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# Custom Printed Mouse Pads

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Table of Contents

- What type of custom printed mouse pads can Computer Specialties provide? .....1
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of silk screened pads? .....2
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of hard surface .....2  
and dye sublimation (soft surface) pads?
- What are the sizes and thicknesses of the various types of mouse pads .....3
- Some thoughts on different pad thickness. Or, why would anyone buy .....3  
1/16” thick mouse pads?
- What is “spot color” and “four-color process” printing? .....3
- What type of graphic formats doe CSI support? .....4
- Why can’t CSI use gif, bmp, jpg or jpeg graphic files to print mouse pads? .....4
- What size does my artwork need to be? .....4
- Can CSI assist me with my artwork? .....4
- How can I get my artwork to CSI? .....4
- What is an appropriate file name for my artwork? Or, why shouldn’t I call .....5  
my artwork “mouse pad.”
- How will I know exactly what my order will cost and that the order .....5  
information is correct?
- What are typical delivery times for the different types of mouse pads? .....5
- Does CSI “drop ship” mouse pads? .....6
- Does CSI ship mouse pads outside of the United States? .....6

**Q. What type of custom printed mouse pads can Computer Specialties provide?**

A. CSI has a complete line of different type mouse pads. We can provide silk screened (soft surface) pads, dye sublimation (soft surface) pads and hard surface pads. Hard surface mouse pads are sometimes referred to as Lexan mouse pads.

Silk Screened mouse pads are our most popular and least expensive type of mouse pad. They are the soft surface, colored fabric top mouse pads

with one or more ink colors that you see everywhere. The minimum order is 100 pads.

Silk screened pads come in eight different colors: black, royal blue, navy blue, burgundy, forest green, gray, red and white. They measure 9-1/4" x 7-3/4" x 1/4". All silk screened mouse pads are printed using “spot colors.” They cannot be printed with a “full bleed” (printing all the way to the edge). There must be at least 1/4" margin around the edge and 1/2" or larger usually looks better.

Hard surface and dye sublimation pads can be printed using either spot color or four color process (photographic quality). They can be printed using a full bleed and come in two sizes and three thicknesses: "Large" pads are 7-3/4" x 9-1/4" (the same size as silk screened pads). "Small" pads are 7-1/2" x 8". Both sizes are available in 1/4", 1/8" and 1/16" thicknesses. Custom sizes and shapes are available. Please call. The minimum order for either of these pad types is 250 pieces.

**Q. What are the advantages and disadvantages of silk screened pads?**

A. The advantages of silk screened pads are: They are the least expensive pad type, have the smallest minimum order quantity (100 pads) and the pad color can contribute to the design without paying for an additional color.

The disadvantages of silk screened pads are: Cannot print four color process (photographic quality) or a full bleed (print all the way to the edge). There must be at least 1/4" margin around the edge and 1/2" or larger usually looks better.

Cannot print gradients (blends): i.e., cannot go from one color to another with various shades and colors in between: e.g., Black to white with different shades of gray in between. One shade of a color is possible: i.e., Gray can be printed by using 30% black. This does not count as an additional color

Large print areas in the middle of the pad can interfere with the action of the mouse if the pad color is darker than the ink color. This problem can be avoided by using a light color pad, such as white, or by leaving the center of the pad unprinted. Another reason for leaving the center unprinted is so the user will see your message when they look down at the mouse pad, since their hand and/or mouse will usually be covering the center of the pad.

Background colors are limited to the 9 pad colors mentioned above. (It isn't possible to silk screen a different solid background color on a white pad because the background color appears "splotchy" and uneven.)

These disadvantages are not as bad as they may seem. Most custom printed mouse pads consist of an organization's name, telephone number and logo. A one or two ink color silk screened pad is a good match for this requirement; unless the pad artwork is a photograph or has a lot of colors. And, silk screened pads are the least expensive pad type and have a minimum order quantity of only 100 pads versus 250 pads for both hard surface and dye sublimation mouse pads.

**Q. What are the advantages and disadvantages of hard surface and dye sublimation (soft surface) pads?**

A. There are really no disadvantages to hard surface or dye sublimation mouse pads except that they have a larger minimum order quantity (250 pads) and, generally, are more expensive than silk screened pads. However, in quantities greater than 1000 pads, dye sub pads may be less expensive than silk screened pads.

Dye sub pads resemble silk screened pads except that the print area is very smooth. hard surface and dye sublimation pads can be printed using either spot color or four color process. They can be printed using a full bleed and gradients. The mouse pads come in two sizes and three thicknesses. Custom sizes and shapes are available. Please call.

The "standard" background color for both hard surface and dye sub pads is white. If another background color is desired that color must be printed and that counts as an additional color. This additional color cost only applies to spot color jobs since four color process can print almost any color with its four colors.

**Q. What are the sizes and thicknesses of the various types of mouse pads?**

A. Silk screened pads only come in one size: 7-3/4" x 9-1/4" x 1/4".

Both hard surface and dye sublimation pads come in two sizes and three thicknesses: "Large" pads are 7-3/4" x 9-1/4" (the same size as silk screened pads). "Small" pads are 7-1/2" x 8". Both sizes are available in 1/4", 1/8" and 1/16" thicknesses.

Custom sizes and shapes in all three thicknesses are available for hard surface and dye sublimation pads. Please call.

**Q. Some thoughts on different pad thickness. Or, why would anyone buy 1/16" thick mouse pads?**

A. CSI can provide hard surface and dye sub pads in 1/4", 1/8" and 1/16" thicknesses. Historically, most people have felt that a "thicker mouse pad is a better mouse pad." However, a mouse pad is not a load bearing structure. The only difference between a 1/4" thick mouse pad and thinner mouse pads is the thickness of the rubber backing. A mouse pad has three important characteristics:

1. It should not slide or damage the surface on which it is placed.
2. It should work well (not skip or drag) with a mouse.
3. The top surface should wear well.

*None of these things is a function of the thickness of the rubber backing.* So while the "perception" of the higher quality of thicker mouse pads exists, there is "functionally," no difference between thick or thinner mouse pads. So why would anyone buy a 1/16" mouse pad? There are several reasons:

- They are less expensive to buy.

- **They are much less expensive to ship.** A 1/16" pad literally weights about 25% of the weight of the same size and type 1/4" thick mouse pad. That's a 75% savings on shipping costs. This huge freight savings is particularly important to **overseas customers** where shipping costs are much higher than shipping within the United States.

- Some users, including several of CSI's artists, actually prefer 1/16" thick mouse pads because the mouse can be run off and on the pad without having to lift it up to clear the edge of the pad.

- Other users think they are "neat" because 1/16" pads are still rather rare.

**Q. What is "spot color" and "four-color process" printing?**

A. Spot color and four-color process are two different ways to print on anything—mouse pads, paper, etc. For both processes there must be a separate plate or screen (called a color separation) for each ink color to be printed. As you might expect, the more colors to be printed, the more plates are needed and the more expensive the job is. In spot color printing the inks are mixed by the manufacturer and are applied one color to a plate. If "exact" color matching is required, exact colors can be specified using PMS (Pantone Matching System) numbers.

In four-color processing, four ink colors are mixed together on the printing press to make essentially all the colors of the rainbow. These four-colors are usually called "CYMK" for cyan (a light blue), magenta (a pinkish red), yellow and black inks.

If the job has only a few colors, spot color is an economical way to print. However, if the job has a lot of colors it can be less expensive to print using four-color process. Photographs must be printed using four-color process because of the large number of colors they have.

**Q. What type of graphic formats does CSI support?**

A. Our art department uses Macintosh computers, but we also have IBM compatibles on our network. We can accept tif, eps, Corel Draw, Freehand, Illustrator, Microsoft Publisher, Pagemaker, Photoshop, Powerpoint, Quark-EXpress, Word and WordPerfect files from either platform.

Please note that Microsoft Publisher, Word and WordPerfect cannot output “color separations” and can therefore only be used for “one ink color” jobs. Please see above discussion on spot color and four color process printing if you do not know what a color separation is.

We need “at least” a 300 dpi resolution image for both four color process and spot color. This means that gif, bmp, jpg and jpeg file formats are unacceptable formats because they are “screen” graphics files and are only 72 dpi. That is not a high enough resolution to print well.

**Q. Why can't CSI use gif, bmp, jpg or jpeg graphic files to print mouse pads?**

A. Gif, bmp, and most jpg (also know as jpeg) graphic files are “screen” graphics files and are only 72 dpi (dots per inch.) They look beautiful on a computer monitor, but are not high enough resolution to print on a mouse pad (or on paper, for that matter). Try printing your artwork to a 300 dpi or higher resolution laser printer and you will see what we mean.

**Important:** Photoshop files and tif files can be any resolution. Occasionally you see a high resolution jpg file. These file types must be at least 300 dpi in order to print properly.

Some graphics programs, such as Photoshop, will let you increase the resolution of an image by merely typing a bigger number into a dialog box. This does not work. Here's why.

Resolution is actually measured in “dots per square inch.” 72 squared is 5,084 and 300 squared is 90,000. 5,084 divided by 90,000 is .0565 (a little less than 6%).

When you tell the computer to increase the resolution from 72 dpi to 300 dpi, you are asking the program to “guess” what 94% of the image looks like when it knows what less than 6% of it looks like. No wonder it doesn't work.

The reason these programs let you change the resolution is that it is possible to “reduce” the resolution by “throwing away” parts of the image. In this case the computer knows what the entire image looks like and can make a good guess as to which parts to eliminate. The main use for this capability is to take a high resolution image and turn it into a screen graphic.

The only solution to the “screen graphics problem” is to have a different higher resolution image elsewhere, have a “good” hard copy that can be scanned in, or to have an artist redraw the artwork using the low resolution graphics file as a pattern.

**Q. What size does my artwork need to be?**

A. If you are printing a “full bleed” (all the way to the edge, we need a 1/4” additional margin all around. For rectangular pads that adds 1/2” to each dimension. Therefore, the full bleed artwork for our 7-1/2” x 8” pads needs to be 8” x 8-1/2” and the full bleed artwork for our 8” x 9-1/2” pads needs to be 8-1/2” x 10”.

This additional 1/4” margin will not show on the final printed pad. *Be careful not to put anything you want printed on the pad in this area or the rounded corner area.*

Whether you are using a full bleed or not, your pads will look better if you do not place any part of your image, except the background (on a full bleed job), closer than 1/4” from the edge—and 1/2” looks better.

**Important:** Make sure your artwork has the right proportions (aspect ratio) to fit on the size pad you select.

**Q. Can CSI assist me with my artwork?**

A. Yes, CSI has a complete art department and will be happy to provide whatever type of assistance is required.

**Q. How can I get my artwork to CSI?**

A. The easiest and fastest way for most customers is to e-mail it to us as an attachment. Our e-mail address is **sales@mouse-pads.com**. If the file size is over 900 KB, please call us for instructions on how to access our FTP site.

You can use the U.S. Postal Service or Federal Express to send us a computer disk or a hard copy for us to scan.

For “four-color process” (photographic quality) a color print, in addition to a computer file, is very desirable because it tells us what colors you expect the image to have.

You can fax us your artwork if you are only trying to convey your ideas and want us to do the design and/or set the type, redraw the logo, etc. However, a fax is too low a resolution to use as “actual” artwork. CSI has a complete art department and can assist you in your artwork implementation and/or design.

**Important:** Please put your full name, telephone number and fax number on any e-mail, faxes or letters you send us. You would be amazed at how many people neglect to do this.

We get a lot of requests for information that are too vague (“How much are your mouse pads?”, etc.) and typing an e-mail message describing all the different mouse pad types, sizes, thicknesses, number of colors and quantities is a big job. It is much easier for us to pick up the telephone and call you to find out exactly what you want.

Your cooperation in providing your full name, telephone number and fax number on all correspondence will be greatly appreciated.

**Q. What is an appropriate file name for my artwork? Or, why shouldn't I call my artwork “mouse pad.”**

A. Please **do not** call your artwork “mouse pad”, “mousepad”, etc. We get many pieces of artwork each day, and most of them are called “mouse pad” or some variation of the term.

As you might expect, keeping track of all these files with similar names is a nuisance. Please use your organization's name as the file name. (We already know the artwork is for a mouse pad.) We can accept long character names from either IBM compatible or Macintosh computers.

**Q. How will I know “exactly” what my order will cost and that the order information is correct?**

A. Before a job is begun, CSI faxes all customers an “Order Confirmation and Proof Sheet.” This document provides the following information:

- Complete customer contact and shipping information.
- An itemized list of all costs, including shipping.
- Method of payment.
- Complete description of the mouse pads ordered including type of pad, quantities, colors, etc.
- A black and white paper proof of the artwork.

Different types of proofs:

For “spot color” jobs a black and white paper proof will be provided that includes a composite and color separations if the job has more than one ink color.

For “four color process” jobs, a full color pre-production proof will be provided before the job is actually printed.

**Q. What are typical delivery times for the different types of mouse pads?**

A. Typical deliver times are:

**Silk Screened Mouse Pads**

7 to 10 working days after customer approval of a paper proof

**Dye Sublimation Mouse Pads**

10 to 12 working days total, assuming customer approves sample pad (four color process) or paper proof (spot color) within 24 hours.

**Hard Surface Mouse Pads**

10 working days for a proof and additional 5 working days after customer approval of sample pad (four color process) or paper proof (spot color.)

A color proof is provided on all four color process (photographic quality) jobs. A black and white paper proof, including color separations, is provided on all spot color jobs. A color proof is not needed on spot color jobs since either the Pantone colors are specified, which guarantees an exact color match, or the colors are “generic” (bright red, royal blue, etc.) and an exact match is not required.

The above delivery times are “typical” delivery times. They may vary by a few days more or less depending upon current production workload. Please tell us if your mouse pads are needed for a seminar, trade show or other event that has a specific date. We will make every effort to accommodate your schedule.

Every month we have a few potential customers who spend many days or weeks receiving samples, discussing artwork, pad types, sizes, etc.; and then casually mention, “By the way, I need the mouse pads by this Friday for a trade show.”

This is not fair to you or CSI. Very short delivery times can lead to mistakes, additional costs or may be impossible to meet at any cost.

**Q. Does CSI “drop ship” mouse pads?**

A. Yes, CSI will be happy to drop ship any of our products to your customer. There will be no reference to CSI either in or on the boxes. We can even use your shipping labels and/or packing slips and invoices. Please call us if you have any concerns in this area.

**Q. Does CSI ship mouse pads outside of the United States?**

A. Yes we do. We have shipped pads to many different countries around the world.

We can ship directly to an overseas address or to a shipping agent anywhere in the United States. We will ship via any carrier the customer prefers and either charge the shipping to the customer’s account or add the shipping costs to our invoice.

We have had excellent results shipping overseas via “Express Mail International Service (EMS).” EMS delivers in two to three business days to major business centers and a few days later in outlying areas. That is not as quick as the overnight delivery offered by Federal Express and other carriers, but their rates are generally much lower. The actual rates are set by the Post Office of the receiving country.

You may want to see the section on 1/16” thick mouse pads. These pads can save you up to 75% of your shipping costs.

All of our prices are in United States dollars, are based upon “customer provided camera ready copy” and are exclusive of any shipping charges, duty or customs charges, sales or use tax or any other charges that may be applicable in the customer’s country. Because of the custom nature of our products, prepayment is required on all international orders.

We will be happy to provide free samples of any of our products, however for *overseas shipping* we ask that the recipient provide a Federal Express account number, or an account number with a similar carrier, to help defray the cost of the sample pads and the overseas shipping.