

# Picking Colors

## Process vs. Spot Colors

Have you ever been disappointed with the results of a color brochure that looked so beautiful on the monitor and nothing like the ink chip you picked out or what printed to your inkjet printer?

Avoiding disappointment in the future is easy once you make the investment in color libraries that pertain to the type of printing you plan to do. There is a standard for picking colors that is used world-wide. It is called the Pantone Matching System.

The two most basic types of printing by a commercial printer are spot color printing and process color printing. Spot colors are solid colors created from specially pre-mixed inks while process colors are a reasonable facsimile of a spot color created from mixing cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK).

When choosing spot colors, you should always choose from a Pantone solid swatch book and never from what looks good on your monitor. Even on the best calibrated monitor, colors will look different from the actual ink. The reason? Your monitor uses RGB phosphors that can only display a simulation of process and Pantone colors.

In your digital files, colors must be created and assigned in the manner in which they will print. Four-color process colors should be created using the CMYK model and marked for process separation in your color menu. Pantone colors should be chosen from the Pantone list in your color menu and not marked for process separation.

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### REMEMBER:

- If you import graphics with specific Pantone numbers into a layout program, be sure that you are designating the same color and not multiple versions.
- Check your elements and text color assignments. Two different shades of the same color may look alike on the monitor. If you are printing black and one PMS spot color; be sure that what you've selected is in fact the same color! **Test, Test, Test.** Laser print your job as you go along. Print ALL PLATES as separations “on” when dealing in process or multiple colors. This will show any elements of your job that print in an incorrect color.
- Some Pantone colors look different if they are built from process colors. The CMYK edition of the Pantone color guide is invaluable for picking process-built colors. The Pantone Process Color Guide can be ordered at [www.pantone.com](http://www.pantone.com) or calling 1-800-PANTONE.