
PANTONE
& SCREEN PRINTING
SHARPRINT®
Manufacturers of Decorated Apparel

INTRODUCTION

When you say "red," it could refer to countless shades. But when you say "Red 485C," you're pinpointing one exact hue. Pantone® colors provide a universal standard for selecting and communicating color across various industries.

Every reputable screen printing company relies on an ink mixing system aligned with the Pantone® Matching System. However, even with Pantone's precision, the color you see on a swatch may not always match the final result in textile screen printing.

This guide outlines best practices for choosing Pantone® colors for apparel screen printing and what to expect from printed inks—so you won't be surprised when you open that fresh box of tees.



COATED & UNCOATED

Pantone® books for graphics come in coated and uncoated versions. These books show the ink formulas as printed on paper coated with a gloss type finish or uncoated, no finish.Textiles and t-shirts don't come in coated and uncoated versions as paper does, so what does this mean for screen print ink colors?

In general, C or coated colors are the best pick for screen printing. Standard plastisol screen print ink has a little shine by nature and tends to reflect the look of the coated Pantone® fan book. That being said, there are formulas for the uncoated Pantone® colors as well. The uncoated formulas tend to be more dull and more opaque than the coated colors when printed, although not quite as flat looking as the uncoated Pantone® fan book.

THE UNDERBASE EFFECT

Screen printing on dark or colored garments requires an underbase so the ink can be seen. An underbase is a layer of white ink printed before the design colors are printed. Without an underbase, ink colors are absorbed by the garment or noticeably altered by the garment color.

Some Pantone® colors can be printed with no under base. Depending on the color of the garment and the ink color, the Pantone® may remain true. In most cases, however, the garment. color will affect the ink color. All screen printing inks have a degree of transparency. A white underbase has a tendency to lighten the ink printed over it. The more transparent an ink color is, the more it will lighten on an underbase.



TRANSPARENT SCREEN PRINTING INKS & UNCOATED

Middle to dark blues and purples are particularly transparent. Process colors and fluorescent colors are also very transparent. These inks can lighten up to a full shade from the target Pantone® colors. If at all possible avoid these colors in the design. In some cases, you can select a shade darker and it will lighten up to near the target shade.

If these very transparent colors are part of a logo or brand identity, you will want to work with your screen printer to create a match shade for under base printing. This involves some research and development along with a series of swatching. Once the color is approved for under base printing, the ink department can record the modified formula and/or keep the ink on the shelf for you.