

A guide to  
**decoration  
techniques**



# The low-down on deco techniques

**Quadpack provides a practical guide to the most important decoration techniques for the personalisation of beauty packaging solutions**

First impressions are everything in beauty packaging. The right kind of decoration can give it that all-important differentiation. By applying the right techniques – just one or in combination – a standard pack can be transformed, to look entirely unique and in perfect alignment with a brand's identity. So how do you choose what decoration to apply to your packaging solution? Here is a guide to the most important techniques available and when to use them. Be sure to consult your packaging partner, as more than one can be applied to achieve the desired look and feel!



CARNIER  
BARCELONA

**Screen printing**  
**(Silk screening)**



# Screen printing (Silk screening)

Silk screening is a screen-printing technique which involves transferring an ink through a silk mesh fixed to a frame. The design is embedded into the mesh using an impermeable emulsion, which blocks the ink in areas that need to be left blank, leaving only the printed pattern. One colour is printed at a time, so multiple screens are used for multi-colour designs. The technique is repetitive, but very precise. The process can be repeated multiple times without losing definition.

**When to use it:** Screen printing is ideal for fine, intricate designs on any kind of material.

**Materials:** Plastic, glass, wood and aluminium

**Shapes:** Flat, round, oval, square and irregular



**Pad printing**  
(Tampography)

**ARMAND BASI**  
**WILD FOREST**

# Pad printing (Tampography)

Pad printing, or tampography, is a printing process that uses a metal or plastic plate (cliché) embossed with an image. The cliché is engraved with the artwork to be printed. A silicone pad then transfers the inked image, pressing first onto the cliché, then onto the component. Multiple colours can be layered without the need for drying (wet on wet). Pad printing is very flexible and can print on virtually any shape, on any packaging material, from plastic to fabric.

**When to use it:** Pad printing is mostly used when screen printing is not possible due to odd shapes or positioning of the artwork.

**Materials:** Plastic, glass, wood and aluminium

**Shapes:** Flat and irregular



Pad printing on cap

TERRACOTT

**Hotfoil stamping**  
(Hot stamping)

# Hotfoil stamping (Hot stamping)

Hotfoil stamping is a method of transferring a (usually shiny) colour film to a pack using a metal or silicone die with an engraved image. The die is heated and used to press the film onto the pack, transferring the design onto the component.

**When to use it:** Hotfoil stamping is perfect for applying bright and metallic colours, adding a real luxury touch.

**Materials:** Plastic, wood, glass and anodised aluminium

**Shapes:** Flat and cylindrical

# Full-cover hotfoil stamping



# Full-cover hotfoil stamping

Full-cover hotfoil stamping involves several hotfoil stamping processes to seamlessly cover a complete pack with a foil, achieving an effect similar to metallisation. The foil is rolled on to the flat, curved and cylindrical surfaces in multiple colours and effects. It is a low-emission, solvent-free technique, offering a more sustainable alternative to metallisation. Foils and foiling tools can be standard or bespoke, to match pack designs.

**When to use it:** Full-cover hotfoil stamping gives a glossy, premium finish and offers a variety of creative finishes, such as brushed aluminium, wood and hologram effects.

**Materials:** Plastic

**Shapes:** Flat and cylindrical



# Metallisation



# Metallisation

Metallisation involves various steps to produce a shiny, mirror-like effect using metal particles, such as aluminium or copper. First, the part is cleaned and pre-treated. Then, a base coat is applied, as well as a primer, if appropriate. Next, the component is metallised in a vacuum chamber or through a process called 'sputtering' (rather like spray coating). A protective top coat completes the process. The top coat can be coloured, if desired.

**When to use it:** Metallisation adds a high-gloss finish for a luxury look-and-feel.

**Materials:** Plastic and glass

**Shapes:** All kinds of shapes



# Heat transfer



WATER RESISTANT 80min SPORT  
**STICK SOLAIRE**  
AU MONOI DE TAHITI AO  
ET À LA LUZERNE BIO  
**SUN STICK**  
WITH TAHITI MONOI OIL  
AND ORGANIC LUCERNE  
Visage, Zones sensibles  
Face, Sensitive areas  
MADE IN FRANCE

RECHARGEABLE  
BOÎTE DE PLASTIQUE  
**HEI POA**  
Soins Solaires  
**50+**  
SPF  
UVB UVA TRÈS HAUTE PROTECTION  
VERY HIGH PROTECTION



# Heat transfer

Heat transfer uses a combination of heat and pressure to apply a pre-printed foil permanently to a pack in a single pass. As the foil is preprinted, there is great flexibility in the design, which can be smooth, matte, metallic and multi-colour. It is a popular choice for mass market and masstige lipsticks and mascaras. Digital heat transfer, where the foils are printed digitally instead of using offset, is now also gaining in popularity for small MOQs, although this not suitable for bright or metallic colours.

**When to use it:** Heat transfer is often chosen for complex, colourful graphics.

**Materials:** Plastic

**Shapes:** Flat and cylindrical

# Spray coating



# Spray coating

Spray coating is the process of applying a transparent varnish or coloured lacquer to a pack, with either a high-gloss or matte finish. Both are applied on a spray coating line, which turns the coating into a mist before spraying it onto the parts.

**When to use it:** Spray coating allows a wide variety of effects, from metallic finishes to matte lacquers, offering more flexibility compared to colour injection.

**Materials:** Plastic, wood and glass

**Shapes:** All kinds of shapes



**Digital  
printing**



# Digital printing

Digital printing is a direct printing method that enables on-demand projects, short turnaround times and a great deal of personalisation. Photographic quality can be achieved on plastic, glass and wood. First used in paper and textile, it is now gaining popularity in packaging.

**When to use it:** Digital printing is suitable for both large and small runs (ie, limited editions) or special effects such as debossed logos or special textures like wood or stone effects.

**Materials:** Plastic, glass, wood and metal

**Shapes:** Flat and cylindrical



# Laser engraving





# Laser engraving

Laser engraving etches a design onto a surface by means of a laser. Wood, metal and plastic can all be engraved, with permanent, sharp and well-defined results. No ink is required. On wood, it can produce an attractive burnt effect, though this can also be avoided with careful calibration. On wood that has been spray coated, laser engraving can also remove areas of the ink in the shape of logos or other geometric patterns.

**When to use it:** This kind of decoration enables a subtle form of branding, adding a minimalist touch of elegance.

**Materials:** Wood, metal and plastic

**Shapes:** Flat and irregular shapes

# What about sustainability?

Each technique has an impact, either through energy use, or through the screens or inks involved. Solvents produce volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can be neutralised through emissions control systems. Water-based inks do not, but require energy-intensive purification. Digital printing uses less ink than silk screening. European regulations dictate that decoration consisting of up to 5% of the total pack weight does not affect overall impact. At the end of the day, it is a trade off to achieve the lowest impact, using the most environmentally-friendly processes. Your packaging provider will help you navigate the options.

Find out more about Quadpack's decoration facilities in Europe and the US

Do you want help in choosing the right decoration for your packaging solutions?  
Get in touch with our experts.

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