How to Create the Correct Custom Ring Binder

Before you start...

There are several questions you should answer before you start making ring binder specifications. The answers to these questions will help you make the necessary decisions regarding binder material, size, accessories and decoration. If you would like recommendations or suggestions as you start this process, just give one of our representative a call.

- How will the binders be used?
- Will the binder and the contents be handled frequently or only referenced occasionally?
- Does the binder need to have a long shelf life or is it for a short term program?
- How many binders are needed?
- How much do you want to spend per binder or what is your overall budget?
- Are there any coordinating materials such as index tabs or presentation folders that need to be considered? Will colors or materials need to be matched?
- Do you need printed materials inserted, mailing labels or cartons?

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Step 1:
Choose the Binder Material

Several factors help determine which material is best suited for your ring binder needs. The following outlines the different characteristics of each material. The most important factors affecting your material decision are based on the planned usage for the binder and the decoration wanted.

Vinyl

Vinyl is a very popular, all-purpose binder material. The binders are created by heat sealing vinyl around chipboard to create the binder case. Vinyl binders are great for seminars, sales meetings, price lists, or reference materials.

Characteristics:

- Good material for a temperate, indoor office environment
- Comes in a variety of colors and textures
- Can have a very rigid or somewhat flexible cover (using flex board)
- Can be screen printed, foil stamped, or debossed

Polyethylene (Poly)

Poly is a durable plastic sheet made from a polyolefin blend. The one piece poly binder construction makes this a more durable and yet less expensive alternative. Poly binders are perfect for reference or training guides that will be frequently handled, for example, manuals in a workshop area.

Characteristics:

- Comes in a wide variety of bright colors
- Available in different gauges or thicknesses
- Indestructible, high density material that will not fade, crack or tear
- Withstands from -150° Fahrenheit to +150° Fahrenheit without changing its form
- Life of hinge exceeds 50,000 flexes
- Can be screen printed.

Step 2:
Determining the Binder Size

The size of the binder depends on the size of the sheet of paper it needs to hold. The only difference is that paper sizes are described as width by height. But, binder sizes are described just the opposite – height (the binding edge) by width.

For example, an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet with hole punching on the 11" side is a standard size sheet. However, the binder to house such sheets would be described as an 11" x 8 1/2" sheet size binder. **The binding edge is always listed first.**

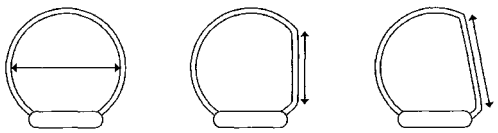
The other thing to consider is whether or not index tabs will be used in the binder. If so you need to make sure the binder case incorporates an index tab allowance so the tabs don't stick out beyond the edge of the binder case. For example, many binder cases will have an allowance for a 1/2" index tab extension.

Each binder case has a different outside dimension depending on the binder case material, ring size and style. Check with your representative for binder case dimensions based on your specifications.

Step 3:
Choose the Ring Size & Type

Ring Size

The ring size of a binder is determined by the capacity of the ring, not the width of the binder spine. To determine the ring size of an existing binder with a round ring, measure the inside diameter of the ring. For a D ring or Angle d ring, measure the length of the straight or angled edge. The illustrations below indicate where to measure different rings.



Round Ring **D Ring** **Angle D Ring**

Ring Type

For the "metal" or ring in your binder, you have several options. The most common metals have 3 rings and vary from 1/2" to 3" in diameter. Special-order metals with varying number of rings and other sizes are available.

Round Rings are circular and the most common ring used. They are all-purpose and work well for many applications. Round rings can be attached to the spine or back cover.

D rings are shaped like a backward "D". The flat edge holds the binder contents. The D ring allows the sheets to lie flat along the straight edge for less wear on the contents' hole punches. D rings are always attached to the back cover.

Angle D rings are the same as a D ring except the straight edge is angled so the ring is wider at the bottom of the ring than at the top. This ring is especially good for larger capacity binders. Angle D rings are always attached to the back cover.

Post binders use metal posts instead of rings. These are primarily used to hold extra large capacity materials such as catalogs. Posts are a 1 - 4 inches in length and can be fixed or expandable.

Boosters Boosters are the triggers that open and/or close the binder rings, and are standard unless otherwise specified.

Step 4:
Choose the Decoration Process

Now that you know the binder material, the ring size and type, and the binder case size, it is time to decide how you will design your binder. Where will you place the artwork, what process will be used to apply the artwork and how should the artwork be prepared.

Placement of Artwork

Your artwork can be placed on the outside front or back cover, the spine, or the inside front or back cover. The most common placement for artwork is on the front cover and spine.

Outside or Inside Cover

When submitting artwork for binder production, indicate in which position the artwork should be placed. Some common placements are diagrammed below. Keep art or copy at least 1/4" away from edges, spine and rivets.

For the inside front or back cover, it is important to indicate the position of pockets, (vertical or horizontal) and any business card holders (sealed 2 or 3 sides).

Spine

The major concern for art or copy on the spine is that it fits between the rivets. Indicate whether it should be centered between the rivets and whether it should be placed lengthwise, stacked or in the horizontal position. Keep art or copy at least 1/4" away from the edges and rivets. If you need more area than the space between the rivets allows, the spine can be constructed with concealed rivets.

If you want a label holder, indicate where it should be placed on the spine.

Note: Each binder case has a different outside dimension depending on the binder case material, ring size and style. Check with your representative for binder case dimensions based on your specifications.

Design Process

Binders are created by cutting a large piece of material that makes up the front cover, spine and back cover of the binder. Your artwork is then applied to the material. There are several processes you can use to apply the artwork to your binder cover.

Screen Printing

The process of silk-screening is started by the creation of a screen which has the non-printing areas blocked by a stencil. Printing is done by applying ink to the screen, spreading and forcing it through the fine mesh openings onto the printing surface.

Things to consider when preparing artwork for silk-screening...

- All lines, type and graphics must be at least 1 point in thickness
- Artwork should be based on 65 line screen
- Halftones should not be more than 70% in value or less than 30%
- Silk-screening inks are not opaque. Light colors screened on dark vinyl or poly can make color matching difficult. The dark base of the vinyl or poly "shows" through the silk-screened ink.

Foil Stamping (Hot Stamping)

Foil or hot stamping is the process of applying heat and pressure to a metal die to transfer foil onto the printing surface. Gold and silver foil is most common, but colored foils are available. Vinyl or paper can be foil stamped.

Things to consider when preparing artwork for foil stamping...

- All lines, type and graphics must be at least 1 pt in thickness
- Reverse type should be bold. Fine reverse type has a tendency to fill in when stamped
- Eliminate any halftones and screens
- The stamping area should not exceed 24 square inches. If a larger area is desired, more than one die will be needed.

Embossing & Debossing

Embossing and debossing both involve the process of using heat and pressure to press a metal die into the printing surface. The die smooths out the grain of the material and raises or lowers the surface. When embossing the die is pressed into the underside of the printing surface to raise the artwork. Debossing is just the opposite, the die is pressed into the top of the printing surface so the artwork is lower than the surrounding surface. Not all materials can be embossed or debossed, see chart below.

Things to consider when preparing artwork for embossing and debossing...

- The emboss/deboss area should not exceed 24 square inches. If a larger area is desired, more than one die will be needed
- Eliminate any halftones and screens.

Offset Printing

A printing process in which the ink is transferred from a plate to a blanket which in turn does the printing.

Things to consider when preparing artwork for offset printing...

- Film should have a 133 line screen.
- Halftones should not be more than 90% in value or less than 10%

Material	Foil Stamp	Silk-Screen	Emboss	Deboss	Offset
Vinyl	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES*
Poly	NR**	YES	NO	NO	NO

*This is practical only for larger quantities. **Not recommended.

Artwork Preparation

In many cases, you will be asked to supply "Camera-Ready Art". Camera-ready means that the artwork is suitable for photographic reproduction. It is sharp, high contrast black and white mechanical art that has size and position indicated. It is not a photocopy or a fax. In some cases, even laser-printed art is not as sharp or as high contrast as necessary. This camera-ready art should then be pasted up on a board and color separated.

Once your artwork is complete, make sure it is proofed. It is very easy to overlook a misspelled word, especially if you have looked at the same copy several times. A good idea is to get someone unfamiliar with the artwork and copy to proof it.

Note: It is possible to provide artwork directly from a computer: Problems do arise with the compatibility of different software and systems. If you do want to submit artwork on a diskette, make sure your supplier can "read" the software used to create the artwork. You need to know the name and version of your software as well as if it is DOS or MAC based.

Step 5:

Ring Binder Options and Accessories

There are several options and accessories you can add to your ring binder to make it more functional and attractive.

Easel Binders: Easel binders are a great choice for presentation and reference binders. upright Easel Binder and the Landscape Easel Binder are constructed so they can display material at an angle when set on a desktop. Ask your representative for more information on these binder styles.

Rivets: Rivets on the spine can be concealed if you want additional area for artwork or simply to create a cleaner look. Rings can also be mounted on back cover for the same results. You have a choice of nickel or black rivets.

Pockets: Add a pocket to the inside front and/or back cover to add more functionality to your binders. Loose sheets or brochures can be placed in the pockets. Pockets can be horizontal or vertical.

Entrapments: An entrapment is sealed-in printed material. A printed piece can be sealed into the covers and spine of your binder with a clear vinyl overlay. If your artwork is very detailed or of multiple colors, it may be more practical (due to the limitations of silk-screening and foil stamping) to offset print the art on paper and then seal it into the binder.

Insertables: A clear overlay is placed over the binder covers with an opening left in the top. This allows you to slip a printed piece into the cover and/or spine. This is perfect for covers that may need to be updated or for "reusable" binders.

Padding: Padding can be added to the front cover, spine or back cover. This gives the binder a richer, more expensive appearance.

Appliques: A three dimension effect is created by heat sealing vinyl on top of vinyl. This creates a very unique look and adds texture to the artwork.

Business card holders: A clear vinyl pocket for a business card can be placed almost anywhere on the binder. The most common placement is on the inside front cover. The holder can be sealed on 2 or 3 sides.

Label holders: Label holders are clear vinyl pockets most commonly added to the spine of a binder.

Personalizations: Name can be individually foil stamped onto your binder.

Plastic or audio video holders: Plastic audio or video holders can be heat-sealed onto the cover of a binder or can hook onto the rings.

Sheet lifters: A rigid plastic piece that is placed over the rings of a binder in the front and behind the sheet contents. These lifters help the sheets over the lower curve of the rings, thus keeping the sheets from binding and tearing when closing the binder. They also keep the sheet contents from sagging or tearing at the hole punches when the binder is in the upright standing position. Sheet lifters can be silk-screened with a logo or artwork.

Step 6:

Be Clear

You've gone through all the steps and you know what you want. Now the most important thing to do is clearly communicate your specifications. This will ensure that you get what you want, when you want it. Questions resulting from insufficient or unclear information results in delays. The easiest way to avoid problems is to be clear and explicit when you place your orders.

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Glossary

Appliquè: A three dimension effect is created by heat sealing vinyl on top of vinyl. A die is created for the desired artwork. Then, a piece of vinyl is placed on the vinyl cover and the heat sealing machine, using the die, makes the appliquè and seals it to the cover at the same time. The overflow is torn off.

Backbone: The spine of the binder case.

Camera-Ready: Art that is black and white mechanical art with size and positioning indicated. Suitable for photographic reproduction. It should be color separated if more than one ink color.

Case: The complete binder cover excluding the ring metal or other binding mechanism.

Chipboard: A grade of course cardboard used to provide rigidity to a vinyl binder cover. The vinyl is heat sealed around the chipboard. Chipboard comes in varying point sizes or thicknesses.

Debossing: Heat and pressure are used to press a metal die into the material. The die smooths out the grain of the material and lowers the artwork into the surface. This image lower than the surrounding material creates an "embossed" effect.

Die: Metal into which artwork or lettering has been cut for the purpose of making an impression. For example, foil stamping requires the use of a die. The cost of a die depends on the size and complexity of the artwork. Each color and position requires a separate die.

Die (Sealing): A metal die formed into the shape of the object to be heat sealed. It consists of two parts: the inside part for sealing and the outside part for cutting the material.

Dimension: The size of a loose leaf binder refers to the size of the sheets it is designed to hold An 81/2" x 11" sheet with hole punching on the 11" side is called a standard sheet. However, the binder to house such sheets would be described as an 11" x 81/2" sheet size because the binding edge is always listed first.

Entrapment: A printed sheet placed under clear vinyl which is heat sealed, on all four sides, to the outside cover. The effect is a full page color cover that is protected under clear vinyl.

Flex Board: a paper based board with latex that allows it to bend without breaking or creasing. It is used in place of chipboard in a vinyl binder cover when a flexible cover is needed.

Foil Stamping: Foil (or hot) stamping is the process of applying heat and pressure in a metal die to transfer metallic or colored foil onto the printed surface.

Gauge: A measure of thickness stated as a specific measure. For example, polyethylene comes in .015, .023, .035, .055, .075, .090, .110 gauge (thinnest to thickest respectively) Also referred as point i.e. 15 point = .015 guage or 15000 of an inch.

Heat Sealing: The electronic process whereby vinyl film is welded together by means of a sealing die. The die has two blades, in one operation the outer blade cuts the material to size and the inner blade, using radio frequency (RF) welding, seals the piece of vinyl together. Chipboard may be placed between the two pieces of vinyl before sealing to produce rigid covers. Pockets, label holders and business card holders can also be sealed into the vinyl cover.

Hot Stamping: See Foil Stamping.

Index Guides/Index Tabs: A sheet with a tab extension that is used to divide or subdivide the contents such as material in a ring binder.

Ink Proof: Ink applied to a swatch of the material to be printed. Any color change due to the combination of ink color and material color can be checked.

Loose Leaf: With reference to binders, it is that class of binding in which individual sheets may be easily removed and new sheets easily inserted.

Metal: The metal binding mechanism in a binder. For example, most binders have 3-ring metals.

Offset: A printing process in which the ink is transferred from a plate to a blanket which in turn does the printing.

PMS: A system of mixing and identifying ink colors by number. The initials stand for Pantone Matching System.

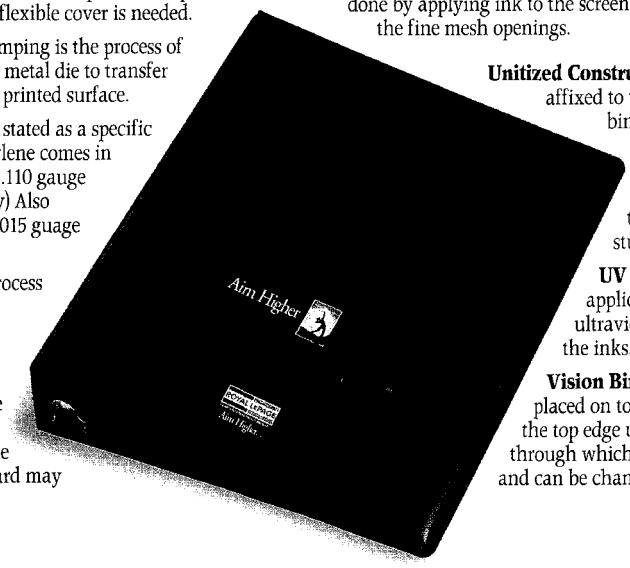
Polyethylene: A rigid plastic sheet made from a polyolefin blend. It comes in different gauges or thicknesses. Standard poly is available in .015, .023, .035, .055, .075, .090, .110 gauge.

Proof: A version or facsimile of how the final printed material will appear.

Score: To mark by impression, causing a partial breakage or bending of the fibers in a material and thus creating a hinge.

Sheet Lifters: A rigid plastic or pressed board, piece that is placed over the rings of a binder in the front and behind the sheet contents. These lifters help the sheets over the lower curve of the rings, thus keeping the sheets from binding and tearing when closing the binder. They also keep the sheet contents from sagging or tearing at the hole punches when the binder is in the upright standing position. Two required for round ring one for D Ring.

Screen Printing: The printing process of applying ink to a screen which has the non-printing areas blocked by a stencil. Printing is done by applying ink to the screen, spreading and forcing it through the fine mesh openings.



Unitized Construction: The use of a material, affixed to the chipboard on the inside of the binder case, which extends across the binding edge section and reinforces the joining points of the front and back binder cover to the backbone. This creates a sturdier, longer lasting hinge.

UV Inks: Ultraviolet inks. After application, these inks are placed under ultraviolet lights which immediately dries the inks.

Vision Binder: A clear vinyl overlay cover is placed on top of a vinyl binder cover leaving the top edge unsealed. This allows an opening through which a printed sheet can be inserted and can be changed periodically.