

Is a plate truly unusable?

What determines if a plate is reusable?

Many times, people replace a plate thinking that it is damaged. In reality, there is still some other variable in the print process that needs to be addressed. We will go over the steps that you need to follow to evaluate a plate to verify if it can be reused or not.

It may appear that the plates have reached their end of life, but there are other contributors that need to be assessed first. An example of some of these contributors are:

- Worn doctor blades
- Worn or wrong mounting tape
- Improper ink drying (too fast or slow)
- Dirty Anilox
- Substrate issue
- Lack of Press Maintenance

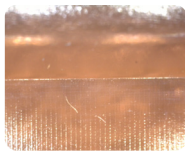
Evaluation of Used Plates

Once you complete a job you need to determine if the plates have life left on them. If the plates still have life, then they need to be saved for reuse. If the plates have damage or show signs of excessive wear, then new plates should be ordered. The big question is how do you know how much life is left on a used plate.

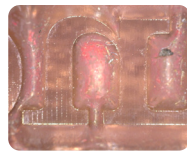
Below are some indicators to assess if the plate needs to be reordered or not:

- Excessive known number of repeats or linear footage on plate.
- Inspection of dots and edges of solids.
- Missing dots.
- Chips on edges of solids.
- Rounded edges of solids/text.
- Cuts on plate- result in ripping during dismount.
- Kinks in backing material from dismounting/handling.

Tip: Evaluation should occur after plates have been cleaned.

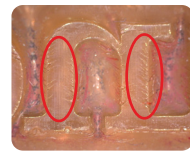


New Plate



Edge of solid is damaged from excessive Anilox impression

Used Plate



Chevrons seen on the plate due to overimpression

QC After Storage

Whenever a plate is taken out of storage, it needs to be evaluated prior to going on press to make sure that there wasn't any damage caused in storage. Here are some good practices to follow:

- Inspect plate for surface cracks (easier to see when you bend/wrap plate).
- Measure plate caliper to see if plate has shrunk.
- For example, a .067" plate should be .066"- .069".
- Look for discoloration of polymer.
- DuPont plates turn yellow if exposed to ozone and excessive ambient light.



Cracks caused by excessive ozone levels during storage

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