

## Tips on Choosing and Using Inkjet Canvas

By Ed McCarron  
InteliCoat Technologies

The two main variations of canvas currently coated for inkjet printing are 100% cotton or a cotton/poly blend. Each type is available in a variety of weights with glossy or matte finishes.

The **100% cotton canvases** tend to have the most texture and “personality,” which is what most people envision when they think of art canvas. But, because they are made up of 100% natural fibers, they can vary slightly in whiteness and texture from run to run. To some printmakers, this variability in the color and look of their prints is an advantage because it gives each piece of art a very original look.

The **poly/cotton blends** provide improved consistency from run to run, but the tradeoff is that they typically have less texture.

Different brands of inkjet canvases have different formulations of receptor coatings for different applications and requirements. Some are designed to work best with either dye inks or pigment inks; some are universal and can be used with both.

Some canvases are simply used to give an art-like look to signs and displays. Some canvases need fast-drying/water-resistant properties that make them suitable for over-painting with gels or acrylics. Other inkjet canvases are used to print fine-art reproductions, so the base material, coating, and inks must combine to produce acid-free, archival products. Many reproductions are also stretched over wooden frames just as oil paintings are. Thus, the material’s inkjet coating must be able to handle the stretching process without cracking or flaking.

Because inkjet canvas is relatively heavy, the feed rate through the printer may differ from other products you use. To avoid registration problems it is a good idea to run a calibration process on the printer when switching over to canvas media.



## Good Questions to Ask

Depending on your requirements, here are some good questions to ask when choosing among various products:

1. Is it compatible with my ink and printer?
2. Is the canvas and inkjet-coating acid-free?
3. Has the canvas been tested and certified for archivability?
4. Is this canvas water-resistant enough to withstand post-printing painting?

## Printing and Finishing Tips

- Use the highest-quality print mode. Make sure your ICC profile reflects that print setting.
- Don't exceed the material manufacturer's recommended ink-saturation limit if you're using a water-resistant canvas that you plan to overpaint. The water-resistance of the inkjet-receptive coating is adversely affected if you exceed the recommended ink load.
- To avoid the appearance of fingerprints, wear white cotton gloves when handling your prints.
- Turn off the automatic cutter. Some printer blades may not be able to trim canvas media, especially if the blade is dull. To avoid problems, advance the canvas several inches and cut the print manually.
- Allow the print to dry completely before you handle or finish it. The amount of drying time required will depend on the type of ink you used, ink saturation, and the relative humidity and temperature of your studio.
- Follow the material supplier's recommendations for print finishing. IntelliCoat recommends liquid laminates ("clearcoats") because laminating films may not always make complete contact with all of the high and low points on the weave of the material. Pretest liquid laminates before using them on your final print.
- Use a matte or luster clearcoat if your canvas print looks too glossy.
- Staples or tacks are commonly used to permanently attach all edges of the canvas to a rigid board or frame. Using glue or pressure-sensitive adhesives isn't recommended because the canvas material can shrink over time, causing the edges to curl or peel up from the surface. Shrinkage can also cause gaps in multi-panel canvas murals.
- It is best to stretch at 50%RH / 70F + or -because the material is made of natural fibers that shrink and expand w/ moisture/ humidity. As an example: If a print is stretched in "dry" condition the material is contracted and tight. If it is later exposed to a humid environment it will expand and may sag. At or about 50% RH the canvas is in a neutral state and should only expand or contract slightly when exposed to extremer conditions.



*Ed McCarron is Marketing Manager for IntelliCoat Technologies in South Hadley, MA. IntelliCoat's Magiclée® line of digital-printing materials includes four types of inkjet canvas, including a 17-mil, water-resistant poly/cotton inkjet stretch canvas for pigment-ink printers, a 19-mil poly/cotton canvas that works with both pigment or dye inks, a 20-mil glossy stretch 100% cotton canvas for use with dye inks, and a 17-mil acid-free matte cotton canvas for pigment-ink printers. ([www.magicinkjet.com](http://www.magicinkjet.com))*