Sublimation Glossary

Learning Sublimation is as easy as 1-2-3. But just like anything, Sublimation has its own "terms" or words. Some of the essential terms will soon become second nature to you, I promise. These Sublimation Vocabulary words are prevalent, and some of the words are even "interchangeable."

Glossary of Sublimation Terms

Blow Out Paper- Blowout paper is essential when doing Sublimation Printing. By definition, blowout paper is what is used to catch any stray dyes and should only be used once.

CISS is a Continuous Ink Supply System that allows you to minimize printing expenses for Sublimation. Also known as Bulk Ink kits but most commonly called CISS.

Design- The image or "graphic" that you will apply to your substrate. My favorite places to get my designs are Creative Fabrica, Design Bundles, and So Fontsy.

Easy-Subli- by Siser is HTV that allows you to sublimate onto cotton materials.

Graphics- The image or "design" that you will apply to your substrate. My favorite places to get my designs are Creative Fabrica, Design Bundles, and So Fontsy.

Heat Gloves- Save your hands from burns because most items need a temperature of 400F for Sublimation.

Heat Press- A heat press is needed for bonding the printed image to the blank or substrate. If you are doing mugs, caps, or plates, you will need a separate heat press for those or attachments for compatible presses.

Heat Tape-Heat tape is used for substrates to keep the sublimation paper in place while applying heat and pressure for Sublimation.

High Release Sublimation Paper- Works just like the Hybrid Sublimation paper by allowing more ink to be released onto the substrate. It works on hard and soft substrates and comes in sheets.

Hybrid Sublimation Paper- is paper made by Johnson Plastics and is sold by the roll. It has a thicker bond which allows more ink to transfer over to the substrate.

Image Types-
JPG- JPEG- is short for the Joint Photographic Experts Group and JPG is the type of images most digital cameras use. They are generally usually used for photos and not graphics.

PNG- Portable Network Graphics or PNG's are commonly used for Sublimation items, especially when you need a transparent background. They are typically more significant in size than a JPG and are great for designs that include text which is perfect for graphics.

SVG- are scalable vector graphics that allow you to make the image larger or smaller depending on your needs. They are two-dimensional and are in an XML-based markup.

Low Release Sublimation Paper or Standard Sublimation Paper allows your ink to dry quickly, so smearing issues are less likely. It works best with hard substrates and has very little "blow out" onto your blowout paper.
PolySpray- This is a spray that will enable you to spray a cotton garment so that it coats the fibers in a polyester chemical that, once it is dry, allows you to Sublimate on Cotton.

Pressing Pillow-They are flat foam squares with a protective cover on them. They cushion items with thick pieces in them, like buttons, bulky seams, rings, bags, masks, etc. It essentially lifts areas with seams or other items listed above, so you still get more even pressure and keep blurring to a minimum. *Stay away from Teflon for Sublimation Printing

Refillable Cartridges- Cartridges that you place into the printer for printing, usually filled with Sublimation Ink.

Spray Adhesive-Spray adhesive is mainly used for soft substrates (shirts, blankets, etc.) to keep the sublimation paper in place while applying heat and pressure for Sublimation. Heat tape (can) leave a mark on your substrate, but I still use it on all of my soft substrates.

Sublimatable Items - products that are otherwise known as substrates or blanks

Sublimate- is the gaseous products that form at the end of the **sublimation** process.

Sublimation-The process of Sublimation Printing includes some specialized equipment that is often converted to the use of sublimation ink onto a specific type of paper. The definition of Sublimation is when a solid material turns into a gas without going through a liquid stage.

Sublimation Ink- (DYE) is the material used to color materials and fiber infused into the substrate. It is a permanent process and will last forever if done correctly. Sublimation ink starts in a liquid form, which is printed onto Sublimation Paper. When heat and pressure are added, the solid dye changes into gas, which then adheres to your substrate permanently. It will not wash out if applied correctly. However, if you sublimate on cotton, the ink will wash out over time.

Sublimation Paper- Sublimation Paper is a particular type of paper that is used exclusively for Sublimation Printing. It often has a special coating added to it to help the paper hold Sublimation Ink (dye). My favorite is Printer Jack's Sublimation Paper, which I purchase from Amazon! Another name for Sublimation Paper is Transfer Paper.

Sublimation Printer- The printer that you are using to print your images on is a Sublimation Printer. However, most printers have to be converted from a regular ink printer to a Sublimation Printer. Epson now has the SureColor F170 Dye-Sublimation Printer that is explicitly made for Sublimation Ink. So converting printers could be a thing of the past. Sawgrass Printers also have printers that are actual Sublimation Printers.

Sublime- (essentially the same as a sublimate, but happens when a solid substance is extracted by a chemical process.

Substrate- This is the base material you will apply the images to; it is frequently called a **blank**. Substrates are also what the finished product is after the **Sublimation** process occurs when the sublimation ink changes from solid state directly to vapor.

Examples of Substrates include paper, fabrics, metal, acrylic, glass, wood, film, and foils, to name a few.

Transfer Paper- Transfer Paper is a particular type of paper that is used exclusively for Sublimation Printing. It often has a special coating added to it to help the paper hold

Underpressed- is a common term for not pressing long enough with heat resulting in off colors.

Common Sublimation Problems

Blowout- Blowout is when the ink colors expand beyond the image design. It also happens when ink is heated, and you will have "blowout" on your blowout paper, which is why it is essential in Sublimation printing. Blowouts can be caused by uneven heat, overheating, and excessive pressure on the substrate and happens when Sublimating.

Blue Specks- If you have the dreaded blue specks after pressing, it is likely because you have dust or lint on your substrate, your print, or even your paper. So use a lint roller before pressing anything.

Ghosting- Ghosting happens when a transfer moves or slips during pressing, which sometimes results in a double image being on your substrate. Ghosting can also include a blurred image.
If black ink looks brown, it is overcooked, and if the blank ink looks green, it is undercooked. *Think Brown = Burnt Green= Undercooked

If black ink looks blue, it could be undercooked, or your black isn't showing as a true black

Press Lines- Press lines are often the result of too much pressure, not using a pressing pillow, or even using paper that is too thick. I trim around my design with scissors, so I don't have a square outline on my substrates.

Yellowing- If your substrate shows yellowing after heat, sometimes you can use hydrogen peroxide to make it whiter. But oftentimes, that item is left "unsellable" or into the discount bin.

Common Acronyms for Sublimation Printing

CMYK- Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black, which are the four ink colors that are used most commonly in Sublimation Printing. There are also the four colors of ink cartridges that go into your Sublimation Printer during setup.

DSP- Dye Sublimation Printing

ST- Sublimation Transfer

Sub- Short for Sublimation