



Choosing the Right Label Finish



Varnishes

Varnishes are a liquid coating. They are primarily water-based, otherwise known as Aqueous Varnish, and formulations can include other materials such as alkyds and various resins.



Pros



Varnishes can be applied to the entire label (flood varnish) or sections of the label (spot varnish) for focused matte or gloss effects.



Most varnishes are water soluble and made from natural materials, creating no harmful emissions.

Cons



Varnishes are less durable and offer less protection than laminates, resulting in a shorter lifespan.



Most varnishes are more susceptible to elemental wear and tear.



How are varnishes applied?

Just like ink, varnishes are printed onto the label using an inline rubber coating roller for a flood coating or designed plates for spot coating.



What are ideal varnish applications?

Cost-effective and versatile, varnishes are ideal for product labels that don't require advanced durability such as product or chemical resistance.

Varnishes are a great way to add unique aesthetic enhancements on labels.



What visual effects do varnishes have?

Varnishes enable a wide variety of design elements such as:

- Varying levels of gloss
- Multiple levels of mattes
- Slick textures
- Tactile textures



Laminates

Laminates are a film made from biaxially oriented polypropylene and polyester (BOPP) film.

Pros



Recommended for abrasion resistance and chemical or outdoor exposure, laminates are more durable than varnishes.



Their heightened durability makes them ideal for labels on high intensity products that will be exposed to environmental elements, chemical exposure and physical exertion.

Cons



Laminates are less cost effective in comparison to varnishes.



While offering a few design elements, laminates are less design focused and versatile than varnishes. Varnishes can be applied over laminates however, to combine ultimate protection with visual appeal.



How are laminates applied?

Self-wound laminate is applied from a roll into a print or die station via a laminating rubber roller – think a giant roll of scotch tape.

Lined lamination is a self-adhesive version with a release layer covering the adhesive. The release layer is removed when the lamination is applied.



What are ideal laminate applications?

Products that have regular exposure to physical abrasions, chemicals or environmental elements should use laminates for label protection.



What visual effects do laminates have?

Laminates have varying levels of gloss or matte aesthetics.

Varnishes can be applied on top of laminates to mix gloss and matte elements.