FOUR COLOURS OR FOUR COLOURS?

Are we printing four colours in full or four spot colours?

Surely if full colour incorporates cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK) then that's four spot colours?

What's a spot colour and why are Pantones therefore important?

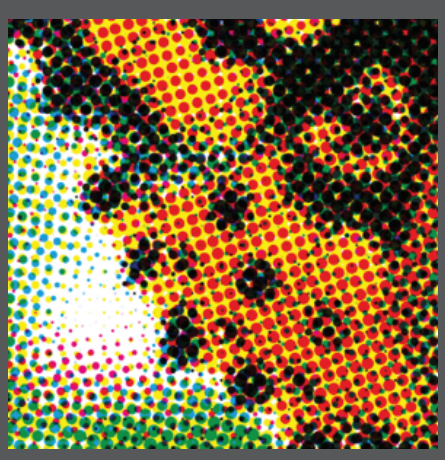
Which printing process is required for the artwork we have available?

For printers working with CMYK breakdowns and Pantone references daily, these questions and more are simple enough to answer. But for those just looking to get their artwork printed to a range of products, with no knowledge of colour management, the question of 'How many colours are in your artwork?', which our sales team will ask when producing a quotation, can often throw people.

Processes that incorporate full colour, four colours or CMYK printing techniques use a combination of dots from cyan, magenta, yellow and black inks to create the colour required. Using different percentages of each means you can produce any colour you wish at varying percentages. Zoom in on an area of artwork printed in this way and it will start to look like a piece of work by Roy Lichtenstein!

Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black Separation

Final CMYK Image



Detailed View of Artwork

Not all colours can be produced using this method however. Whilst digital printing (including transfer) is limited to replicating artwork in CMYK, offset litho printing, screen printing and pad printing for example, allows for any colour to be mixed and printed as a solid spot colour.

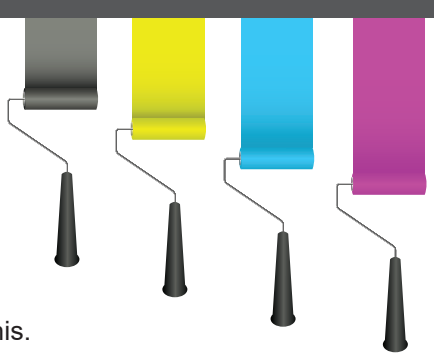
When printing in spot colours, the colour matching system widely used by most printers is the Pantone Formula Guide. This guide provides a PMS number for each colour available, which is then used to precisely mix that colour and introduce it to the printing process as a one-off addition. So, if printing in CMYK means that many coloured dots are being applied to create the colours required, spot colour printing uses just the specific colours selected from the Pantone range, resulting in a more consistent rendering than you would get when printing digitally.

Colour Range for Printing Processes

CMYK / Four Colour Process / Full Colour: Digital / Transfer / UV
Any colour possible at any percentage (including tints / blends and gradients)

Spot Colour: Offset Litho / Screen Print / Pad
All colours used must be assigned a Pantone reference in a solid state

Still confused?



Don't worry - when you request a quotation from our sales team, they will quote based on the printing processes available for the products you are enquiring about.

Our studio team will then make sure that your artwork is suitable for print based on this.

You can find out more about this topic, along with an overview of artwork file types required, outlining fonts for print, and the various printing techniques we work with, by heading to...

www.fluidbranding.com/artwork-studio