted media leader in front of your printed media for lamination. The leader will provide you the opportunity to check for wrinkles or any laminator hiccups prior to laminating your actual print job.
- Make sure the image is completely dry prior to overlaminating. It is recommended to wait at least 4 hours prior to overlaminating. Waiting 24 hours is optimum. Even though the inks are dry to the touch, the co-solvents (Glycol) from the inks may be present. Glycol is used in inks to prevent clogging of the ink nozzles. High gloss media is more difficult to laminate because the ink tends to sit on top of the coating. Matte coated products absorb moisture and the ink so they are easier to laminate.
- Do not exceed the recommended ink saturation limits for the media you are using. Higher ink lay downs have an adverse effect on laminate adhesion. Lower the ink density, the better the laminate adhesion.
- Store your prints in an area that is free of dust and debris. If debris is attracted to the imaged surface, dirt particles can be trapped and show up as "bubbles" in your finished laminated graphic. An unclean laminating environment is the worst enemy of any successful finishing job.
- Wipe the print with a lint-free, soft cotton cloth prior to overlaminating. This helps remove materials in the inks which migrate to the surface of the print which inhibit good adhesion. The longer you wait after the printing, the more effective the wiping will be.

TRIMMING LAMINATED GRAPHICS:

- After laminating, wait at least an hour before trimming. Laminate/media bond will strengthen over time and many laminate manufacturers recommend waiting as long as possible before trimming.
- When possible, leave an unprinted border when trimming. Laminate bond to unprinted media is very good, so when the job permits, leave a white border.