

# HOW TO ORDER HIGH QUALITY *Screen Printed Tees*



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# T-shirt Tragedy

Each year, your bar sponsors a summer softball league team. This year you even pop for some screen printed team tees. You tremble with excitement as you drive to pick them up. This is going to be the best year in Big Tony's Tigers history!

It's a sweltering July evening and the first game of the season. The team gathers expectantly as you crack open the box of [custom tees](#). The print looks great, but feels like it could deflect bullets. "Jeez, Big Tony, it's a competitive league, but I doubt there will be gun play..." jabs your third baseman.

It's true, the Tigers look pretty darned sharp out on the field, but the prints are not very flexible and the players are having trouble getting a full range of motion. All that plastic isn't breathable, and is not helping the team keep their cool. The Tigers are uncomfortable and distracted. The opposing team takes the lead.

Grudgingly, the Tigers wear the shirts each week of the worst season they've ever played. Not to mention, they're not even looking sharp by the end of the season. The graphics on the tees have all cracked from regular wash and wear.

**"The Tigers are uncomfortable and distracted. The opposing team takes the lead."**

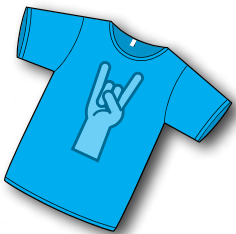


# Introduction



How can you be sure the custom t-shirts you order don't lead to tragedy like the defeat of Big Tony's Tigers? From selecting the right [t-shirt](#) color to inquiring about special print techniques, this guide will give you the basics on how to order beautiful, soft t-shirts.

First, let's get down some of the lingo, shall we?



**Ink.** Ink is the "paint" used in [screen printing](#).

**Hand.** The "hand" of a printed garment refers to how it feels to the touch. A [soft-hand print](#) is ideal. Big Tony's tees had terrible hand.



**Under Base.** Most screen print inks do not show up well when printed on dark shirts. Screen printers apply a layer of white before the colors in the design so the inks will show up. The layer of white ink is called an [under base](#).



**Plastisol Ink.** [Plastisol](#) is traditional fabric screen printing ink. The ink is composed of PVC particles suspended in a plasticizing emulsion. It tends to feel like plastic.

**Ink Additives.** An ink-like clear medium added to plastisol ink for a desired affect. Soft hand additives, such as chino or fashion soft make plastisol ink softer when printed. This ink may cost a little more for printing than traditional plastisol ink.



**Water-based Ink.** Inks which use water as the main solvent. [Water-based ink](#) is naturally softer than plastisol ink. This ink may also cost a little more for printing than traditional plastisol ink.

**Bullet Proof Vest.** Stiff, thick prints that are uncomfortable and have a tendency to crack. This occurs most often when an under base is needed or when screen printers simply use too much ink.

# Tonal



Printing a design in darker and lighter shades of the shirt color is called tonal printing. By gearing the artwork for tonal printing you eliminate the need for an under base. It's part of the design to see some of the shirt showing through. The printer can create the stencil using finely woven screen [mesh](#) (fabric). By printing through a fine mesh, very little ink is transferred to the garment. The print will be super soft using the traditional plastisol ink.



# Vintage



Vintage printing captures the look and feel of your favorite old t-shirt. Start with an athletic heather tri-blend or retro baseball raglan for a classic [vintage](#) look. Next, add some distress to your art. Request a soft-hand ink additive or even water-based ink. After the first wash, you won't even be able to feel the print!



# White Or Light



White or very light colored tees (pastel colors) are really the best choice for a bright print with a soft hand. The screen printer can create the stencil on a high mesh (fabric). This allows a minimal amount of ink to go on the shirt when printing, and the print colors will remain most true. Soft hand ink additives are an option for an even softer print, as well as water-based ink.



# Discharge



Saved the best for last! Inks with soft hand additives and regular water-based inks are very transparent and do not print well on an under base, so how do you get a soft hand on dark tees? Discharge! Discharge ink is a kind of water based ink, but is formulated to bleach the t-shirt fabric while depositing pigment. It's really quite amazing! Take note that some fabric dye lots do not discharge well, and can end up leaving the inks with a tint of the shirt color.





# Wrap Up

The actual act of printing is key to a great print, however, artwork, t-shirt color and specialty inks are also contributing factors to a great print. Be sure to discuss ink options with a screen print professional, and you are all set for some awesome retail quality screen printed t-shirts!

