

Specialty printing

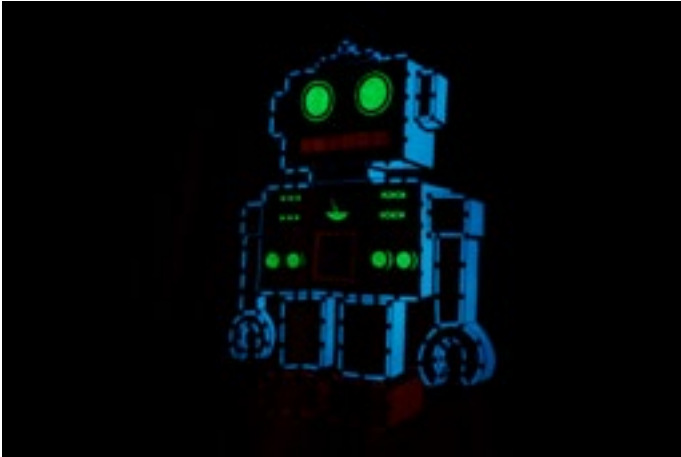
When we started Threadless back in 2000, designs were printed using fairly basic screen printing methods. With the launch of our Select line in 2006, we began to encourage artists to explore new printing techniques that enhanced creativity, which in turn resulted in some really amazing designs.

In the past, most designs were printed with regular plastisol inks, some with a chino additive and a few with water-based or discharge inks. Now, designers can use up to eight colors, specify super glow, puff, high density, suede, UV color change, shimmer, metallic clear, glitter, blister, flock, vinyl, foils, gradients, embroidery, simulated process and even belt printing.

While it's not required to use these techniques, we've created this guide to help you learn about what can and cannot be done during the production of designs. What follows is an in-depth look at printing techniques we use that you may wanna experiment with when designing your tee.

Happy designing, and good luck!

Specialty Inks and Transfers



Super Glow

Super Glow

Super glow is exactly what it sounds like: glow in the dark ink, on steroids. Glow ink comes in a variety of colors, including yellow, orange, red, sky blue, aqua, violet and white. It's transparent, but not completely, so it'll show up very faintly in daylight.

Glow ink works best on light colored tees. On dark colored tees it needs an opaque white base to work, so if you're using glow ink on a dark tee be aware that the glow part of the design will appear white in daylight.

Glow ink can also be layered over other ink.



UV Color Change

UV Color Change

UV ink works like magic. Almost completely invisible indoors, UV ink shows its colors when exposed to sunlight. The colors produced are not as bright as normal inks, but UV ink can be made in any color.

UV ink only works on light colored tees and cannot be layered over other inks.



Puff

Puff

Puff is a rounded, raised ink that's best used on organic shapes and lines. Hard edges and angles are softened and can be lost when used with puff ink.

It can be used for detail work, however, the smaller the detail, the smaller the "puff." Puff ink is not suited for large areas of ink, since it will be very heavy on the tee.

High Density

High density ink is much like puff ink, but it's a square stack raised ink. That means it works best for shapes and lines with hard edges and angles.

High density ink can also be printed clear, which creates a darkened tonal effect on the tee without adding color.

Specialty Inks and Transfers



Shimmer

Blister

Blister ink is like puff paint with dimples. It's thick and can create a lot of texture on the tee. Because it's so heavy, it's best not to use this ink on large fill areas.

Shimmer

Shimmer is sparkly, metallic ink that is available in black, silver, bronze and gold. It works best in larger areas with no fine detail.



Metallic Clear

Glitter

Glitter ink is like shimmer ink, but features thick glitter flakes instead of tiny metallic sparkles. It's available in a range of basic crayon colors.

Like shimmer ink, it works best in larger areas with no fine detail. Glitter ink is also a little transparent, so if you layer glitter ink over other inks, the colors underneath will peek through.

Metallic Clear

Metallic clear ink can be printed over other basic inks to produce a metallic shiny effect. When printed directly on the tee, it produces a darkened tonal effect with a hint of shimmer.

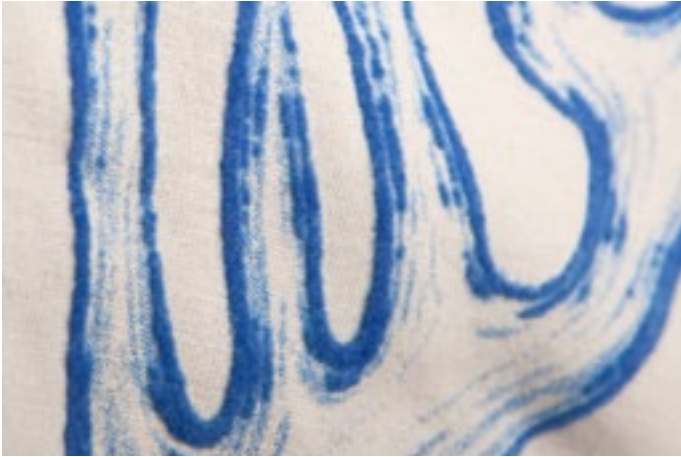


Suede

Suede

Not to worry, this isn't made from actual animals! Suede ink is a raised ink with a fuzzy texture. The line work must be at least 1/8" to 1/4" to appear fuzzy. Like puff and high density ink, suede ink does not work well in large solid areas.

Specialty Inks and Transfers



Flock

Flock

Flock is actually not an ink, but a heat-transferred material that feels like felt. It's a little heavy on the tee so it works best in smaller areas.

Vinyl

Vinyl is a plastic-like material just like the stuff you find on sports jerseys. It comes in an array of basic crayon colors.



Embroidery

Foil

Foil material is similar to vinyl, but much softer and more flexible. It's also very shiny! Foil comes in gold, bronze, red, blue, green, black, purple, iridescent clear, iridescent silver, luminescent silver, metallic rainbow, patterned silver and patterned gold. (The pattern is similar to what you'd see on a bike reflector.)

Embroidery

In addition to inks and heat applications, you can also spruce up your designs with good old-fashioned needle and thread. There are tons of thread colors, so nearly any color you can think of can be used to add a stitched design on your tee.

Specialty Printing Techniques



Belt Printing

Belt Printing

A belt printer uses a huge screen that covers the entire front and back of the tee to create a design that goes all over the tee. Belt printing can only be used on designs that use one color of ink.

Each tee will look unique, since the design will vary slightly from tee to tee when printed due to shirt size and how it's placed on the printer.

There will also be small areas of imperfections on the tee around the collar, seam and armpits as a result of the printing process.

It's possible to create a belt-printed, one color design with a regular sized design printed over it!



Belt Printing Details

Oversized Printing

Oversized prints are made using very large screens to produce designs that are not limited to the center of the tee.



Oversized Printing

Gradients and Simulated Process

Here at Threadless, we have an 8-color limit on designs, if you're using solid colors. There is a way to achieve the look of unlimited color, and that's with simulated process printing.

Simulated process printing can create the look of photorealistic elements, watercolors, gradients, etc. by printing with a limited number of colors in tiny halftone dots. The smallest halftone we can print is 10%.