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Academy of Screen & Digital Printing Technologies

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**The Squeegee**

I conduct a lot of textile screen printing workshops and seminars and I am always amazed about the responses I get to a few questions I ask about squeegees.

I would like to state that I prefer using squeegees that are sharp and straight no matter which garment color will be printed or the detail that will need to be held.

The first question I ask is “do you know which squeegee hardness or durometer to use based on the type of work you are going to print, and the ink type you will be using?” The next question is “how many of you own automatics?” Based on the reply, the next question is “of those of you that own automatics, how many of you don’t own a squeegee sharpener?” It amazes me how many print shops don’t have them and when I ask why not, the answer often is “I’ll buy new squeegees once these wear out.”

I cannot believe how many manual and automatic shops only have one set of squeegees per press. This is one of the least expensive production products to own and choosing the right hardness of blade has a massive impact on the quality, detail and vibrancy of the finished print, especially when printing on dark garments.

So, let’s take a descent production shop and let’s say they average 1,500 prints per day. At the end of a month, they have printed about 30,000-35,000 prints. Do you think the edge of the blade may have gotten worn down? Will you really purchase a new set of blades each month? Not very practical is it.

About 40% of the inks sold are white. That being the case, it would probably be a good idea to have one or two squeegees that are dedicated to being used only on white ink.

Here’s a brief run down on the squeegee hardness I like to use for printing textiles based on garment color and detail to be held.

75/90/75 Triple Durometer-Four Color Process with an automatic and for very fine detail on light colored garments.

75 Durometer-Four Color Process with a manual and for very fine detail on light colored garments.

65/90/65 Triple Durometer-Used on an automatic for printing the underlay and on top of an underlay Light colored garments where a stronger color is desired. Used for water base and many special effect inks such as high density. This is my favorite for most prints on an automatic.

65 Durometer-Used on a manual for printing the underlay and on top of an underlay. Light colored garments where a stronger color is desired. Used for water base and many special effect inks such as high density. This is my favorite for most prints on a manual.

62/90/62 Triple Durometer-Very similar to the 65 Durometer squeegee but a little softer that the 65/90/65 and a little harder than the 55/90/55. Use it for getting a good ink deposit on top of an underlay. Use on an automatic or manual press.

55/90/55 Triple Durometer-Great for underlays, water base, gels and any ink where a large deposit of ink is needed. Use this on manuals and automatics.

Special Squeegees- the following squeegees have a specific purpose

Double Squeegee-this squeegee has two blades in the holder and is made for automatic presses. The front blade is a 55/90/55 and does the finish of the print. The back blade is a 62/90/62 and starts laying down the ink. One print stroke with this blade is equal to or possibly better than two strokes of a standard blade. Although this blade has to be set to 15 degrees to work properly and prints on the slow side, the production with this blade is 30 more than a double stroke.

Roller Squeegee-this squeegee is used in combination with a screen that has a hard Teflon sheet mounted to the bottom of it. This screen follows right after the flash. As the flash starts to cool down, the pallet moves and the hot ink is sent under this screen. The Roller Squeegee comes down on the screen and rolls over it which flattens and smoothes the print. This makes the print look brighter. The remaining colors, especially those with detail will now be printing on a smooth substrate.

There are also Roller Squeegees made for manual printing.

Chose the squeegee that will give you the best results and not just the one that is clean.