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Glossary of Label Definitions

For your convenience, we have compiled a list of common label definitions to help you to better understand the label industry. We hope that you find our label glossary helpful.

Materials

Thermal Transfer: a material that requires a thermal transfer ribbon for printing. Heat is applied to the ribbon which transfers the ink onto the labels. Ideal for products that need more temperature resistance and a longer shelf life than a standard direct thermal product.
Direct Thermal: a material that does not require a ribbon for printing. Heat is applied directly to the label, and a chemical reaction on the face stock causes the label to darken where heat is applied. Receipt printers use direct thermal technology.
Standard Direct Thermal Labels: The material is an uncoated medium sensitivity product with excellent image quality. It is manufactured with a permanent acrylic adhesive. Since this product is uncoated, it should be tested by the end-user for their application. It should not be used for applications that require extreme environmental resistance.
Premium Direct Thermal Labels: The material is a top-coated medium sensitivity product with an all-temp/freezer grade, acrylic permanent adhesive. This product provides excellent image quality. Since it is top-coated, it provides excellent results in most environmental conditions. It is recommended that any direct thermal product be tested in an end-user application before ordering production quantities.
Direct Thermal Near Infrared: This is a direct thermal material that has high bar code scannability and is ideal for fast scanning applications It is scannable with both visible light and near infrared.
Laser Labels: Laser labels are printable using standard laser or inkjet printers. Laser sheets are ideal for address labels, full color label productions, and packaging. They are manufactured on 8½" x 11" or 8½" x 14" sheets.
Integrated Labels: These are a blend between a laser label and a standard sheet of paper. They can be used in the packaging industry to allow you to print both the packing slip and shipping label on one page. Integrated labels can print on any laser or inkjet printer.
Film: A film facestock is a non-paper material that is usually waterproof, heat resistant, and chemical resistant. Examples of films are polypropylene, polyester, polystyrene, polyethylene, and vinyl.

Adhesives

Permanent: A label with a permanent adhesive cannot be removed without either tearing the label or tearing the surface that the label is applied on. Ideal for most labels including box and shelf labels.

Removable: A label with a removable adhesive can be peeled off and reapplied. This is ideal for labels that are only used temporarily or will need to be removed.
Freezer: A freezer grade adhesive that is standard on our premium direct thermal labels. Freezer grade adhesives are used on case-ready meats and on goods that have to withstand the cold and moist conditions of freezers.

Packaging Methods

Rolls: The standard packaging method for labels is to roll them onto cardboard cores. The most common core dimensions are 3" and 1" cores. Most stock rolls have an outer diameter of 8".
Fanfold: An alternative label packaging method is to fan fold them. The labels fold accordion style into individual stacks.
Sheets: Laser and integrated label products generally come in 8½" x 11" and 8½" x 14" sheets. A sheeter is used on the press to cut the labels into individual sheets.

Label Colors

Blank: Most labels start out as blank labels. These are plain white labels with no printing or ink.
Floodcoat: A floodcoated label is coated from edge to edge in a single color. Any solid colored labels are floodcoated.
Spot Color: A spot colored label has one or more colors covering only part of the label. Any labels preprinted with text, images, or shapes are generally printed with spot colors. Alternatively, colored ribbons can sometimes be used to achieve a similar effect.

Label Characteristics

Perforation: This refers to the perforation between each label to allow for easy tearing of the liner. Perforation is generally used for hand apply and non-perforation is used for machine apply.
Label Width: Label width refers to the dimension of the label perpendicular to the direction of feed. The width goes across the label.
Label Length: Label length refers to the dimension of the label parallel to the line of feed. The length goes along the label.
Core Size: This refers to the diameter of the inner core of roll labels. Sheeted and fan folded labels do not have cores or core sizes.
Roll OD(Outer Diameter): This refers to the diameter of the complete roll. This does not apply to sheeted or fan folded labels.
Opaque: An opaque label has a black backside to prevent the surface underneath the label from showing through. This can be used if the labels need to cover other labels.

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Miscellaneous Label Terms

Die Cut: This refers to a cut made in the face stock of a label construction by means of a hard or flexible die. Labels are shaped and customized by different die cuts.
Face Perf: A perforation that is only in the top layer of the label (face stock). The perforation stops when it hits the liner (see also face slit).
Face Slit: A slit that is only in the top layer of the label (face stock). The slit stops when it hits the liner (see also face perf).
Face Stock: The top layer of the label construction. This is what the adhesive is adhered to.
Liner: The bottom layer of the label construction which is discarded after use. This is what the label and adhesive sit on. It is coated with silicone to enable to label to be pulled cleanly away from it.
Matrix: Once the label has been die cut, the matrix is the part of the face stock that is not intended for use. The matrix is generally removed around labels except in the case of laser and integrated labels.
Piggy Back Label: This is a label that has several layers. The top layer (or ply) is usually the printable material. The middle layer is a release liner that is coated on the back with adhesive. The bottom layer is a standard release liner. These labels are often seen in retail applications with "instant coupons" on the product where the top label can be removed.

Again, we hope this helps. Please give us a call or email if you have any questions or need any help.

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