

Anatomy of a Spec Sheet

Basic Book Specs

AKA What a printer needs to know to give you the most accurate cost estimate

Description

A basic description of your book. (Example: “Full color spiral-bound gardening journal”)

Project Due Date

Do you have a firm deadline? Or a desired completion date?

Specifications

Size: What will the finished size of the book be?

Full bleeds: Will the ink go off the edge of the page or will there be margins?

Color: Specify requirements for both the cover and the interior pages. Options: Black ink only, specific PMS colors, 4-color process (cyan, magenta, yellow and black), just one or two of the process colors or metallics

Varnish: Will the cover have any kind of protective and/or spot varnish? A spot varnish can be applied to specific areas of a page to make it stand out (i.e. making the title text glossy), or certain paper stocks might hold up better with an aqueous coating. Discuss these details with your printer

Paper Stock + Weight: You likely won’t know exactly what brand of paper you want to use at the beginning. This is where actual book samples will be extremely helpful – so you can *show* your printer what you want - and your printer should be able to provide paper samples as well.

Number of pages: How many pages will the book be? This number will likely get adjusted as you go, but an estimate is fine at the beginning

Binding Style: Not all printers will be able to offer all binding options, or they might be able to offer them by using a third party. Know what you want, but also consider what your printer can offer at a price that is affordable.

Art Supplied/Graphic Design Services: Your printer will want to know how they are going to receive the files for your book. Will you submit your book in a

digital format ready to go to press? Will you need your printer to scan artwork or other pages? Will you need them to create page layouts and/or format your work? You will likely need to have a discussion with your printer to determine whether or not they will need to do additional formatting or adjusting.

Proofs: The proofs are your one and only opportunity to adjust, edit and correct your files. Do you want actual hard copies? A mock-up? Could the proofs be digital? Some printers might only offer one kind of proof and some might have different options available. Talk to your printer to determine what will be best for your project.

Delivery Prep: This is for things like shrink wrapping and packaging. Not all printers might be able to offer a lot of options, but ask for what you want and see what's possible. For *Ordinary Sparkling Moments*, I did not want them individually shrink-wrapped, but I did want them protected during the delivery process, so I had them shrink-wrapped in groups of five. I also didn't want to have to deal with unreasonably heavy boxes, so I had them delivered in boxes of 25.

If your printer is from out of town, find out how your books will be shipped (UPS? Another delivery service?), how they will be dropped off (will they be brought into your home, studio or storage unit or be left at the curb?) and what the exact cost of delivery will be.

Quantity: How many books will you want? Here's the crazy truth about printing: Once you print 1000, the cost per unit plummets *exponentially*. The cost between 1000 and 2000 is nominal. The cost between 500 and 1000, however, is significant. This is especially true with traditional offset printers.

Other Details

Will your book have special details? These could include interior pockets, rounded corners, die-cuts, perforated pages, special papers, foil stamping, dust jackets, inset cover images, etc. Be sure to clarify any unique features you'd like to explore for your book.