

## Lithos or Photos - That is the Question

One of the most frequently asked questions we get at Final Print is “What’s the difference between lithos and photos?” Here we will try to answer that question.

### Photos

Photos are the best quality reproductions that we make. They have the widest color range, best detail and come in two finishes, glossy and “pearl”. We prefer the pearl finish because it resists fingerprints and has less glare, making the photo easier to view in bright lighting. Photos are easy to sign with either felt-tip or ballpoint pens and are available in smaller quantities than the lithos. If you are signing or selling these prints, photos are the way to go. Also, they are best for submitting to media, such as newspapers and magazines.

Photos are made in a darkroom by shining light on photo-sensitive paper, dunking this paper in a developer solution, then a “stop bath” and finally rinsing with water. They are, therefore, waterproof.


One disadvantage of photos is that you cannot print on the back with either inkjet or laser printers. They are also on thinner paper than the lithos and are not bio-degradable.

### Lithos

Lithos look almost as good as photos, though the color range is not as wide (see below). We offer them in two finishes, UV coated and no coating. The UV coating is a glossy plastic coating that helps resist fading and is waterproof. The uncoated paper still has some shine to it, but is not glossy and it will not resist water at all. The lithos come on thicker, stiffer paper than photos. Signing the uncoated ones is no problem, while the coated ones will not take a ballpoint and a felt-tip needs time to dry. You can print on the back of a litho with either inkjet or laser printers.

Lithos are made on printing presses using 4 colors of ink: cyan, magenta, yellow and black.



This limits the colors that can be achieved. If you want this blue, for instance:  you’re not going to get it with 4-color printing - that’s just the way it is. Printers’ inks are transparent and the various colors are created by the four color inks combining. In lithography the picture is converted to an array of small dots (rasterized) which vary in size to provide for lighter and darker areas. Larger dots mean more coverage and a darker area. Looking at a newspaper picture will give a good example. A much more detailed description of lithography can be found here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithography>

Because of the lower cost, lithos are the way to go for submissions, auditions and other “everyday” uses. On the other hand, because “inking up the presses” is labor intensive, smaller quantities are not available and no exact color proofing is available. Submitting a “match print” with your order gives us the best chance to get the color you want.

### **Final Print**

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