

# Screen Making Terms & Acronyms Cheat Sheet

Your guide to better setups and fewer mistakes!

## A. Art and prepress terms

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>DPI (dots per inch)</b>	A measure of image resolution in the artwork file. Higher DPI generally supports sharper edges, especially for fine detail.
<b>LPI (lines per inch)</b>	How many halftone lines appear per inch. Higher LPI requires tighter control of mesh, exposure, and contact.
<b>Halftone</b>	Dots arranged to simulate gradients. Halftones demand consistent coating, accurate exposure, and good contact.
<b>Positive (film positive)</b>	The opaque black image that blocks UV light during exposure. "Good positive" usually means dense blacks and clean edges.
<b>Film density / Dmax</b>	How well the black areas block UV light. Low density can cause weak stencils and edge issues.
<b>Registration</b>	How multiple colors align. Inconsistent stencil thickness, mesh tension, or under/over exposure can affect register.
<b>Trap</b>	A small overlap between colors to reduce gaps from registration variation.
<b>Moiré</b>	An unwanted pattern caused by interference between mesh angle and halftone angle. Often solved by changing angles or mesh.

## B. Screen and mesh terms

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>Mesh count</b>	Threads per inch. Higher mesh holds finer detail and deposits less ink. Lower mesh lays down more ink.
<b>Thread diameter</b>	Thickness of the thread. Two meshes can share the same count but print differently if the thread diameters differ.
<b>Open area (%)</b>	How much "open space" exists in the mesh. More open area generally means more ink flow.
<b>Mesh tension (N/cm)</b>	How tight the mesh is stretched. Proper tension supports sharp prints, easier registration, and improved stencil durability.
<b>Knot / weave</b>	How the mesh is constructed. This can influence coating behavior, detail, and print consistency.
<b>EOM (emulsion over mesh)</b>	How much stencil thickness is built above the mesh on the print side. EOM impacts ink deposit, edge definition, and durability.

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## C. Coating and stencil-building terms

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>Emulsion</b>	The light-sensitive coating that forms your stencil.
<b>Diazo</b>	A sensitizer type commonly used to make dual-cure emulsions. Known for good latitude and durability.
<b>Photopolymer (SBQ)</b>	A “ready-to-use” emulsion chemistry (often called SBQ). Typically fast exposure and consistent results when dialed in.
<b>Dual-cure</b>	Emulsion chemistry that combines photopolymer properties with diazo sensitizer benefits. Often chosen for durability and latitude.
<b>Solids content</b>	How much actual “stencil material” is in the emulsion. Higher solids can help build thickness more efficiently.
<b>Viscosity</b>	How thick or “flowy” the emulsion feels. Viscosity affects coating behavior and consistency, but it is not the same as solids.
<b>Scoop coater</b>	The coating tool. The edge profile and sharpness impact coat quality and repeatability.
<b>1 over 1, 2 over 1, etc.</b>	Coating method shorthand. Example: “2 over 1” usually means two coats on the print side and one coat on the squeegee side (shops may describe this differently, so confirm how your team uses the terms).
<b>Wet-on-wet</b>	Applying multiple coats without fully drying between coats. Can build thickness efficiently, but demands controlled drying.
<b>Streaks</b>	Visible lines in the coating. Common causes include poor degreasing, damaged coater edge, contamination, or wrong coating speed.
<b>Fish eyes</b>	Small round “craters” where emulsion pulls away. Often caused by oil, silicone, or residue on the mesh.
<b>Pinholes</b>	Tiny open spots in the stencil after washout. Often caused by dust, poor degreasing, or bubbles during coating.
<b>Drying cabinet / dry box</b>	A controlled environment for drying screens. Consistent drying is one of the biggest factors in consistent exposure.

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## D. Exposure terms

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>UV (ultraviolet light)</b>	The light that hardens the emulsion.
<b>Exposure unit</b>	Equipment that delivers UV light in a consistent way.
<b>Lamp type (metal halide, LED, etc.)</b>	Different sources behave differently. The key is consistent output and consistent timing.
<b>Contact</b>	How tightly the film/positive is pressed against the emulsion. Better contact equals sharper detail.
<b>Vacuum frame</b>	A system that pulls the film tight to the screen during exposure to improve contact.
<b>Underexposure</b>	Stencil is too soft or weak. Symptoms include slimy washout, edge breakdown, and short run life.
<b>Overexposure</b>	Stencil is too hard to wash out. Symptoms include closed detail, lost halftones, or stubborn "scum."
<b>Exposure latitude</b>	How forgiving an emulsion is when your exposure time is not perfect.
<b>Step wedge (exposure calculator)</b>	A tool to dial in exposure. If you want repeatability across shifts and seasons, this is one of your best friends.
<b>Post-exposure</b>	Exposing the screen again after washout to further harden the stencil. Often improves durability.

## E. Washout, stencil quality, and troubleshooting terms

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>Washout</b>	Rinsing the unexposed emulsion away to open the image.
<b>Scum</b>	A thin film of emulsion that remains in open areas. It can block ink flow and cause printing issues.
<b>Haze</b>	A "ghost" image in the mesh after reclaim. Haze is not always visible until you hold the screen to the light.
<b>Sawtoothing</b>	Jagged edges on what should be smooth lines. Often linked to mesh selection, film quality, contact, or exposure.
<b>Edge definition</b>	How clean the stencil edges are. A major driver of perceived print quality.
<b>Stencil durability</b>	How well the stencil survives production. Influenced by emulsion choice, exposure, ink type, and reclaim habits.

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## F. Reclaim and chemistry terms

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>Reclaiming</b>	The full process of returning a screen to usable mesh: remove ink, remove emulsion, remove haze, degrease.
<b>Ink degradant</b>	Chemistry used to break down ink for easier removal.
<b>Emulsion remover (stripper)</b>	Chemistry designed to remove the stencil.
<b>Haze remover</b>	Chemistry designed to remove stain and ghost images.
<b>Degreaser</b>	Used to remove oils and residue to help emulsion wet out and bond to the mesh.
<b>Pressure washer</b>	Common washout and reclaim tool. Used correctly it saves time. Used incorrectly it can drive haze into the mesh or damage it.
<b>DDU (drum dispensing unit)</b>	A dispensing system that delivers chemistry consistently and reduces waste.

## G. Equipment acronyms you will hear a lot

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>CTS (computer-to-screen)</b>	A system that images the stencil digitally, typically using inkjet or wax to create the "positive" directly on the screen.
<b>LTS (laser-to-screen)</b>	A system that images the stencil with lasers, typically paired with an exposure workflow. Often discussed for speed, repeatability, and labor reduction.
<b>Auto coater / automatic coater</b>	A machine that coats screens consistently at scale.
<b>Exposure calculator</b>	A step-test tool used to confirm correct exposure.
<b>RIP (raster image processor)</b>	Software that converts artwork into output for film, CTS, or other imaging systems.

## Quick clarifications (commonly mixed up)

Term / Acronym	Plain-English definition
<b>Solids vs viscosity</b>	Solids is "how much stencil you are building." Viscosity is "how the emulsion behaves while coating." They are related, but not the same.
<b>Haze vs leftover emulsion</b>	Haze is stain in the mesh. Leftover emulsion is stencil residue. They look similar, but they respond to different chemistry.
<b>Underexposure vs poor film contact</b>	Both can cause soft edges and lost detail. One is about time/energy, the other is about contact quality.

Want help translating this to your shop? Share what inks you print (water-based, plastisol, UV), your typical mesh ranges, and how you expose and reclaim. A knowledgeable Chromaline representative can help you match terminology to a repeatable process and recommend a stencil + chemistry setup for your workflow.