

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT LABELS & RIBBONS FOR YOUR ZEBRA PRINTER



A Practical Guide from Millennium Technologies

The label coming out of your printer might look simple. Choosing the right one isn't always as straightforward.

Label material, adhesive, environment, durability requirements, printer technology, and ribbon selection can all affect print quality and performance.

The right combination helps create labels that print clearly, scan reliably, adhere properly, and withstand the conditions they'll encounter throughout their useful life.

Use this guide from Millennium Technologies to identify the factors that matter most when selecting supplies for your Zebra printers.



1. START WITH THE APPLICATION

Before choosing a label, consider exactly how and where it will be used.

Ask:

- What will the label be applied to?
- How long does it need to remain readable?
- Will it be used indoors or outdoors?
- Will it encounter heat, cold, moisture, chemicals, or abrasion?
- Does it need to be removable or permanent?
- Will the barcode need to remain scannable for an extended period?

A shipping label that only needs to survive a few days has very different requirements from an asset label expected to remain in place for years.

TIP: Start with the application, not simply the label size you're currently using.

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT LABEL MATERIAL

Your operating environment plays an important role in material selection.



Synthetic Labels

When greater durability is required, synthetic materials can provide additional resistance to demanding conditions.

Consider for:

Applications involving moisture, abrasion, outdoor exposure, chemicals, or longer-term identification.

The best material isn't necessarily the most durable option available. It's the material that provides the appropriate performance for your specific application.



Paper Labels

Paper can be a practical choice for many general-purpose, indoor applications where exposure to moisture, chemicals, or extreme conditions is limited.

Consider for:

Shipping, receiving, general identification and other short- to medium-term applications.

3. DON'T OVERLOOK THE ADHESIVE

A label is only useful if it stays where it belongs.

When evaluating adhesive requirements, consider:



Surface: Is the label being applied to cardboard, plastic, glass, metal, or another material?



Texture: Is the surface smooth, rough, curved, or irregular?



Temperature: What is the temperature when the label is applied, and what temperatures will it experience afterward?



Duration: Does the label need to be permanent, or should it eventually be removed?



Environment: Will moisture, chemicals, dirt, oils, or other contaminants be present?

Matching the adhesive to the application can help prevent lifting, peeling, and premature label failure.

4. DETERMINE WHETHER YOU NEED A RIBBON

Your printer's technology and application requirements will determine whether a ribbon is needed.



Direct Thermal

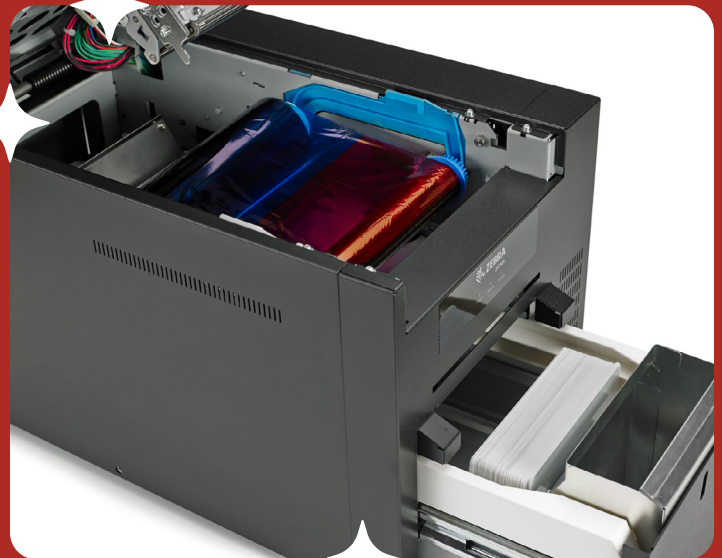
Direct thermal printing creates the image directly on specially treated label material and does not require a ribbon.

It can be well suited for applications where labels have a relatively short lifespan and aren't exposed to conditions that can cause the image to fade or degrade.

Thermal Transfer

Thermal transfer printing uses a ribbon to create the printed image.

It's commonly considered when greater durability, longer label life, or resistance to environmental conditions is required.



5. MATCH THE RIBBON TO THE APPLICATION

For thermal transfer printing, selecting the appropriate ribbon is just as important as choosing the label.

The label material, required durability, and operating environment should all be considered together when selecting a ribbon.

Depending on the application, different ribbon formulations can provide varying levels of print quality, durability, abrasion resistance, and resistance to environmental conditions.

Remember: Labels and ribbons work as a system. Selecting them together can help you achieve better overall performance than treating each as a separate purchase.



6. PROTECT YOUR PRINthead, TOO

Choosing Zebra Certified Supplies can provide benefits beyond the label itself.

When you commit to using Zebra Certified Supplies exclusively with qualifying Zebra desktop or industrial printers, you can take advantage of the Zebra Printhead Protection Program.

Through PHP, replacement printheads are provided 100% free of charge for the lifetime of your printer.

Zebra's high-quality, minimally abrasive media helps protect printheads against premature wear, while the program provides added protection against future replacement costs.

It's one more reason to think of your printer, labels and ribbons as a complete system rather than individual components.

Zebra Certified Supplies + Printhead Protection = Greater Peace of Mind

7. THINK BEYOND THE LABEL ITSELF

Once you've identified the right supplies, there's another important question:

How will you keep them in stock?

Your purchasing strategy can have an impact on cost, storage, inventory levels, and your ability to keep operations running without interruption.

Zebra offers multiple supplies programs to address different types of demand.



Predictable Label Demand?

Consider the Label Blanket Order Program

Lock in pricing and establish predictable deliveries for recurring supply requirements.

Best suited for: Businesses with consistent, predictable demand.

Want Volume Pricing with Flexible Delivery?

Consider the Label Make & Hold Program

Take advantage of volume discounts while maintaining greater flexibility over when your supplies are shipped.

Best suited for: Businesses that want bulk pricing but have unpredictable shipment dates.



Managing a Complex Supply Chain?

Consider the Supplies Management Program

Take a more fully managed approach to label supplies and help reduce the risk of running out of critical materials.

Best suited for: Enterprise organizations with complex requirements or multiple locations.

FIND YOUR RIGHT FIT

Choosing supplies shouldn't come down to guesswork.

Millennium Technologies can help you evaluate your application, identify the appropriate Zebra labels and ribbons, and determine a supplies purchasing strategy that aligns with your operational requirements.

From the material on the label to the way it reaches your facility, we'll help you build a smarter approach to Zebra Supplies.

Ready to get started?

Contact Millennium Technologies to review your Zebra label and ribbon requirements.



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