



## Frequently Asked Questions

### *What is Flexographic Printing?*

Flexographic printing, often called flexo for short, is a popular method of printing that is commonly used for large-volume printing jobs. It is a form of relief printing which needs a rubber (photo cyrel) printing plate made. This printing plate has raised images and text that transfer ink onto the substrate. The recessed layer does not print, only the raised areas.

In flexographic printing, a rubber flexible printing plate is wrapped around a large metal printing cylinder, which rotates and transfers ink onto the substrate, typically paper, polythene, compostable films, or plastics. The inked areas of the plate transfer the ink onto the substrate while the non-inked areas do not.

The ink can be solid pantone C or U depending on the substrate. For example non porous substrates such as polythene will result in a C number outcome while uncoated substrates such as kraft paper or corrugated board will result in the U version. It is the same ink, the U or C pantone reference indicates the outcome depending on the substrate.

Flexographic printing is used in a variety of applications, including packaging, labels, corrugated boxes, newspapers, and magazines. It is especially well-suited for printing on non-porous surfaces, such as polythene, plastic and metallic materials. This makes it ideal for printing on items like polythene carrier bags, food packaging films, where durability and resistance to moisture and other elements are important.

Flexo is a versatile printing process, capable of producing high-quality prints with vibrant colours, fine details, and sharp lines. It is also a cost-effective option for printing large quantities of materials, thanks to its high-speed printing capabilities and efficient use of ink. For example printed tissue paper small orders upto 5000 sheets are typically litho or digitally printed but usually flexo starts to become the more economical option on volumes of 5000 – 10000 sheets upwards. Each product will have its own volume tipping point.

In our industry of packaging, flexo has more restrictions than digital or litho due to the method of the ink transfer. Sometimes for larger runs it is better to engrave the metal cylinder instead of wrapping it with a printing plate. This is called gravure printing. It is reserved for the very large volume runs as each cylinder can cost £250 - £300+vat