

DTG Digital Printing vs. Screen



Major advents in the digital t-shirt and accessory printing industry have been made over the past decade, which have created a competitive edge on screen printed products.

The Basics of Digital Printing:

In **direct printing**, the ink is **printed directly onto the t-shirt**. It's as if you customized a normal printer to accept a t-shirt instead of paper. These printers are quite costly, however, and are more likely to be found at professional print shops than in private or small-scale operations.

Advantages of Digital Printing:

The **main advantages of digital printing over screen printing** are color and detail. You can create more **vibrant, colorful, and detailed** prints than on screen printed products. Summed up, the strength of digital printing lies in its **flexibility, order size variability, accessibility, and speed**.

Flexibility:

Digital printing offers the most **flexibility** of any printing method in terms of **color options and detail**. Unlike screen printing, colors are unlimited (with 16 million colors) and gradients and shading are a snap.

Series or Order Size:

You can print off **as little or as many** prints as you want. Let's say, for example, that you want to make a birthday t-shirt for your friend. You can print out a single t-shirt order without the expensive set up fees and minimum orders that are associated with screen printing. If you don't like a part of the design in the final product it's easy to go back to your digital file and correct any mistakes. Also, if your t-shirt turns out so well that you want to print a birthday t-shirt for everyone at the party, it is very easy to do so. You can have the shirts in a matter of minutes!

Accessibility:

In this day and age people are likely to have some form of access to a computer. So, exceptions aside, most will already have (or have access to) the basic "materials" or equipment needed to design and produce t-shirts the digital way. The startup costs therefore are very low to minimal.

Speed:

The whole process from design to finished product can take **less than an hour** if you know exactly what you want and have all the materials ready. Even with direct printing, which you will most likely have to outsource, t-shirts can be made and delivered in a very short time. (Note: whether with screen printing or digital printing, bulk projects will take you longer to produce).

The “Hand”:

“The Hand” (of a garment) is a common expression in the industry which refers to how a final printed t-shirt (or product) **feels to the touch**. Direct garment printing texture has no print-like texture at all! It feels like a blank t-shirt to the touch!!!

Printable Areas:

Because digital printing is **computer based**, its **format often echoes the dimensions of computer equipment**. **Direct printing** has its limitations on printable areas as it has to go through its own “printer”. The maximum size is 14 x 16 per print.

Wear and Tear:

With time, wear, and washing **any garment**, printed in any format **will show signs of use**. Digital printing methods hold up quite well and last just about as long as screen printed shirts do. Digital printed t-shirts will fade a little in time, just like any other shirts with other printing methods that eventually show wear.

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