

## **Explanation for Printing Estimate Request Form**

The attached Estimate Request helps you organize each bid request.

***Date & Date Bid Needed:*** Please allow a day or two, even more for complex bids. If a late bid poses a problem, please communicate this fact to bidder.

***Company Address & Contact Person:*** Who is the specific person to be contacted to clarify the bid? Make it easy for the estimator to get a hold of you. Also, some firms want complete details on your company name, address etc. to include in their database. Hey, fair enough for a free estimate eh?

***Project Name & Description:*** What do you call this item? Do you have a code #, the printer doesn't care what it's called and prefers to use your nomenclature. Description is a summary of what you are asking to bid on, such as "This is a perforated, numbered, flat card" or "160 page book (80 pages 2 sides) plus cover, perfect bound" or "This is a set of stepped inserts of varying height that collate".

Your summary alerts the estimator to a simple or complex bid so they can plan for it. You may get a response of "no bid" if what you want doesn't fit that particular printer.

Note for books, always state number of total pages and to avoid confusion express it in a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> way such as: "160 page booklet (80 sheets 2 sides or 40 signatures of 17x11) plus cover (or self cover?).

***Size Flat & Folded:*** If you're working on a booklet give folded size. All other jobs, give the flat size of a one-up piece and then the folded size. (17x11 folds to 5-1/2 x 8-1/2). Also, if you have a weird fold, explain. Your folded size may also give away the fact that it is a more expensive gatefold or off-center fold. Also, just work with a one-up piece, don't presume to tell the printer that you have 6-up on an 8-1/2 x 11 piece. Let the printer decide how many up they will run.

***Quantities:*** Three or 4 quantities is workable. I always sense an unreasonable client when they ask for quantities of "1,000 on up to 100,000 quantity"?! Hey, if you don't have any real idea of how many you need, don't waste our time! Now, if you want various prices for budgeting, explain it and the estimator may be more understanding. Again, quantities are finished, *individual pieces*. Don't figure that because you wanted them to print 4-up on a 17x11 sheet that the 1,000 price is really 4,000 (4x1, 000). Sometime you may get a price for "additional thousands" but again that's within 10%, don't extrapolate it up to twice the quantity!

***Stock:*** What paper are you are thinking of using. (We say "stock" because it is possible to print on a non-paper substrate such as plastic or corrugated cardboard.) If you know paper well, describe it as much as possible, especially if you must have a specific name brand and color to match something. For competitive estimates, all printers' should be basing prices on the same type, weight and color of paper.

What weight? 80 lb glossy is helpful, but are we talking book or cover weight? And without specifying a name brand, you'll get the house sheet or maybe the "least expensive" brand to make the bid look good.

If you don't know paper well, be honest and ask the printer to advise you. Choice of paper depends on many factors, which only you, as the end user, can explain.

Factors like what? : does this new piece need to match anything else? Will it need to accept pen ink or typewriting? Must it fold to fit inside something? Is it an item you are selling (so it needs great paper) or is it a throw away and you could get by w/ cheap stock? How will it be used? Does it go through the mail or get handed out? Does it go inside a loose leaf binder and may have a lot of wear and tear? The more you can explain, the better advice you will get on the proper paper.

On small items (business cards) or small quantities (1,000 or less) cost of paper is minimal. But as the size of the item (pocket folders) increases or the quantity gets big (10,000 plus) the choice of paper represents up to 40% of the cost of the job.

***Ink:*** (All printing starts on flat sheets of paper so there are two sides.) How many different colors of ink print each side? Are they standard colors, special mix colors or metallic inks? Do you want a coating of varnish, aqueous or UV? And if the colors on one side are different from the colors on the other side, please specify.

***Bindery:*** After your item is printed what occurs? Does it get converted into some shape or folded or numbered? Please explain in detailed terms what more must be done to finish the piece. Scores: you may not know if a score is required, but the printer will know if you want coated cover stock and it folds, they'll have to score. You will know, however, if you want perforations, diecuts, embossing etc.

Also, how do you want it boxed and delivered? Gift cards and envelopes may need to be collated into sets and individually cello wrapped. Items going directly to a mailing house may only need to be bulk boxed, cheapest way. Do you want job shipped to you or another destination?

Letterpress work is a sub category of bindery.

***Art Supplied:*** This is where the rubber meets the road nowadays. Just what "camera ready art" are you planning to supply for printing? Has it been prepared by a professional Graphic Artist? What graphics program? Are all photos scanned, crop marks included? or did someone buy a \$35 "graphics" program at the local office supply store and hope that the printer can "wing it". Also, not all printers can output from all available programs. So, the printer will need to know if you or they should send to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to output film or prepare it for printing. If you want someone to supply scans and other graphic elements, explain in detail. Either the printer will offer the service at added cost or refer you to a sub contractor for the service.

***Proof:*** A proof should be required on any new or changed project; especially since most art comes in nowadays on computer-generated graphics programs. Many "unforeseen" problems can occur; sometimes they are the fault of no one. For example, your graphics may be on a Macintosh program, but the printer output it on a PC, so the fonts (type) move. This is a common default when "dingbats" don't appear properly. A proof is a

way to double-check that your graphics have been rendered properly by the printer. If they are wrong, give the printer a day or two to fix it and show another proof. If it is due to your fault, find out if the printer can fix the dilemmas, how much it may cost and take the time learn, for future reference, what you could have done better.

Proofs come in many formats today. Bluelines are exposed directly from the film which will be used to burn a printing plate. Color keys and laminated color proofs are made from the four-color process film. Digital proofs are reaching acceptable levels too and are common for direct-to-plate printing.

Press Checks: I've never been a fan of having the customer press-check unless you are printing a "high end coffee table book" or maybe really strange combination of inks on colored stocks. But otherwise, why are you press checking? Why are you paying the extra money? Don't you trust a good proof and the capabilities of highly trained crafts-people to make the project work? One of my customers went to a competitor's press check (so they could charge him for the extra service), he didn't know what to look for and when he received the job, he discovered the phone number did not appear on his color brochure? !