

Sublimation Protective Paper Placement Chart

What to use, what to avoid, and where the protective barrier goes

Best simple default: Use fresh, clean, white, uncoated butcher paper or purpose-made sublimation blowout paper. Protective paper stays blank. It is NOT the same as the sublimation transfer paper that carries your printed design.

Quick Material Guide

Material	Use?	Best Role	Reuse?	Main Caution
Purpose-made blowout paper	YES	Primary protective barrier	Follow maker guidance	Replace if contaminated
White uncoated butcher paper	YES	Best general default	Fresh sheet safest	Must be uncoated/unwaxed
Plain copy paper	YES	Small jobs / backup	No	Small sheet size
Heat-press parchment	MAYBE	Only when product is rated for heat transfer	Product dependent	Kitchen parchment varies
PTFE / Teflon sheet	NOT PRIMARY	Non-stick cover in other workflows	Yes	Does not absorb dye; cross-contamination risk
Wax paper	NO	Do not use	No	Wax and high heat do not belong in the press
Freezer / unknown coated paper	AVOID	Use only if explicitly rated	No	Coatings may react under heat

Fast Rules Before You Press

1. Make the protective sheet larger than every area where stray dye could escape.
2. Put a clean barrier inside shirts so dye cannot pass through to the back layer.
3. Treat dye-contaminated butcher paper as single-use for pressing.
4. Do not use wax paper or unknown coated paper.
5. Do not assume a reusable PTFE/Teflon sheet is a substitute for absorbent blowout paper.
6. Follow the blank and press manufacturer when they specify a different stack or orientation.

Why fresh paper matters: Sublimation dye can remain on a used barrier and reactivate when reheated, placing part of an old design on the next blank.

Where the Protective Paper Goes

Use these stacks as practical starting points. Exact orientation can vary by blank and press.

Shirts and Fabric

1	Upper heat platen
2	Fresh protective butcher paper
3	Printed sublimation transfer
4	Shirt front / printable layer
5	Clean protective paper or cardstock INSIDE shirt
6	Shirt back
7	Pressing mat or lower platen

Key point: The inside barrier protects the back of the garment from dye that can pass through polyester fabric. Secure the transfer if it could move, then open the press without sliding the stack.

Flat Hard Blanks: Metal, Coasters, Hardboard, Ornaments

Protective paper
Transfer + blank in the manufacturer-specified orientation
Protective paper where dye could reach the lower platen/mat

Do not memorize one face-up or face-down stack for every hard blank. Product instructions can differ. The rule is to protect any surface exposed to escaped dye.

Mugs and Tumblers

1	Tape the printed transfer tightly to the coated blank.
2	Add clean protective paper around the transfer where your press or workflow calls for it.
3	Keep folds and overlaps from changing pressure.
4	Inspect the heater/wrap area for old dye before the next blank.

Paper size rule: The barrier should extend beyond the complete dye exposure area. If your press manufacturer calls for full heat-plate coverage, use that larger size.

Troubleshooting and Press-Side Checklist

Protective-paper problems usually show up as contamination, stains, residue, or unexpected transfer marks.

Symptom - Likely Cause - Fix

Symptom	Likely cause	What to do
Old design appears on new blank	Reused contaminated paper/sheet	Replace barrier; inspect press surfaces
Ink stain on upper platen	Paper too small or missing	Increase coverage; clean platen safely
Ink on back of shirt	No internal barrier	Add clean paper/cardstock inside garment
Random colored marks	Contaminated barrier or press	Stop production and inspect everything that touched the last job
Double/ghost image	Transfer moved	Secure transfer; open press without sliding
Paper leaves residue	Wrong/coated paper	Switch to known uncoated protective paper
Paper scorches heavily	Unsuitable paper or excessive exposure	Verify paper and press settings
Print is faded everywhere	Usually not protective paper	Check heat, time, pressure, blank, ink and color workflow

30-Second Pre-Press Checklist

- ☐ Correct sublimation transfer paper is printed and positioned.
- ☐ Protective paper is clean, blank, uncoated and large enough.
- ☐ A clean barrier is inside any garment when dye could pass through.
- ☐ No old dye is visible on platen, mat, wrap, heater, or reusable surface.
- ☐ Transfer is secured if movement is possible.
- ☐ Time, temperature and pressure match the blank/press instructions.
- ☐ Fresh protective paper is ready for the next blank.

Safest workflow: Fresh barrier + full dye coverage + stable transfer + clean press surfaces. If protective paper is visibly stained, do not put it back into a heated sublimation stack.

Quick reminder

Protective paper prevents contamination; it does not fix incorrect heat, time, pressure, poor blank compatibility, printer issues, or color-management problems. Change only the part of the workflow that matches the symptom.

For the full explanation and troubleshooting guide, visit:

subligeniusprint.com/sublimation-protective-paper/