

## Top Coat

### *Understanding Coated Papers and Which Type to Use for the Results You Want*

When you look through paper samples evaluating different paper, one of the first things you probably notice is whether the sample is coated or uncoated. Coated papers feel smooth to the touch because they have a coating of clay and other substances. This coating causes the paper to reflect light more and absorb ink less than uncoated papers.

Many different types of coated papers exist. To make them, the paper mill starts with an uncoated piece of paper and applies different types of coatings to give the paper different qualities. The uncoated stock is called the base sheet. The thinnest type of coating is called a film or wash coat, which acts as a sealer to prevent ink absorption. The next step is called a matte coating. A matte coat has more clay than a wash coat and is good for projects with a lot of text. If your project involves large areas of heavy dark ink coverage, however, matte coat papers can sometimes appear somewhat mottled.

The next step is called a dull, suede or velvet coat. Like matte coatings, dull coatings are good for text readability because they are not as reflective as a gloss coat. Glossy coatings actually have the same amount of clay as a dull coat, but the sheets are smoothed and polished

*Coated paper generally produces sharper, brighter images and has better reflectivity than uncoated paper.*

*Uncoated paper is generally more absorbent than coated papers and colors tend to print a little duller. The non-reflective surface lends itself to text-heavy materials.*

using a process called calendaring. The paper is run between rollers, which compress and smooth the paper. Glossy coatings are great for color photographs, but the same shiny qualities that make photos

look great can make text harder to read because of the glare.

Gloss coated papers can be somewhat less white than dull coated papers because the heat required to polish the paper also can add a slightly brownish cast. Coated papers often include shades of white named with terms such as balanced, warm and cold to indicate the hue. Cream and other off-white tones are available, but because coated stock is so often used for showing off vibrant four-color printing, the paper itself is rarely brightly colored. **15**

