

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

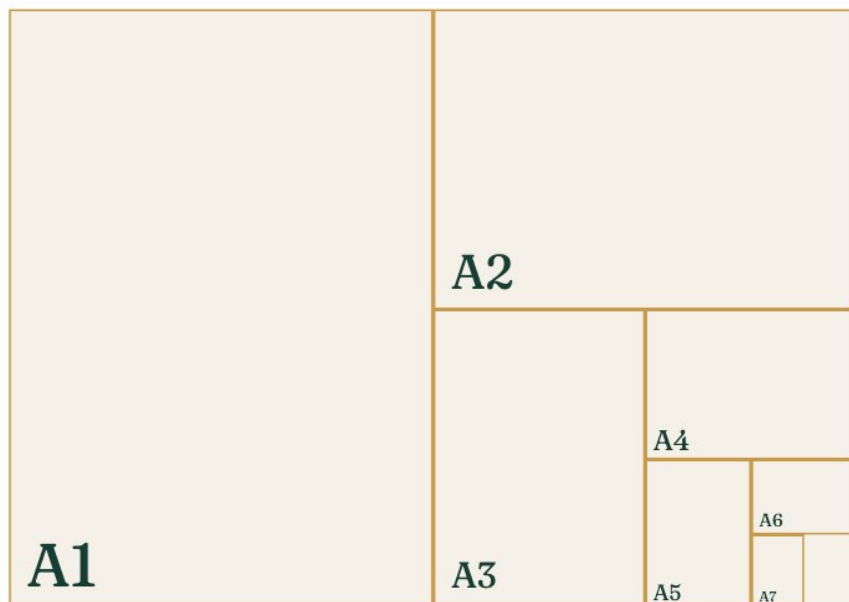
The print *buying* guide

Sizes, paper, finishes and artwork explained — so you get it right first time.

01 — SIZES

Paper sizes

Most print uses the A-series. Each size is exactly half the one before it, so artwork scales neatly between them.



SIZE	MILLIMETRES	TYPICAL USES
A1	594 × 841	Posters, display boards
A2	420 × 594	Posters, menu boards, notices
A3	297 × 420	Posters, folded brochures, certificates
A4	210 × 297	Letterheads, brochures, magazines, reports
A5	148 × 210	Flyers, menus, booklets, invitations
A6	105 × 148	Postcards, flyers, tickets
DL	99 × 210	Leaflets, compliment slips, invitations
Business card	85 × 55	The UK standard card size

02 — PAPER

Paper weight & type

Paper weight is measured in gsm (grams per square metre). The higher the number, the thicker and more substantial it feels in the hand.

80–100 gsm Letterheads, compliment slips, notepads

115–130 gsm Flyers, leaflets, booklet inside pages

150–170 gsm Posters, premium flyers, brochure pages

250–300 gsm Covers, invitations, postcards, menus

350–450 gsm Business cards, swing tags, place cards

Silk

Smooth with a soft sheen. The most popular all-rounder — great for photos and easy to read.

Gloss

Shiny and vibrant. Makes photography pop; can reflect light, so it is less ideal for lots of text.

Uncoated

Natural and matt, like good writing paper. Perfect for letterheads and anything people write on.

Recycled and textured premium papers are also available — ask for samples if the feel of the paper matters to your brand.

03 — FINISHES

Finishes that make it special

A finish protects your print and changes how it looks and feels. A little goes a long way.

01 Matt lamination

A thin protective film with a smooth, non-reflective look. Elegant and fingerprint-resistant.

02 Gloss lamination

A shiny protective film that boosts colour. Durable for menus and covers.

03 Soft-touch lamination

A velvety, premium feel that people notice the moment they pick it up.

04 Spot UV

A clear gloss coating on selected areas — such as a logo — for contrast against matt.

05 Foiling

Metallic gold, silver or coloured foil pressed onto the paper for a luxury finish.

06 Embossing & debossing

Raised or pressed-in detail you can feel, often used on business cards and covers.

FOLDING

Half-fold (4 sides), tri-fold or roll-fold (6 sides), Z-fold and gatefold. Heavier papers are creased before folding so they don't crack.

BINDING

Saddle stitching (staples on the spine) suits booklets and magazines — the page count must be a multiple of four. Thicker documents are perfect bound with a square spine, or wire-bound to lie flat.

04 — LARGE FORMAT

Banners, signs & event graphics

The right material depends on where it will go, how long it needs to last and how it will be fixed.

MATERIAL	BEST FOR	GOOD TO KNOW
PVC banner	Outdoor events, building fronts, fences	Weatherproof; hemmed with eyelets for tying
Fabric backdrop	Stages and indoor backdrops	Lightweight, crease-resistant, no glare under lights
Pull-up banner	Receptions, exhibitions, events	Self-standing in its case; quick to set up
Correx board	Temporary outdoor signs, directions	Light, rigid and weather-resistant
Foamex	Indoor signs and display panels	Smooth, rigid and economical
Dibond	Long-lasting indoor or outdoor signs	Aluminium composite; very durable
Acrylic	Premium office and reception signs	Glass-like finish, often on stand-off fixings
Self-adhesive vinyl	Windows, walls, floors and table wraps	Removable or permanent options

VIEWING DISTANCE

Large signs are read from further away, so text needs to be bigger and simpler than you might think. A common rule of thumb: every 25 mm of letter height can be read from about 10 metres.

05 — ARTWORK

Getting your files print-ready

Most print problems come from the file, not the press. These are the checks I make on every job before it goes to print.

1

Bleed

Extend backgrounds and images 3 mm beyond the trim edge, so there are no white slivers after cutting.

2

Safe area

Keep text and logos at least 3–5 mm inside the trim edge so nothing important is cut off.

3

Resolution

Photos should be 300 dpi at the size they are printed. Images taken from websites or social media are usually too small.

4

Colour

Print uses CMYK ink, not the RGB light of your screen — very bright on-screen colours can look slightly softer on paper. Brand colours can be matched with Pantone references.

5

Fonts & format

Supply a print-ready PDF with fonts embedded. Logos are best as vector files (AI, EPS, PDF or SVG).

DON'T HAVE PRINT-READY FILES?

No problem — send me what you have and I will prepare and check the artwork for you.

06 — BUYING WELL

Quantities, timing & proofs

01 Order the right quantity

- The price per item falls as quantity rises, because most of the cost is in setting up the job.
- Order a few spares for events and walk-ins — reprinting a small number later costs more per item.
- For items that change often, such as prices or dates, smaller runs avoid waste.

02 Allow enough time

- Plan for design, proofs and approvals as well as printing — most print takes 1–4 working days once approved.
- Seasonal peaks (Christmas, events, the start of term) get busy — book early.
- Express options exist when something is urgent, at an extra cost.

03 Check the proof carefully

- Read every word, number and date — then ask someone else to read it too.
- Check phone numbers, emails and web addresses by actually using them.
- For large or important runs, ask for a printed proof copy before the full run.

07 — CHECKLIST

Before you order

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ What is it for, and who will see it? | ☐ Finished size and orientation |
| ☐ How many, and do you need spares? | ☐ Paper weight and type |
| ☐ Any finish — lamination, spot UV, foil? | ☐ Folding or binding needed? |
| ☐ Are the text and images final? | ☐ Who approves the proof? |
| ☐ When and where is it needed? | ☐ One delivery address or several? |

NOT SURE WHAT TO CHOOSE?

**Tell me what you're making and I'll
recommend the right size, paper and finish
— free.**

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