

Press changeover and first-off colour approval

How a flexo line is taken from the end of one job to an approved first-off on the next, without a second make-ready. **Nobody signs their own first-off** – the approval is always a second pair of eyes, and that rule is the whole reason this procedure exists.

Owner Sam Ortiz, press hall manager

Applies to Lines 2 and 3, kraft and film

Typical time 38 minutes

Next review 1 June 2026

Measure	Target	Tolerance	If it falls outside
Solid ink density, spot	1.45	± 0.07	Adjust impression first; re-pull before touching ink
Registration, station to station	0.00 mm	± 0.15 mm	Stop and re-seat the plate; do not correct on the fly
Delta E against retained sample	0.0	≤ 2.0	Call the planner; the customer is asked before the run
Web tension, running	2.4 kg	± 0.3 kg	Re-thread rather than trim; film is less forgiving than kraft

Set by – operator

First-off approved by – second operator

Time approved

Before the line stops

Pull the next job’s pack. Plate set, anilox schedule, approved proof and the retained sample from the last run of that SKU. If the retained sample is missing, say so before the line stops rather than after – a changeover without a reference is a changeover you cannot close.

Check the ink against the schedule. Two kilos in hand per station plus the wash-up allowance. Ink brought from the store during a changeover is the single most common cause of a second make-ready on this hall.

Changeover

- 1 Wash up in station order, not in order of convenience. Station one to station six, each washed and proved clear before the next is opened. Working out of order is how solvent finds its way onto a clean deck.
- 2 Change plates with the deck locked out. The lockout stays on until every plate is seated and the sleeve is torqued. Two people, one calling and one turning.
- 3 Set the anilox to the schedule, then check the schedule against the proof. The schedule is right more often than the proof, but when they disagree the job stops here and the planner is called. Do not average them.
- 4 Run the web up to 60 metres a minute for the first pull. Slower than production, fast enough that registration means something. Pull three impressions and discard the first two.

Do not adjust two variables between pulls. Impression, then colour, then registration – one change, one pull, one reading. Two changes at once give a good sheet nobody can reproduce on Monday.

First-off approval

- 5 Read the first-off under D50, never under the hall lights. Densitometer on the solid patches, eye on the vignette. Record the readings on the job ticket as you take them, not from memory afterwards.
- 6 Compare against the retained sample, not the proof. The proof shows what was sold; the retained sample shows what the customer has been receiving. Where they differ, the retained sample wins and the difference is noted on the ticket.
- 7 Get the second signature before the line goes to speed. Any trained operator on shift other than the one who set the job. A first-off approved by one person is a first-off that gets re-run.
- 8 File the approved sheet with the ticket and retain a second copy. One goes in the job bag, one in the retained file. The retained copy is what the next changeover reads.

If the first-off fails

- 9 Stop at two failed pulls, not at five. Two consecutive first-offs outside tolerance means something upstream is wrong – a plate, an anilox, or the ink itself – and further pulls only spend substrate proving it. Call the planner and the shift lead together.
- 10 Write down what you changed before you change it back. The ticket is the only record of what was tried, and the next changeover on that SKU reads it. A job that ran second time without an explanation is a job that will fail again.

Substrate is not free. A stopped line costs less than 400 metres of printed kraft. If you are unsure whether to stop, stop.