

## Paper Weight Demystified

We are continually asked one question "What weight is the paper?". The question is asked with simplicity, but is always answered in a more confusing manner. Stating the weight of different papers is like comparing apples to oranges. I hope this explanation will help clarify the term for those of you who have are confused.

The thickness of paper is measured by the weight of a ream of the full-sized sheet (a ream consists of 500 sheets). Bonds, offset, book papers and cover stocks all have different full-sized sheets, so their weights are specific to their paper types. Here are some practical tips when choosing paper:

- Bonds are commonly used for copying and economy print jobs. The most economical and lightest bond commonly used is 20 lb., with 24 and 32 lb. bond being heavier.
- The offset, or book, papers have a finish designed specifically for offset printing with the most common being 60 lb. (similar to 24 lb. bond) with 70 lb. and 80 lb. being the most common heavier grades used.
- Coated book stocks have a clay coating that can be gloss or matte and are designed to be used in high-end spot and process color printing.
- Cover stock is much heavier and stiffer than either bond or book stock. The most common grades of cover stock are 90, 100 and 120 lb. Cover stock can also be uncoated, matte coated or gloss coated and either coated on one or two sides. These covers are often measured by actual thickness or caliper and are referred to in points (10 point = 0.010" thick). The point thickness roughly corresponds to the weight, eg. 12 pt is often 120 lb.

I trust that the next time the term "paper weight" comes up in one of your conversations, it may seem slightly less complicated, giving you a greater grasp on what it all means.