

What Decorating Method is Best for My Order?

Screen printing is the most common method for decorating apparel. It involves the semi-automatic printing of apparel by “forcing” liquid plastic ink through a design that has been photographically exposed on a polyester screen. It is ideal for small to large orders (we recommend at least 12 or more garments) with designs up to 6 colors. Cotton, polyester, or cotton/poly blended apparel provides the best results. We can print on some nylons and other specialty materials - *but please check with us first!* Be aware, the labor intensive nature of creating and setting up screens and the screen printing press makes moderate to large orders more practical than small orders.

Heat sealing is the most common method for personalizing apparel. This method is ideal for putting names and titles on staff wear as well as names and numbers on team wear. Heat sealing is the process of applying computer-cut vinyl to a variety of garments. A thin vinyl is cut by a computer plotter into the shape of letters or numbers which are then applied using a heat press that distributes high pressure and temperature to the vinyl and the garment. Heat sealed vinyl has a feel and look very similar to screen printing.

Embroidery is most popular for decorating upscale garments, including headwear, fleece, and jackets. Normally, embroidery is not best suited for t-shirts under 6.1 ounces and other lighter-weight fabrics. Preparing custom embroidered designs involves a more expensive initial set-up than other methods. However, the upscale appearance, affordability of small quantity production, and the high degree of personalization provided by this method is well worth the initial investment costs. Embroidery involves hooping the area of the garment to be sewn with a backing material, attaching the hoop and the garment to a computerized sewing head, and setting up the threads, programming the machine to embroider the design onto the garments, then removing the garments and trimming away excess backing and stray threads.

Tackle twill, like embroidery, is considered an upscale decorating method. It is most common on higher end athletic wear, but is also becoming very popular on club jackets and some business wear. It involves using a laser or water jet to cut twill fabric into characters and shapes which are then sewn onto the garments utilizing special software programs and a computerized embroidery machine.. This method works very well when combined with embroidery. It can substantially reduce the stitch count of an embroidered logo. This results in a lower cost while maintaining the up-scale appearance. Like embroidery, tackle twill is best suited for heavier weight fabrics.

Other Methods of garment decoration include direct to garment inkjet printing; digital transfers, which provide the look and feel of direct to garment inkjet printing; screen printed transfers, which look and feel much like direct screen printing, and embossing, a method that creates a dimensional design utilizing the fabric of the garment. For the time being, we do not believe that direct to garment inkjet printing is commercially viable and do not offer this printing method. We do offer sublimation and screen printed transfer printing when they offer advantages over our primary printing methods. And, if you are interested in embossed apparel, we can help with that as well.



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