

# Screen Printing

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Screen Printing When one thinks about t-shirt printing, often what comes to mind is screen-printing. It is commonly used on different types of apparel like shirts and hats. It is one of the most versatile printing processes available and the materials used in this process are inexpensive and readily available. The process begins with the creation of the screen. The screen is made from fine porous fabric stretched over a frame made of wood or aluminum. The screen is placed onto a substrate or printing material. Ink is then placed on top of the screen and a fill bar to fill the mesh openings with the ink. The screen-printing process is something that can be very complicated. Prints are created using CMYK or cyan, magenta, yellow and black. Areas that are not to be printed on are blocked off on the screen acting as a stencil. The ink pushed through the open spaces on the screen onto the printing surface. The ink is layered on one at a time and as the colors mix, they can create all the colors of the rainbow. Once the printing is complete, the ink needs to be cured. A textile dryer, flash dryer and a drying board are required for the curing to happen. Once this is done a fabric brush is used to clean the screen. In some cases the ink is hard to get off the screen so a fast ink wash will get what the brush missed. There are several different methods to screen-printing. Plastisol is most commonly used in printing on apparel. The outcome to this method produces good color on dark fabric and clear detail and a more plasticized texture. The texture can be softened with special additives or thicker with more layers of ink. Using water based inks are good for printing onto lighter colored fabrics. These inks penetrate the fabric more and are much softer than Plastisol inks. Discharge inks are used to print lighter colors on darker fabric. With these inks, they work by removing the dye of the fabric. However, they are less detailed and the color is harder to control. Screen-printing is something that has been used for a long time and there is no sign of it stopping. You can do several things with this type of printing that the results are endless. Once you get the process down, you can experiment more with different types of inks and methods for screen-printing.