



## Deciphering CMYK or “Process” Colour Getting Better Results



If you've ever had anything printed full-colour, you've undoubtedly heard the initials CMYK. These letters stand for the four ink colours used to create full-colour work: cyan, magenta, yellow, and black.

In theory, cyan, magenta, and yellow should suffice in creating full-colour work, since all the colours of the printing rainbow are combinations of these three tones. So why, then, do printers add black? Because theory and reality are not always the same.

Like so many other artificial creations, printing inks contain impurities. These impurities affect the absorption qualities of the ink. Consequently, while a perfect blend of cyan, magenta, and yellow would, in theory, produce black, the impurities in the inks make this idyllic scenario not quite come true. Black ink is needed to compensate for this reality. It also adds finer detail to images, helps to darken and define shadows, and makes the entire process more economical. How? By requiring less ink for the blackened areas of the page, such as printed text.

In some cases, a full-colour application might require a fifth ink, too. Just as cyan, magenta, and yellow alone cannot accurately reproduce black, some other shades fall outside the CMYK realm. In these cases, a specially formulated ink (or “spot colour”) may be needed, to ensure a perfect match. Spot colours, referred to as Pantone or PMS colours in the industry, are often used to reproduce a company's corporate colour palette or to “bump” the density of one or more of the process inks. We can help you decide if a spot colour might be needed for your full-colour work.

For more information or help, call us 519-256-3129, or email us [info@heraldpress.ca](mailto:info@heraldpress.ca)