

# Localcopies etc.™

www.localcopies.com • 230 E. Betteravia Road Suite H • Santa Maria, CA 93454  
805-928-1286 • Fax 805-928-8736

## Know Your Paper

Now, before you actually start an important printing project, is a good time to learn the facts about the papers which are available at Local Copies Etc. (and at most printing companies). If you want to know about the history of paper making and how paper is made you can find lots of information online at sites like “Paper University” which offers interesting facts about paper, recycling and the environment ([www.tappi.org/paperu/all\\_about\\_paper/faq.htm](http://www.tappi.org/paperu/all_about_paper/faq.htm)); at the American Forest & Paper Association site (<http://www.afandpa.org/>); or at Georgia Tech’s Paper Museum (<http://www.ipst.gatech.edu/amp/collection/index.htm>) among others. An excellent article on how paper is made may be read at (<http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2231/how-is-paper-made>).

### Paper Availability

Local Copies has shelves full of paper and many swatch books with samples of thousands more different types of paper. The fact that a paper is shown in a swatch book does not indicate that it is readily available. Local Copies keeps papers in stock which are requested regularly and in large quantities (5,000+). However the primary way for both paper manufacturers and Local Copies Etc. to maintain competitive prices is to stock papers that move quickly.

So, when choosing a paper for your print project be sure you pick your paper early in the process. This will ensure that it is at Local Copies Etc. by the time you are ready to print. Generally paper is ordered once or twice a month. There are minimum dollar amounts which must be ordered at one time to make shipping cost effective. That is why we try to include special orders in with a normal order to avoid adding extra shipping charges to the cost of a special order paper.

### Paper Nomenclature

Papers come in a variety of types with names that, for you the consumer, mean virtually the same thing. The paper you choose may be called “bond,” “text,” “writing,” “book,” “catalog,” “xerographic,” “typing” or “offset” and yet most consumers wouldn’t notice much difference. You might want a heavier paper and the choices you have include some called “card stock,” “cover,” “bristol,” “index,” etc. Once again, it would be difficult for most consumers to tell the difference (see Glossary of Paper Terms).

### Paper Weight & Thickness

Papers are also often designated by basis weight (e.g. “20# bond,” “65# cover”) but this designation can also be misleading. You might be surprised when you hold a sheet of 80# cover and a sheet of 80# book to discover that though both are “80#” one is a flexible paper and one a stiff cardstock. That is because the weight in pounds (#) is determined by weighing a stack of sheets (typically 500) of the standard size sheet for that paper grade (type of paper). The difference is the “standard size.”

The standard size (also called “parent size”) is not the same for all paper grades. The major paper grades such as bond or cover have their own standard sizes which determine the basis weight

for that grade of paper regardless of the final size of the cut paper. These large sheets of paper are typically printed and then cut or folded into smaller sizes such as for booklets or brochures. Standard parent sheet sizes are 17x22, 19x25, 23x35, and 25x38 (North American sheet sizes) or A2, A1, and A0 (International sheet sizes). Bond paper, such as that used in laser printers and copy machines, typically has a basis weight of 13-25 lbs. That weight is based on 500 sheets in a basic size of 17" x 22" although the paper is generally sold in 8½" x 11" sheets. You can see why the pound weight of paper can be deceptive if you use it to determine individual cut sheet weight and thickness.

The most accurate way of comparing the weight of various papers is by a measurement called "gsm" (grams per square meter) which weighs an equal number of sheets in a particular size. If the paper you are looking at has a higher gsm number than another then it is actually a heavier paper. Another measurement used with paper is "M weight." This is the actual weight in pounds of 1000 sheets of cut paper regardless of the basic size or paper grade.

The most accurate measurement of the bulk (thickness) of a paper is "caliper." Caliper is the actual, physical thickness of a piece of paper, usually expressed in thousandths of an inch. The caliper is an indication of the stiffness/flexibility of the paper.

Unfortunately, not all manufacturers list the gsm , M weight and caliper on the packaging for their paper. Local Copies Etc. will be happy to find as many facts and figures as possible about the papers you are considering. Just ask for more information.

### Paper "Life Expectancy"

As paper ages it's color can change and it can become brittle or crumble when touched. When printing documents which need to last a long time you will need to look into the archival properties of the paper you choose.

Acid free paper has had the acid removed from the pulp so that it has a neutral (7.0) pH. Acid free paper is commonly used for scrapbooking, fine art prints and limited edition printing, as well as permanent records where contact with paper acidity could harm the documents.

Acid *and* lignin free paper that lasts longer than other papers and holds color well is referred to as archival paper. Lignin is a naturally occurring component of plant life that helps provide strength in plants. Its presence in paper may contribute to the chemical degradation of the paper and so it is sometimes removed during paper manufacturing. With a quality lifetime of 100 years or longer, archival paper is often used for critical, permanent records that must be kept for many years. Archival paper may also be used for scrapbooking, photograph albums, fine art prints and limited edition prints for even greater protection than other acid free papers.

Cotton is often used in high-quality papers, such as that used for professional printing and resume projects; in addition it can be blended with wood to make mid-range paper products. Cotton is used to make United States currency, which is 75% cotton and 25% linen, according to the Treasury Department. Because of its archival quality, 100% cotton paper is commonly used for legal documents, and college theses. As a mark of quality, cotton paper typically contains a watermark. A watermark in cotton paper will often indicate the amount of cotton in a sheet, whether it be 25% cotton or 100% pure cotton. Cotton paper is rarely as smooth to the touch as print grade acid free or archival papers.