

What is Gravure?

Gravure printing is still widely used for the commercial production of post cards, magazines, newspapers, and corrugated cardboard (and other packaging materials).

Gravure has been used for publications, catalogs, Sunday newspaper supplements, labels, cartons, packaging, gift-wrap, wall and floor coverings, and a variety of precision coating applications. Gravure has large appeal for catalogs and magazines since the process can print on 35lb or even 30lb paper stock that can save money on postage.

Gravure is an intaglio printing process. The image carrier has the image cut or etched below the surface of the non-image area. On the gravure image carrier (usually a copper cylinder), all the images are screened, creating thousands of tiny cells. During the printing process, the image carrier is immersed in fluid ink. As the image carrier rotates, ink fills the tiny cells and covers the surface of the cylinder. The surface of the cylinder is wiped with a doctor blade, leaving the non-image area clean while the ink remains in the recessed cells. Substrate is brought into contact with the image carrier with the help of an impression roll. At the point of contact, ink is drawn out of the cells onto the substrate by capillary action.

The size of gravure printing presses is huge compared to offset webs. The roll sizes are from 70 to 118 inches wide with cutoffs from 50 to 75 inches. Large widths mean that gravure commonly produces of 48 or 64 pages.

