

# LABEL PRINTING FOR TEXTILES



## How To Print Labels On Fabric, Elastic, Ribbon & Much More

A **FREE** Guide From Focus Labels To Help You Win  
More Work, Increase Productivity & Profitability

# Introduction

Thanks for downloading our free guide to textile label printing. We hope you'll enjoy reading through the information in the following sections and will find some useful hints and tips you can apply to your business.

We have put this e-book together to give you some insight into the technical aspects of our business and how print technologies affect the overall productivity and profitability of a print operation. We hope the practical information contained here will add genuine value to your business, whether or not you decide to take the next steps in getting in touch with one of our sales team for further details.

We begin our e-book by briefly introducing Focus Label Machinery Ltd, giving a little bit about our background and why our expertise qualifies us to release a guide such as this. We are then going to launch straight into the core chapters of our guide, which focus on the textile label printing process itself, and, critically, how this

process can be optimised to save you time, cut down on wastage, reduce returns and lower your overheads.

At any time while reading, please feel free to get in touch. Full contact details can be found on our website by clicking here. We look forward to hearing from you and discussing how we can help you with your print operations.



**In the meantime, please enjoy this free guide.**




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# About Focus Label Machinery

# About Focus Label Machinery

As mentioned in the previous section, this guide isn't meant to be primarily about us. However, we do want to briefly introduce ourselves in order for you to know where we're coming from and to hopefully instil confidence that we know what we're talking about.

## Introducing our business


Our company, Focus Label Machinery Ltd, was set up in 1981, so at the time of writing (2016), we are eagerly anticipating our 35th anniversary of continuous operation as a business. We've learned a thing or two about label printing in this time, and so feel ourselves qualified to release a guide such as this, to offer some guidance and free advice to other businesses operating in the industry.

## Improving efficiency through innovation

Printing technology has moved on quite a bit since then, but in this time we have become one of the world's leading manufacturers of narrow web printing and converting equipment for the textile label and packaging industry, with clients based all over the world. We are an established and trusted name in the industry, and also place a strong emphasis on innovation to continually improve the performance of our print equipment for the modern textile industry.

We try and set the standards for other manufacturers to follow, with ongoing investment in research and new product development. In a competitive global environment, our commitment to new technology and our team of highly experienced support technicians gives our clients the edge in minimising wastage, reducing costs and completing assignments on schedule.



The background of the top section is a collage of various rolls of printed labels. Some rolls are partially unrolled, showing different designs and colors like red, blue, and white. The text "About Focus Label Machinery" is overlaid on this image in a white, sans-serif font.

# About Focus Label Machinery

It's fair to say that we are proud of our achievements. Our patented advanced label printing technology allows the fastest complete job and colour changes on any press in the market today, with less downtime, less wastage, faster production, higher output and improved quality. This is no small boast, but it is one that is played out time and again in the efficiency savings and improvements enjoyed by our customers in the textile industry. We'd be delighted to answer any questions you might have, and talk to you about how our label printing machines can help transform your business.

Do feel free to give us a call at our UK office on **01949 836 223**.

A circular badge with a dark blue background and a lighter blue border. The text "100% UK Quality Guarantee" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**100%**  
UK Quality  
Guarantee

While outsourcing is common in the industry, all our equipment is 100% British made. Every machine is designed, manufactured, and assembled in our UK facility, with a full guarantee of quality and ongoing support from our team of expert engineers. There are a number of good reasons why we do this, which will go into in more detail in the ensuing chapters.

So that's enough about us for the time being. Now we are introduced we will dive straight into the print process itself, explaining what is required in the textile printing process, and how it can be optimised to give the best results. If you have any questions while reading, please don't hesitate to pick up the phone or send us an email.



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# How To Print Labels On Textiles

# How To Print Labels On Textiles

The process of printing labels on textiles varies considerably depending on your requirements and the materials you are using. In this, the main section of our guide, we will examine the three main materials used in textile printing, look at what is involved and suggest tips for each.

## The sections below cover the following areas:

1. How to print labels onto textile ribbon
2. How to print labels onto elastic
3. How to print labels using heat transfer

At Focus, we have developed a wide range of textile printing equipment to cover a variety of materials and print configurations. You can take a look on our website for more information about our standard ranges. We also design and manufacture tailored equipment. If you can't find what you're looking for, please get in touch and we can discuss your requirements.



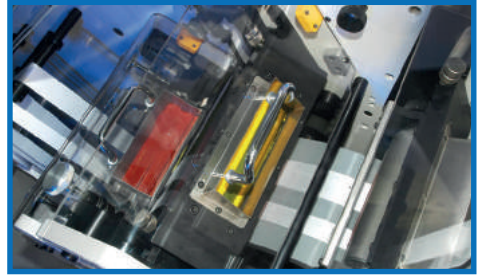
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# How To Print Labels On Textiles

## Printing onto textile ribbon

Worldwide, the textile ribbon is the most commonly used medium for garment labels in the industry. It is used for branding and sizing labels, as well as for wash care instructions, a wide variety of garments from jeans and chinos to shirts, T-shirts, dresses, underwear and coats. To improve efficiency and reduce wastage, both the material and the print technology must be closely aligned with the garments they are intended for and the needs of your business. Technology moves on quickly, with the businesses prepared to invest in new print equipment often securing a crucial competitive edge over those who are not aware of the changes.



## Narrow textiles

Many textile labels only require printing on one side. Rotary printing of narrow textiles can only be carried out successfully using the central impression drum method. This means that the ribbon is printed while supported at all times from underneath by a rotating drum, ensuring perfect print impression & registration. This makes the print process faster and less prone to errors and imperfections than other print methods.



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# How To Print Labels On Textiles

## Wash care labels

Quite often for wash care labels, it is necessary to print on both sides of the ribbon simultaneously. To carry out a successful print on a single run, you will need a machine with two central impression drums (see our LX models). These are located one above the other and feed the ribbon in an 'S' shape around the drums, thus ensuring good print registration from the face side to reverse side of the ribbon. Alternatively, the ribbon could be printed on one side using a single drum, then inverted and printed on the reverse side – all in-line, using the same central drum (see our B4 model)



## Multi-coloured garment labels

Typically, garment labels will have one or two colours on the reverse side and anything up to six colours on the face side. This is a complex print and it can be challenging to ensure good print registration and also that the printed information doesn't fade when the garment is washed. We have developed our print machines for use with a special heat curable ink in order to achieve the required level of wash resistance.



In all cases with textile labels, the finished printed products will need to be cured in an industrial oven at 125 degrees centigrade for approximately two hours. This fixes the ink to the substrate to maximise its longevity and ensure uniform quality across the batch.



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# How To Print Labels On Textiles

## Direct printing onto elastics

Elastics can also be printed using a standard central impression drum press, but due to the nature of the material, elastic labels present two problems:

1. Achieving consistent print registration
2. Maintaining the required colour density

To overcome these two problems, the elastic ribbon needs to be pre-tensioned before being fed around the drum. In this way, the text and images are printed onto the material while the elastic is in a controlled, stretched state. Once printing is complete, the machine gradually releases the tension to allow the elastic to return to its pre-stretched state, and is usually fed into a collecting container, rather than being wound onto a reel. Elastic ribbons are only usually be printed on one side.



# How To Print Labels On Textiles

## Printing heat transfers

Heat transfers are an increasingly popular alternative to sew-in labels on garments of all kinds. When done correctly this process can save an enormous amount of time and money. You can use heat transfers for almost any of the traditional functions of a textile label, such as wash care instructions, brand names, logos and size details.



How does it work? In a similar way to the skin transfers so beloved by young children, the required text and images are first pre-printed onto release paper. These will appear as inverse images, as if viewed through a mirror. In the second part of the process, the images are transferred directly onto the garment through heat and pressure via a heat press / applicator.



## The advantages of heat transfers

So, why use heat transfers rather than a different form of textile label?

1. Larger images can be printed than those available on traditional labels
2. On items of clothing such as swimwear, sports clothing, and underwear, information can be transferred directly onto the fabric, thus avoiding the need for labels that could be obstructive or irritate the skin.
3. The transfer and therefore the brand logo will remain in the garment and cannot be cut out & removed, like a sew-in label.

# How To Print Labels On Textiles

## How does Heat Transfer work?

The standard means of printing heat transfers is **silk screen printing**. This is a popular method because it is great for dark coloured garments such as jeans and T-shirts, as it allows you to deposit a larger amount of ink, giving good opacity and colour strength. However, these benefits come with two significant downsides: the method is relatively slow compared with traditional label printing and it is only really feasible when using one or two colour designs. The method falls down when using complex or multi-coloured designs, due to registration issues.

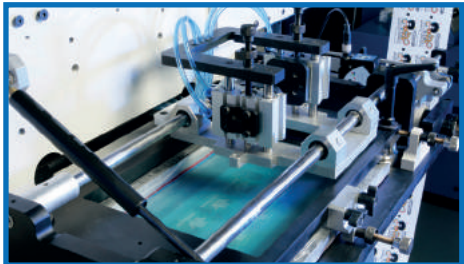
## The Focus method

At Focus, we considered this issue in detail: about how to emphasise the benefits of heat transfer printing while overcoming the downsides.

The result is our patented, advanced form of roll to roll, multi-colour print system with 'halo free' adhesive technology. This enables higher productivity and superior print quality. For light coloured garments, multiple colours can be printed in close

register on a central impression press, then powder adhesive and ink applied & cured in-line, producing finished transfers in a single pass

But what about dark garments that require increased opacity? If required, the printed multi-coloured images can then be overprinted with an opaque white silk screen ink, in perfect registration. Our Tagtrans screen press is designed to carry out precisely these operations.



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# FAQ's Your Print Questions Answered

## FAQ's Your Print Questions Answered

We have developed the following section in response to some frequently asked questions posed by our customers. This can be used in conjunction with the previous section as an instant reference guide to the three common print materials. We also include information about how to avoid common problems and how our products and services can help you make the most of your print runs.

### Q What label material should I use?

A This will depend on what sort of textile label you need to print. Here is what we recommend for the three core methods already covered:

**Textile ribbon:** Typically polyester satin, nylon taffeta, cotton twill, grosgrain. Used for wash care labels, decorative ribbons or sizing labels.

**Elastic:** Commonly used in underwear to carry brand logos, or decorative designs.

**Heat transfers:** These are preferred wherever a sew-in label is inappropriate due to close skin contact. Heat transfers are standard for swimwear, sportswear and many types of underwear. You can also use heat transfers to decorate clothing. In addition, they are useful for industrial gloves, tabards, protective work-wear, safety/warning decals and so on. The transfer substrate used is a specially coated paper or PET film.



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## FAQ's Your Print Questions Answered



### What challenges and problems will I face when printing on these materials?

**A** Each of the materials comes with its own challenges or downsides, most of which can be overcome with a combination of foresight and using the correct materials and equipment.

**Textile ribbon challenges:** Printed images must be wash proof in order to be fit for purpose. They also need to be non-toxic and Oekotex approved. It can sometimes be challenging to print fine detail on these ribbons, especially in close registration.

**Elastic challenges:** Elastic is a difficult surface to print onto directly. Close care must be taken to control the stretch and tension levels throughout the printing process, in order for the image to look its best when they elastic had returned to a non-stretched state.

**Heat transfer challenges:** Like printing on textile ribbons, all images must be wash proof and non-toxic. This is especially important considering most heat transfers are designed for direct contact with the skin. As mentioned in the previous section, while the traditional silk screen printing method is suitable for text and simple images, it falls down when it comes to printing of multi-colour images. Multi-colour silkscreen printing can be slow and prone to registration errors. Care should be taken to manage ink release during the heat transfer process. The transferred image should have good stretch ability and wash resistance.

## FAQ's Your Print Questions Answered

### Q What type of printing equipment will I need to buy?

A Each type of textile printing requires a specialised print press, with the industry standard being a central drum press. These come in many different shapes and sizes to suit all manner of printing businesses. At Focus we manufacture a wide range of models, as well as bespoke machines designed around your requirements.

**Textile ribbons:** You will need a central drum rotary printing press

**Elastics:** These labels require a double central drum rotary printing press with an elastic pre-tension system to stretch out the material prior to printing. You will also need a collection container.

**Heat transfers:** The heat transfer process uses a specialised central drum flexo print press, often in combination with a silk screen over-printer. This really depends on what sort of material the transfers are intended for. If you need to print a multi-coloured design for use on dark fabrics, then you will also need a silk screen over-printer in addition to your central drum printing press.







## FAQ's Your Print Questions Answered

### Q What products do you stock that could help me print my textile labels?

A Our full range of print machines, inks and accessories can be viewed on our website here; <http://www.focuslabel.com/equipment-textiles> You will also be able to download a selection of technical brochures in English, French or German as required. Our complete catalogue of more than 20 brochures can be downloaded from here; <http://www.focuslabel.com/brochures>

Below is a quick reference guide giving the model numbers needed to handle the three main print methods:

**Textile ribbon:** LX2, LX4, LX6, B4

**Elastics:** LX2, LX4, LX6

**Heat transfers:** LX6 Tagtrans, Tagtrans 150, Tagtrans Screenpro 225

### THE NEXT STEPS

If after reading this e-book you'd like to discuss any of the issues raised, or have any questions about our products or services, please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of our experienced customer service team. We hope you found this guide useful and informative, and we look forward to speaking to you in person.

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## FAQ's Your Print Questions Answered

### Q What other tips can you give me to help maximise the success of my print runs?

A A clean, air-conditioned environment is important in order to achieve high quality print and for trouble-free operation of your printing press, as well as stability of inks, adhesives & additives.

A print run is normally only as good as the ink used, so for the best results it is always necessary to use the correct type of ink. High-quality inks for all these purposes can be purchased directly from our Focus UK supply centre, or from one of our approved suppliers. Our textile inks are all heat curable, so the printed products need to be cured in an industrial oven for two hours at 125°C. We stock a range of durable industrial ovens designed to work seamlessly with our print machines.

You also need to make sure you use good quality flexo plates. If you are lucky enough to have a good reprographics supplier in your area then by all means use them. If not then it may be necessary to produce your plates in-house, in order to keep delivery times to a minimum. We are happy to advise on this. Simply give our team a call and we'll provide our best recommendations for the print run you need.





# How to Improve Productivity & Profitability



## How to Improve Productivity & Profitability

As with any industrial process, printing textile labels comes with associated costs. By making the process more efficient and cutting back on your overheads, you can increase the productivity and overall profitability of your operation.

In the previous section we addressed how common problems such as delays, wastage, returns, poor quality issues and high print costs can be rectified through using the correct equipment and optimising the print process itself.

So let's assume that you have all the correct tools and consumables for the job and have your print operation fine-tuned to produce the labels you need.

Here we are going to offer some more general tips on how to print labels more productively and profitably:

### THE NEXT STEPS

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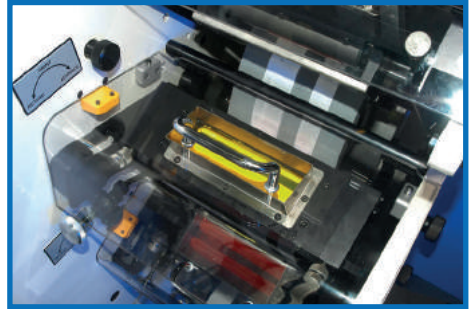
# How to Improve Productivity & Profitability

## Four steps to a more profitable label printing operation

Running a print operation requires a number of different factors to pull together so that the finished product is produced in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. These are the four key factors that can help save you time and money in the long term and make your operation more profitable:

### 1. Invest in modern equipment

A well-built and maintained label press should continue operating without a major hitch for many decades. Label printing equipment represents a significant investment for most businesses, and it is no surprise that investors are keen to get their money's worth – up to squeezing that last label at of well worn, old equipment.



While this is a very valid point; with every service and parts change, with every year that goes by, a label press will suffer incremental drops in efficiency. Correspondingly, every print run using an ageing press is likely to cost incrementally more in terms of energy usage, time taken, increased wastage and ongoing maintenance costs.

In addition, while label printing machines may look fairly similar from one year to the next, this hides the fact that technological advances are moving equipment forward at a considerable rate. Under the bonnet – as it were – label printing technology is enabling production to become more efficient, more cost-effective, and smarter than the previous generation of machines.

Investing in modern equipment allows you to increase your label printing capacity – with faster printing, higher productivity and less downtime. We feel that for label printing businesses and garment manufacturers the question is not whether you should invest in modern machinery, but whether you can afford not to invest in technology that many of your competitors will already be taking advantage of.

The background of the top section is a collage of various printed labels. On the left, there's a colorful label with a castle and flowers. In the center, a blue label with the word "FOCUS" is prominent. On the right, there's a label with a cartoon character and the text "KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE".

## How to Improve Productivity & Profitability

### 2. Modify your press to meet your exact requirements

As well as selecting the best and most modern equipment for your operation, you can also improve productivity by upgrading your press to meet the precise requirements of your business. This is something that our team of technicians can do for you. It is rare to find a label printing business that can operate at full efficiency with off-the-shelf equipment. Some fine-tuning and modification will add additional capacity to your operation, as well as reducing downtime and operating costs. All of our textile printing machines can be upgraded to meet your requirements. We also specialise in designing and manufacturing custom-made textile printing machines for special requirements. So don't 'make do' with a machine that isn't optimised for your company. Contact our team today and find out what we can do for you.

### 3. Choose a supplier with fast support and fast supply of spares

For every minute and hour that your textile printing machine is out of action, costs are mounting up and productivity is going down the drain. While a good machine will operate without a hitch most of the time, downtime does happen and this should be planned for. At Focus, we pride ourselves not only on our technical expertise in design and manufacture, but also in the speed and quality of support services.

We provide ongoing support from skilled engineers at our UK facility whenever you need it. Simply give us a call and we can organise repairs, shipment of supplies and spare parts at short order to anywhere in the world, enabling you to get back up and running as soon as possible and to minimise the cost associated with downtime.



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## How to Improve Productivity & Profitability

### 4. Have your team fully trained


The old cliché that a machine is only as good as its operator is not far from the truth. The vast majority of faults and routine maintenance issues reported to our support team turn out to be caused by user errors that can easily be prevented with the correct training.

To get the most out of a textile printing machine, and to prevent unnecessary faults, your team need to be trained up on how to use your kit correctly. To this end, with each machine we offer a full support and training programme in order for your team to get the best out of your new machinery.

You can do this at our Focus Showroom if you like, or we can carry out the training on site when we install your equipment. It depends on what is most convenient for you. We have working versions of all of our equipment in our showroom, which customers can access for free, so this gives your team plenty of opportunity to become familiar with the printers before your operation goes live.

Furthermore, our team comprises seasoned veterans of the print manufacturing industry; so you can rely on our experience and expertise when training you up in getting the best out of your equipment.





# Why Choose Focus Labels?



## Why Choose Focus Labels?

By now we hope we've convinced you of the importance of using the correct equipment, with the right consumables and fast support, to improve the productivity and profitability of your print operation.

We can summarise the important ingredients of a productive operation in the following five phrases:

- » **Modern print technology**
- » **High-quality production**
- » **Expert technical support**
- » **Fast spares and repairs**
- » **The right consumables**

Before signing off, we'd like to go one step further and explain why we believe we are uniquely placed to provide the design, manufacture and support service you need, as opposed to one of our competitors.

These are what we believe are the key strengths of our business that set us apart from other operators in our industry, and that make us the partner of choice when investing in new textile printing equipment:



# Why Choose Focus Labels?

## 1. The best textile label printing machines in the world

We are confident in asserting that we are **the market leaders** in terms of textile label printing machines and that we make the best machines you will find anywhere in the world.

One of the reasons for this is that all our machines are designed and manufactured at our UK facility. **At Focus Label Machinery, we do not outsource any engineering.** This gives us complete control over the quality of our product and gives us dynamic flexibility, allowing us to innovate our designs quickly to accommodate changes in the industry. A recent example is our quick-change cassette-based system for switching print colours.

These advantages are not possible for businesses that outsource their manufacturing process to several different suppliers. This is common for lower quality machines that are built cheaply in the Far East for export to the west. The businesses concerned are unable to effectively manage their quality control process among their various outsourcers, and they are very slow to respond to rapid technological advances in print technology.

Some of our customers have come to us after being burned by throwing away money on a substandard print machine. Avoid this mistake by choosing the best first time round – come and talk to our team and see what we can do for you.



## Why Choose Focus Labels?

### 2. One stop shop for all your print requirements

Whatever textile printing equipment you require, we can provide the solution. This not only includes a wide range of in-line and central drum print machines, but also ancillary products such as industrial ovens, heat transfer machines, rewinding machines, and silk screen machines. We also supply a selection of inks and consumables, as well as a full complement of spare parts. Rather than dealing with multiple suppliers, we can offer a fully comprehensive package and a single point of contact for after sales care.

### 3. Digital design and 3-D modelling

Our design department takes advantage of CAD design and 3-D modelling software to enable a high degree of tailoring, fine-tuning and modification that was not possible on equipment even a few years ago. Our designers use their engineering experience and software expertise to map out the precise modifications and bespoke features you need from your print equipment. It also enables us to design new features that can often be retrofitted, to keep your equipment up-to-date.

As with the manufacturing and assembly, all of our design takes place in-house. We don't keep anything behind closed doors or under wraps. We offer a tour of our UK facility, so come along, take a look around and see how it's all made. We'd be delighted to see you.



## Why Choose Focus Labels?

### 4. Market-leading customer support

As already mentioned in this e-book, one of the keys to productive and cost-effective print operations is fast and effective support. At Focus we provide this support as one of the core services we give our customers. When you pick up the phone to our customer support team, you'll speak to a technician with years of experience in the industry and intimate knowledge of how our machines work. In many cases we can resolve your problem and get you up and running while you're still on the phone. And if you need parts or repairs, we can arrange these to be shipped out to site for you.



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### Other related documents & ebooks (available on request)

Anilox Roll Technology: Textile Printing Inks: Printing Plates: Drying Systems : Heat Transfers



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