



Balloon Printing Guide



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If this is your first time ordering printed balloons, you may be unsure where to start. The following guide will take you through the essential points to consider when buying printed balloons and will hopefully answer any questions you may have.

Balloon material

There are two main types of material balloons are made of – Latex (rubber) and foil. Latex balloons are the most popular mainly because they cost less than foil balloons. Apart from material and cost, the other main difference is helium retention.

Latex balloons will remain inflated with helium for 8-12 hours, whereas foil balloons can stay fully inflated for several days. It is possible to increase the float time of latex balloons with Hi-Float, a liquid you can insert into the balloon to reduce helium loss.



Latex Balloon



Foil Balloon

Method of Printing

Essentially there are two methods of printing on balloons, Screen printing and Litho (or offset) printing. Screen printing produces the best effect and is used for printing on foil and latex balloons.

A screen is placed on the balloon and the ink is forced through the screen to give the design required. This results in dense ink coverage and print colour that doesn't diminish when inflated. It also gives sharp edges to the printing. Latex balloons are printed inflated and foil balloons are printed un-inflated (as they don't stretch)



Screen printing



Litho printing

Litho printing is a more cost effective method of printing but results in less dense ink coverage and more 'smudging'. A roller is rolled over the design with the ink on it and is then transferred to the balloon. When the balloon is inflated the ink density reduces dramatically and the image may appear faded.

Signature balloons only uses screen printing to ensure the highest quality results.


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Balloon Colour

Balloon colour is usually a matter of personal taste or may be dictated by your corporate brand guidelines. Signature Balloons have a wide selection of balloon colours available and all our 10" and 12" latex balloons are pantone matched (see below for pantone matching). For the best colour replication of your logo we recommend using white balloons. You can choose as many different colours of balloons at no extra cost but bear in mind that dark balloons show light coloured ink best and vice versa (see Ink Colours below).

Ink Colours

The main thing to consider when choosing ink colours is the contrast on your chosen balloon colour. Some ink colours show better on some balloons than on others, for example, dark ink is more visible on lighter coloured balloons whilst light ink shows better on dark balloons. We will always make recommendations if you are unsure and advise you of alternative solutions if necessary. We use the pantone matching system for all our printing.

You may wish to have different colour balloons and then change the colour ink to make it more visible, for example, print green ink on white balloons and white ink on green balloons.

Pantone Matching System

The Pantone Matching System is an international standardised system of colour matching and is used by designers and printers throughout the world. Each colour is assigned a 3 or 4 digit number. There are over 1000 pantone references at the moment and more are added from time to time.

Halftones



'Halftones' is a term used to create different shades of a colour by printing fewer dots per inch of a colour on the balloons allowing the colour of the balloon to come through either making the colour lighter and darker. We recommend printing on white balloons if you have shading on the image you want to print as sometimes, if printing on darker balloons, the area that looks lighter in the image may come out looking darker on the balloons, due to the shaded area being made up of more balloon colour than ink colour.

The image on the left is created using black ink with halftones on white balloons.



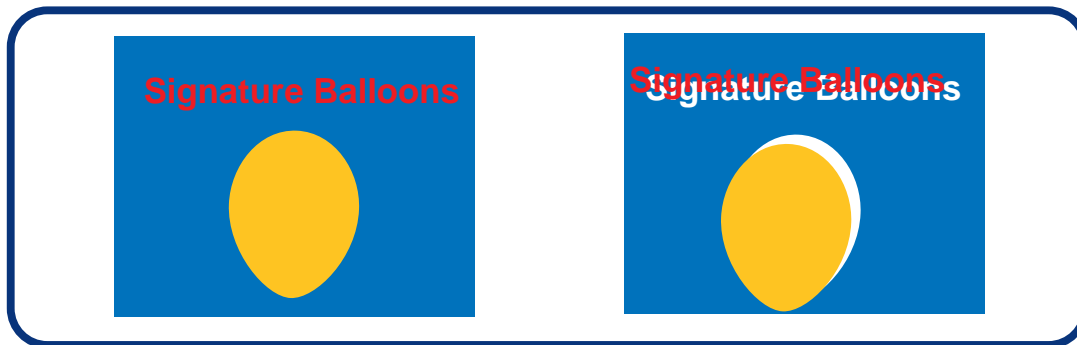
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Registration

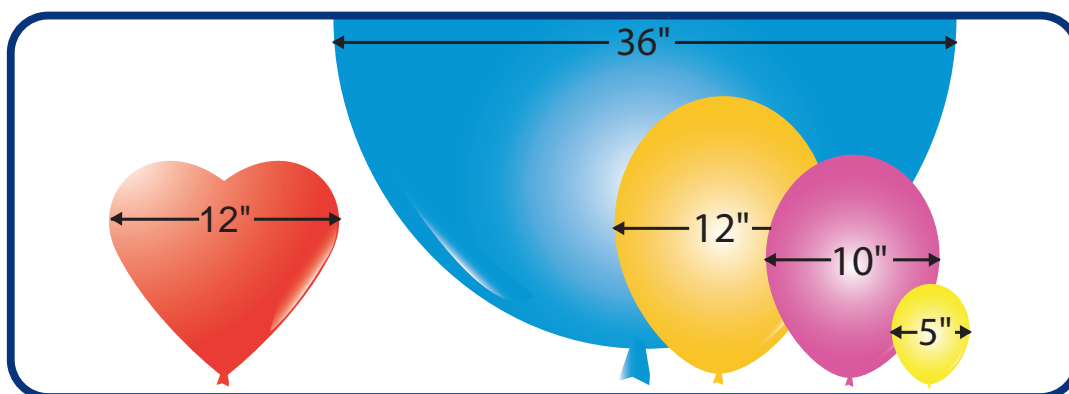
Registration is the term used by printers for how close it is possible to print 2 or more colours. The closer the registration, the more difficult it is to line up the colours. This is because latex balloons are printed inflated so there is some natural movement as the balloon passes through the printing machines. There are methods Signature Balloons use to allow for movement of the screens during printing to give an accurate representation of your artwork. If a logo or piece of artwork is too complex to print on balloons, we will always offer alternative solutions. We are very proud to claim we are able to print with very close registration, in most cases with less than 1mm of movement.

The example below gives an idea of how movement can affect a logo if registration is very close. Imagine the logo is printed on white balloons. The logo on the right shows possible movement that may occur and how it might affect your logo.



Balloon Size

Balloon size will usually be dictated by the use they are intended for. For most occasions such as promotions, small releases and give-aways, 10" balloons are perfect. 12" balloons and 18" foil balloons are great for decoration of venues and larger releases (latex only) as they will remain inflated slightly longer. 36" latex balloons and 4' and 5.5' chloroprene balloons are very eye-catching and generally used to fill a large space or when you *really* need to get your message across!



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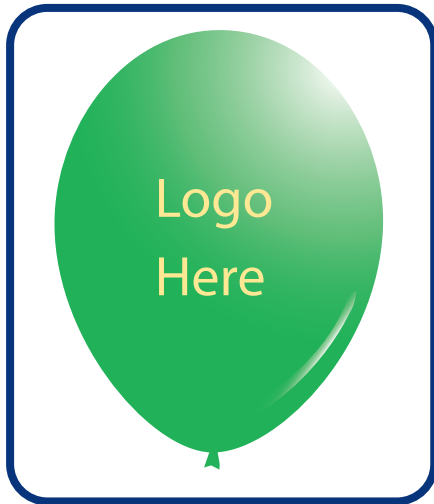
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Neck Orientation

This can cause some confusion but it is not complicated at all! If you intend to fill the balloons with helium or are placing them on sticks you will require the balloons to be printed with the neck of the balloon pointing toward the floor (neck down). This is the most popular way to print balloons.

If you intend to air-fill your balloons, to hang them down by the neck, you will require them to be printed with the neck pointing to the ceiling (neck up).

This is important to ascertain because if you choose the wrong orientation, your logo will appear upside down!



Neck Down
For use with helium or
balloon sticks (air-filled)



Neck Up
For air-filling and
hanging by neck

Helium or Air

There are two ways to fill balloons; helium or air. Helium will make the balloons float, air will not. Helium will keep latex balloons floating for around 8-10 hours and foil balloons will float for days. You can add a liquid called Hi-Float to your latex balloons to increase float time.

Air-filling balloons and placing them on cups and sticks is a cost-effective alternative to helium. You may wish to consider a hand pump or electric inflator if large quantities of balloons are to be inflated.

Balloon Accessories

There are many accessories you can add to your balloon order. The following are the most popular for printed balloons:

Valves

Valves make light work of balloon inflation with helium. Self-sealing, they put an end to tying knots and with approximately 1m of white ribbon attached, balloons can be inflated easily and quickly with minimum of fuss; perfect for handing out at shows! Another benefit of using valves is that the balloons can be 'topped-up' with helium helping your display to look fresh for longer.



Cups and Sticks / Balloon Sticks



Balloon cups and sticks are perfect for promotions if you have a tight budget. They are widely used in fast food restaurants for giving balloons to children. They are less expensive than valves and the balloons are air inflated so you will not require helium. However, you may wish to consider investing in a hand pump or even an electric pump for larger numbers of balloons. Whilst it is not essential, we recommend tying a knot in the balloon before attaching it to the cup and stick to prolong inflation time. Another benefit of using cups and sticks is that preparation for your event can begin prior to your event as air-filled balloons remain inflated for days rather than hours.

Weights

You need to consider how you will keep your balloons from floating away if using helium. Weights are available from 8g (to hold down a single helium-filled balloon) to larger, heavier weights which hold down 10 - 20 balloons. Smaller weights are generally used when handing out balloons whilst the larger weights tend to be used for displays/decoration.



Ribbon



Ribbon is essential if you are helium-filling your balloons. 5mm curling ribbon is available in a variety of colours to match or contrast with your balloon colour(s). If you intend to have valves fitted, remember they come with approximately 1m of white ribbon attached. However, you may still like to order a spool of ribbon so different lengths can be cut to create staggered balloon bouquets.



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Pumps / Inflators

Balloon pumps are recommended for air-inflation. Whether you choose a small hand pump, a heavy duty hand pump or an electric inflator will really depend on the quantity of balloons to be inflated and the time available to inflate them.



Helium

Helium is essential if you require your balloons to float. Modern helium cylinders are very safe and are incredibly simple to use. Signature Balloons offer a range of helium cylinders to hire or smaller cylinders to purchase if you only wish to inflate a few balloons.



We hope this guide has answered any questions you may have about balloon printing, but if not, please contact us by email, phone or through our contact us page and we will do our best to help you.



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