

# Matchup: Direct-to-Card vs. Retransfer Printing

Which printing technology is best for your application?

There are two types of card printing technologies: direct-to-card and retransfer. Direct-to-card printers print your card image directly to the card surface. Retransfer printers print your card image to retransfer film that gets fused to the card surface.

Why is it important for you to understand the difference? Here are five ways the technology affects you!

## Direct-to-Card



Direct-to-Card Sample

## Retransfer



Retransfer Sample

Printhead warranty	Because the printhead comes into direct contact with cards, it can be fairly easily damaged, leading to expensive repairs that may not be covered under warranty.	Most retransfer printers come with a lifetime printhead warranty. Printheads are less likely to be damaged because the printhead never comes into direct contact with the cards.
Card durability	<p>An average PVC card will last 3-5 years, even less if the card is subjected to daily swiping in a mag stripe reader or other harsh conditions.</p> <p><b>TIP:</b> Extend the life of a card printed with a direct-to-card printer by purchasing one that has lamination capability.</p>	<p>When retransfer film is applied to the card surface, the image is "sandwiched" between the card and film, protecting the image from wear and making cards more durable.</p> <p><b>TIP:</b> Extend the life of a card printed with a retransfer printer even further by purchasing one that has lamination capability.</p>
Card types	Direct-to-card printers are capable of printing on standard plastic cards. Cards that include embedded technology or specialty cards, such as key tag cards, are not recommended.	Retransfer printers can print on virtually any type of plastic card, including cards with uneven surfaces such as smart cards, proximity cards, and key tag cards.
Print quality	Today's direct-to-card printers have a very good print quality.	Retransfer printers have an even better print quality. Images are more crisp and vibrant. Plus, you'll need a retransfer printer to exact color match printed colors.
Over-the-edge printing	Direct-to-card printers leave an unprinted border around the edge of your cards because they are not capable of printing over-the-edge. If you print too close to the edge, you'll risk damaging the printhead.	Retransfer printers can print over-the-edge of cards, as well as right up to the edge of a smart chip and over the entire surface of key tag cards.
Ready to get started?	<a href="#">Shop Direct-to-Card Printers</a>	<a href="#">Shop Retransfer Printers</a>



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