



PAPER TRAIL

Info for the end-user

BY JON PACKMAN

No books, no photos, no tickets, no Picasso's, no rizlas, and no *USP Magazine*. The world would indeed be a dark place without paper.

For thousands of years, various trees and plants were pulped and beaten into sheets by hand and then, in the 19th century, paper production became industrialised. Since then its uses have multiplied to satisfy our growing needs, and the paper family has exploded. But why do we need so many types? Surely you're not going to upset anyone by putting economy paper in the inkjet printer. It's all made of the same stuff, isn't it? Just get some that says 'recycled' on it somewhere and everyone's happy.

Not quite. However, despite the seemingly endless range in quality and feel of different types of paper used today, they can all in fact be classified into four main categories: woodfree coated; woodfree uncoated; wood-containing (or mechanical) coated; and wood-containing (or mechanical) uncoated.

The coating part is whether a top finish has been applied to the paper or not. Upon reaching the consumer,

such intricacies of papermaking will have been lost in favour of a simple, sellable description that refers to its intended use – and hey presto, we get laser paper for laser printers.

In reality it's not that simple. The four types of paper will then be differentiated by other factors like basis and coating weight, and fibre type. How everything is combined determines what use that paper is going to be most effective for. Therefore, when you choose paper you should pick that which is designed to do the job in hand.

Your typical office and copying paper would be a woodfree uncoated paper in the 70-120gsm (grammes per square metre) basis weight range. A higher gsm value means the paper is stronger, and will normally allow duplex printing without affecting the quality on either side. The standard weight for most paper is 80gsm, but more 75gsm is available now that gives pretty much the same results. Quality paper tends to come in at 90-100gsm, with laser and inkjet going up to around 160gsm and photo paper topping the scales at anything between 165 and 270gsm. >>

WHAT TO USE

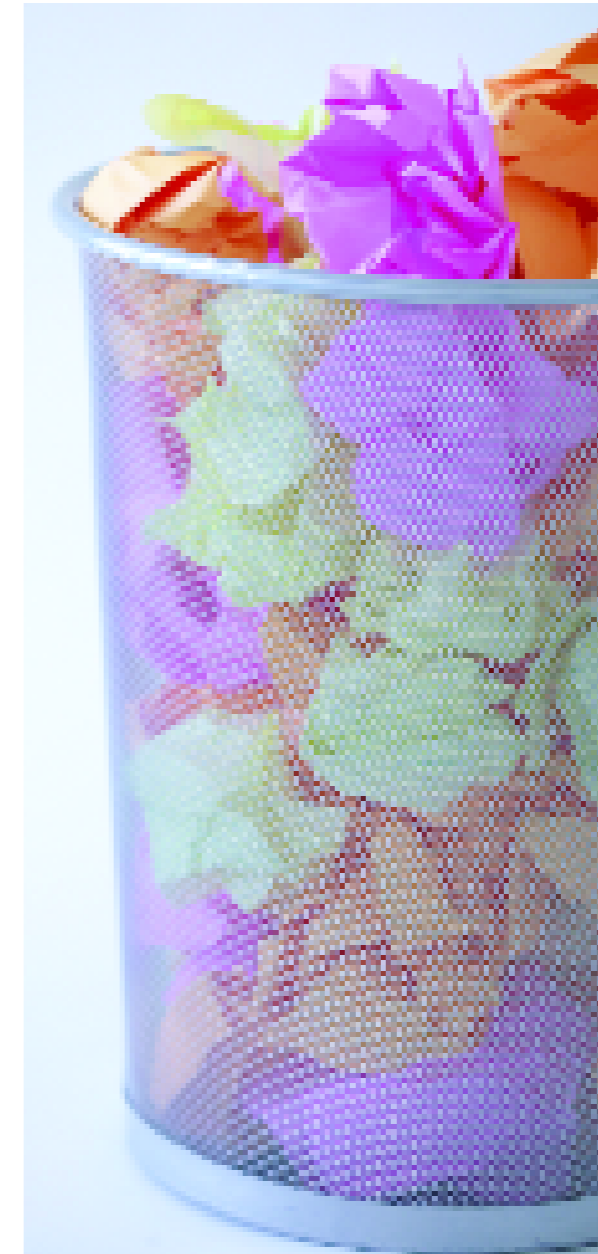
Sitting at the bottom of this hierarchy are economy and copier paper; cheap and cheerful for reasonable quality, short-run printing and copying. Fine for everyday, internal stuff but beware mis-feeds and jams caused by its light weight. The money you save could well be taken up by replacing wasted ink and toners, or getting the printer fixed. This kind of paper gives poor results with colour printing in particular.

Inkjet paper is specifically designed for inkjet printers. It's more expensive than copier paper but produces much better results for general office printing, and particularly in inkjet colour for external communications. While it can be used with other printing types, it's still not a good choice for colour lasers.

Luckily, laser paper is. However, you may be paying extra for the privilege so it's best left to more important jobs and when you need a good result from a colour laser print. It can be used in inkjets, but why bother when inkjet paper is normally cheaper and better suited to its own machine?

All-purpose or multi-functional paper is designed to give good, professional results for all general printing. Be sure to check for its compatibility in the product description though. The cost is higher than other paper which is adequate for most everyday office work.

Important correspondence may warrant the use of laid or wove paper which is at least 100gsm and has a tactile feel to it. Laid has a traditional, often raised finish with a faint pattern woven into it. Wove has a sharp, polished finish and is smooth to the touch. Both offer good print quality but the expensive cost means you'll probably want to save them for special jobs.



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For high quality magazines and reports, posters, calendars and photo quality printing, you need a heavier woodfree coated paper. Multiple heavy coatings give it a smooth feel, high brightness and low opacity. Photo paper, for example, can have a matt or gloss finish, be fast-drying, fade and smear resistant. Basically, the heavier it is, the better quality your photos will be.

Conversely, a wood-containing uncoated paper will be of a lower quality and is typically supercalendered (SC) paper. It's used for envelopes, directories, and light catalogues, for example.

Wood-containing coated papers are generally limited to light-weight coated (LWC) and medium-weight coated (MWC) papers, as in most weekly magazines. LWC and MWC papers are generally of higher quality than the SC grades.

RECYCLED PAPER

The recycled paper market has evolved considerably over recent years and there's now a green option for almost every application. It's a misconception to think that recycled papers are dusty, absorb too much ink, or make photocopiers/printers jam. The quality and performance attributes of recycled papers have improved significantly. However, certain types, such as photo paper, are not generally available as recycled.

Numerous environmental claims, labels and standards exist, but the extent to which they use recycled material can differ wildly. Check out The Waste and Resources Action Programme's website, www.wrap.org.uk, for the facts and more information on recycled and environmentally friendly paper. ■