



## Binding Options: Perfect Binding

### What is Perfect Binding?

Perfect binding (sometimes referred to as soft-cover or paperback binding) is commonly used for catalogs, books, directories, annual reports and magazines. If desired, smaller publications can also be perfect bound for a more finished appearance. However, unlike a saddlestitched book (stapled on the fold), a perfect bound book also allows for text to be printed on its spine, providing easy identification on its side. Using automated methods, perfect bound books can be economically produced for both short-run digitally printed materials and longer-run offset printed books. It is one of the least costly and most versatile book binding methods available.



### How Does It Work?

Printed signatures are formed the same way as signatures for saddlestitched forms, except they are stacked/nested instead of wrapped around each other when gathered for binding. The stacked signatures comprise what is called a "book block". This step is done in-line on the binder, off-line on a collator, or as part of the digital printing process. The spines of the "book block" then travel over a grinding wheel to remove an extra 1/16". This allowance is called "grind off" and allows for improved glue adhesion along the spine. The signatures are compressed in a clamp and hot-glued at the spine. A cover is then wrapped around the finished book block and the entire piece is trimmed on three sides to produce a professional-looking finished document.

### Design Considerations

Design and layout considerations for perfect binding are similar to those for saddlestitching, however there are several additional factors to consider.

### Cover Art Preparation

The width of a perfect bound cover is comprised of three parts: the front and back covers and the spine. All three parts should be combined to make one page in a page layout application such as InDesign. For example, if you have a 6" x 9" book with a 1" spine, the final page width of the cover would be 13" (2x book page width + spine size); meaning the overall cover page size would be 13" x 9".

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If ink is printing on the inside covers (cover 2 and 3) in addition to the outer covers (covers 1 and 4), your layout document should have two pages – one for the outer covers and one for the inside covers. Do not position any printing elements in the spine area of the inside covers. Ink in this area can keep the cover from adhering properly to the book block.

The width of the spine will vary depending on not only the number of text pages of the publication but also the thickness of the paper used. When setting up a spine for any perfect bound publication, contact your HBP representative and specify the paper and number of pages to receive an approximate thickness for the spine.

### Signature Pagination

As in saddlestitching, perfect bound books or signatures always begin with an odd page (right-hand page) and end with an even page (left hand page) and the total number of pages needs to be divisible by four. If your page count is not equally divisible by four, pages will need to be added to or deleted from your book to comply. This can be done by adding blank or “Notes” pages if desired. Your HBP representative can provide guidance to determine where it would be most cost effective to add extra pages.

### Folios and General Pagination

The folio is the page number, which typically falls at the bottom or trim edge of text pages. Page one of a book is not typically the first printed page. The total page count of a publication includes all pages in three basic sections:

1. **Front Matter:** Title page, editors page, copyright page, table of contents, dedications, etc. often comprise the front matter. Any content before the number Page 1 is considered front matter.
2. **Text:** This is the actual book or pages that start with a numbered Page 1. Regardless of where page numbers appear on the page throughout the book, the standard positioning for page numbers on each chapter opener is at the bottom of the right hand page.
3. **Back Matter:** This is the appendix, bibliographies, index, or any other supplementary text. Usually the back matter maintains the page numbering of the text, but it can often be numbered on its own (A-1 for appendix, etc.)

### Crossovers

Crossovers, also called 2-page spreads or cross-page spreads) are generally not recommended for this type of binding since perfect bound publications are glued at the fold and a portion of the gutter gets lost in binding. Any element falling in or close to the spine area will either be difficult to read or not visible. Crossover elements considered to be of a critical nature would include photographs or any type of text. Decorative elements such as bars, rule lines or solid areas of ink would not be considered a critical crossover. These elements can extend into the bind area with no adverse effects but would still require alignment from the left to right hand page. When crossovers are required, prepress review

and adjustments to the file set up are often necessary and can result in additional prepress costs. If you intent to include crossovers in your book, call ahead to discuss any considerations for file set up with your HBP team early in the creative process.

## Advantage of Perfect Binding

- Title and other information can print on the flat spine for visibility on a bookshelf
- Longevity
- Overall look and visual appeal
- Cost effective
- Automated, providing efficient production schedules
- Stackable

## Specifications and Planning Tips

### Suggested Page Counts

Minimum:

- 56 pages (28 sheets) on 60# white offset
- 76 pages (38 sheets) on 70# gloss text

Maximum:

- 736 pages (368 sheets) on 60# white offset
- 1,036 pages (518 sheets) on 70# gloss text

Larger book sizes exceeding 12" in width or maximum suggest page counts can be printed at HBP and sent to a partner specialty binder for finishing if required.

### Considerations

- UV or aqueous coating your cover to protect the printed surface to prevent scuffing during the binding process
- Shrinkwrapping books individually if books will be held in inventory or shipped mailed to prevent damage.