

Plastic Labeling Guru Guide

20 Surefire Plastic Labeling tips guaranteed to save you time and money



SPECTRAGRAPHICS
Label Systems

Congratulations...

you now have in your hands (or on your screen) the answer to all of your labeling woes. In about twenty minutes you will indeed become a plastic labeling guru. You will amaze small children, win the admiration of your co-workers, and impress your loved ones.

You will...okay, okay, I know we're talking about labels here. And to some, no manner of hype will ever make labels and labels adhering to plastic containers very exciting. But we thought, what the heck, life is too short let's have a little fun while we provide the world with some solid information.

To most, becoming a "plastic labeling guru" isn't such a high ambition but if your product, your department, or maybe even your job depends on you gaining a deeper understanding of how to best use a label to enhance your products or packaging...then maybe reading this report will be time well spent.

Enjoy the rest of this report. It is essentially a summary of some of the potential challenges you may face when developing or specifying a label for your product. In some cases the tips are just plain common sense, in others you will discover advice that may save your organization money or make your label more functional.

These tips were gleaned from years of working with almost every possible type of label on every type of plastic surface and plastic container.

So on to the tips already...

Ted Williams
President and Guru Maker
SpectraGraphics
TedW@SpectraGraphics.com

Tip #1. Ask your vendor the best size label to run for his situation. Getting your printer's input in the label design stage can lead to substantial cost savings. Every printer has sizes that best fit their equipment, master roll paper sizes, and run sizes. See if you can make a few small label size changes if necessary to reap big savings in your ongoing cost of labels.

Tip #2. Use graphic artists familiar with flexographic printing. Designing the art from the start to work well with flexography will save time and money. If your design firm is not familiar with flexography, provide them with a copy of Flexographic Image Reproduction Specifications and Tolerances (FIRST) Book to assist them in building artwork. Your label printer should have a copy you can borrow, or you may want to buy one for yourself. Available at www.ftastore.com.

Tip #3. Assign Label Numbers. Having unique numbers for your labels simplifies ordering and helps avoid label mix-ups. If possible, have your label number appear in an inconspicuous place on the label. Be sure to incorporate a revision method into your system so you do not run an obsolete label by mistake. If you do not have a label numbering system, see if your printer does and use theirs.

Tip #4. Allow spot colors to be reproduced using process colors. Many of the colors in the industry standard Pantone Matching System can be reproduced using four color process. This simplifies copy changes and lowers your cost for version changes within a run since it reduces costly wash-up time for your printer.



Tip #5. Consolidate die sizes. Larger runs are always less expensive per label than smaller runs. Rather than have two sizes of labels for say the 10 ounce and 12 ounce sizes, it may be more cost effective to run a larger quantity of a single label size and only pay for a press stop charge to change the label copy. This is usually true unless you are running very large quantities of both labels. Even though the 10 ounce label might be slightly smaller than the 12 ounce label, the larger combined run size is usually the better economy.



Tip #6. Consider paper labels rather than plastic. Labels made of laminated paper are strong, moisture resistant, and costs substantially less than plastic labels. Milk jug labels are in a very harsh, wet environment, and virtually all of them are made from laminated paper.

Tip #7. For label protection, laminate rather than UV coat. Laminated labels cost about the same as UV coated labels but have higher gloss, more strength, and better durability.

Tip #8. Save containers with repositionable adhesive. If you are labeling a plastic item that requires precise label placement, you might want to try an adhesive that takes a few minutes to build strong adhesion to the plastic. This "grace period" will give you some time to remove misapplied labels from your product without the labels tearing apart in the process and leaving paper scraps stuck to the container. You will then be able to salvage the container and run it through the labeler again.

Tip #9. Automate the application process. If you do not have thousands of dollars in your budget for a fully automatic label application system, at least invest a few hundred dollars in an automatic label dispenser. The dispenser will most likely at least double your output compared to hand labeling.

Tip #10. Combine two labels into one. If you use both a front and back label on a product, consider combining them into one, if practical. Larger run sizes of a single label and simplified application often make this the most economical solution.

Tip #11. Cold temperature adhesive is usually the best for plastics. Standard permanent adhesives, often developed to stick on corrugated paper, never really develop a permanent bond with many plastics. The labels can be removed easily days or even weeks after application. An adhesive suitable for cold temperature application generally develops a tight bond with plastic.

Tip #12. Diagnosing adhesion problems. Labels not sticking to the product generally fall into two categories; adhesive problems and application problems. If the label sticks well in spots but is loose in other spots, chances are it was not applied properly. Check your applicator. If it curls up everywhere, it is most likely an adhesive problem. Call your label vendor.

Tip #13. Maintain your label applicator. Web breaks on your label applicator are an annoying cause of downtime. Most of the time a good cleaning and lubricating will solve this problem, but it is a critical part of maintenance often overlooked. A spray can of WD-40 will dissolve adhesive buildup and lubricate rollers. WD-40 does not evaporate, so you can spray it on adhesive and other messes on the labeler and let it soak in for a few minutes. Don't forget the underside of the peel plate as this is a place where adhesive residue builds up and is often hidden from view.

Tip #14. Storage conditions. High humidity and/or extreme temperatures can cause adhesion problems. If you personally would not be comfortable where your labels are stored, consider moving them to a better location.

Tip #15. Labeling volatile materials. If you are labeling a product that has oils or solvents in it, make sure the container has adequate barrier properties. Otherwise the adhesive on the labels will be attacked by the product ingredients and the labels may discolor or fall off.

Tip #16. Increase roll sizes. See whether your automatic applicator can be adapted to take sixteen inch diameter rolls rather than the standard twelve inch diameter rolls. You will get up to 77% more labels per roll, cutting downtime for roll changes and saving storage space.

Tip #17. Consider handle forward shelf presentation. If your container has a handle, consider labeling your product so the handle is forward on the shelf making it easy for your customer to grasp. Studies have shown that the easier a product is to grab, the more it sells. An added benefit is that sometimes you can use a smaller, and therefore less costly, label on the panel with the handle.

Tip #18. Print on both sides. If your product packaging is clear, consider printing on the adhesive side of the label to add additional product information for the consumer such as recipes, useful hints, next purchase coupons, etc. The extra cost per label is minimal and you can effectively double your copy space.

Tip #19. Use a printer that knows the labeling requirements in your industry. An extra set of knowledgeable eyes looking at your label copy is always to your benefit. Though it is the customer's responsibility to approve the final proof, a printer knowledgeable in your industry will often catch the mistake that everyone overlooked saving you a costly rerun - or worse.

Tip #20. Use expanded content labels to increase copy area. Running short of copy space? Consider expanded content labels rather than increasing label size or using secondary labels. Expanded content labels are often the best solution in terms of cost, application ease, and inventory control.



The SpectraGraphics Difference

A quarter of a century of experience making labels that stick to plastic. If you can dream it...it's likely we've already made it at least once.

Use our experience to help you get the most out of your label, reduce production down time, and cut label costs.

Real people with real answers. In this day and age we figure the fact that a real person answers our phone makes us somewhat unique. When you call us about your order, a real person, with answers to your questions, will always answer.

Our job is to add value. We can take orders with the best of them, but we offer most of our clients valuable advice and creative approaches to meeting their label needs. We've discovered that this leads to clients who get more than they expected. Maybe that's why our clients keep coming back for more.

Our Products

SpectraFold Multi Page Labels – Labels that help you sell your product. We have perfected expanded content, promotional, and coupon labels.

Really Cool Labels – Thermal labels for refrigerated and frozen applications. Extreme temperatures and moisture call for some really cool labels from SpectraGraphics.

Labels That Stick To Plastic – We've been designing, engineering, and printing labels specifically for every imaginable use on plastic and plastic containers for over 25 years. We've figured out how to do it well.

Contact Us

SpectraGraphics Label Systems

14701 W. 106th Street
Lenexa, Kansas 66215
800-728-6828 toll free
913-888-7377 fx
913-888-6828 ph

www.spectragraphics.com

