

Film Laminating Basics

What is Film Laminating?

Film laminating is one of the easiest methods of preserving and protecting important documents. From menus and pricelists to posters and covers, laminating has a wide array of applications.

What is the right film?

Selecting the right film for your project is the key to successfully achieving the desired effect.

Most laminating film is thermal. This means that heat, as well as pressure, is required to achieve a proper bond between the film and the substrate.



When ordering film lamination there are several factors to consider: how is the piece printed (offset or digital), what is the size of the sheet to be laminated and the coverage area on the sheet. Finally, what is the desired finish after laminating...matte (soft glare-free look with slightly granular texture), gloss (optically clear with a high shine) or soft touch (a pleasant velvety effect).

Understanding that there are specific films that should be used in certain situations or to achieve certain effects, below is a description of some of the most common films used today.

- **Standard OPP film** - Very glossy, more of a "wet" look. It is a soft film, so durability and scratch resistance is the lowest of the three. It does fold well - but glues and foils don't stick very well due to the lower dyne level.
- **Pro Grade PET film** - Glossy, durable, generally the all-around versatile film. Gluing and stamping can be an issue as the dyne level is generally right on the edge of usability, with the exception of the G/S film which is coated to accept these treatments.
- **Nylon film** - Generally the same properties of the polyester, with the exception that it is hydroscopic. That means it allows moisture to be absorbed. This can be important for certain applications where curl can be a factor, like a perfect bound book cover. This film can help stabilize the laminated sheet to stay relatively flat. Also, the dyne level on these films is generally higher, so gluing and stamping can usually be done as long as the film is less than 6 months old. The fresher the film, the better.
- **SuperStick film** - This film is required for digitally printed pieces. It has very aggressive properties.

What is the right film thickness?

Regarding thickness or rigidity, laminating film is sold in a range of thicknesses as thin as 1.2 mils and as thick as 10 mils. This metric represents the combined thickness of the film and adhesive that makes up a single layer of laminating film. Additionally, film can be applied on only one side of a sheet or on both sides of the sheet.



In short, when planning your next film laminating project, there are three things to consider...the film, the film, and the film. The Print Finishing experts at Eckhart & Company look forward to assisting you with your next film laminating project.

