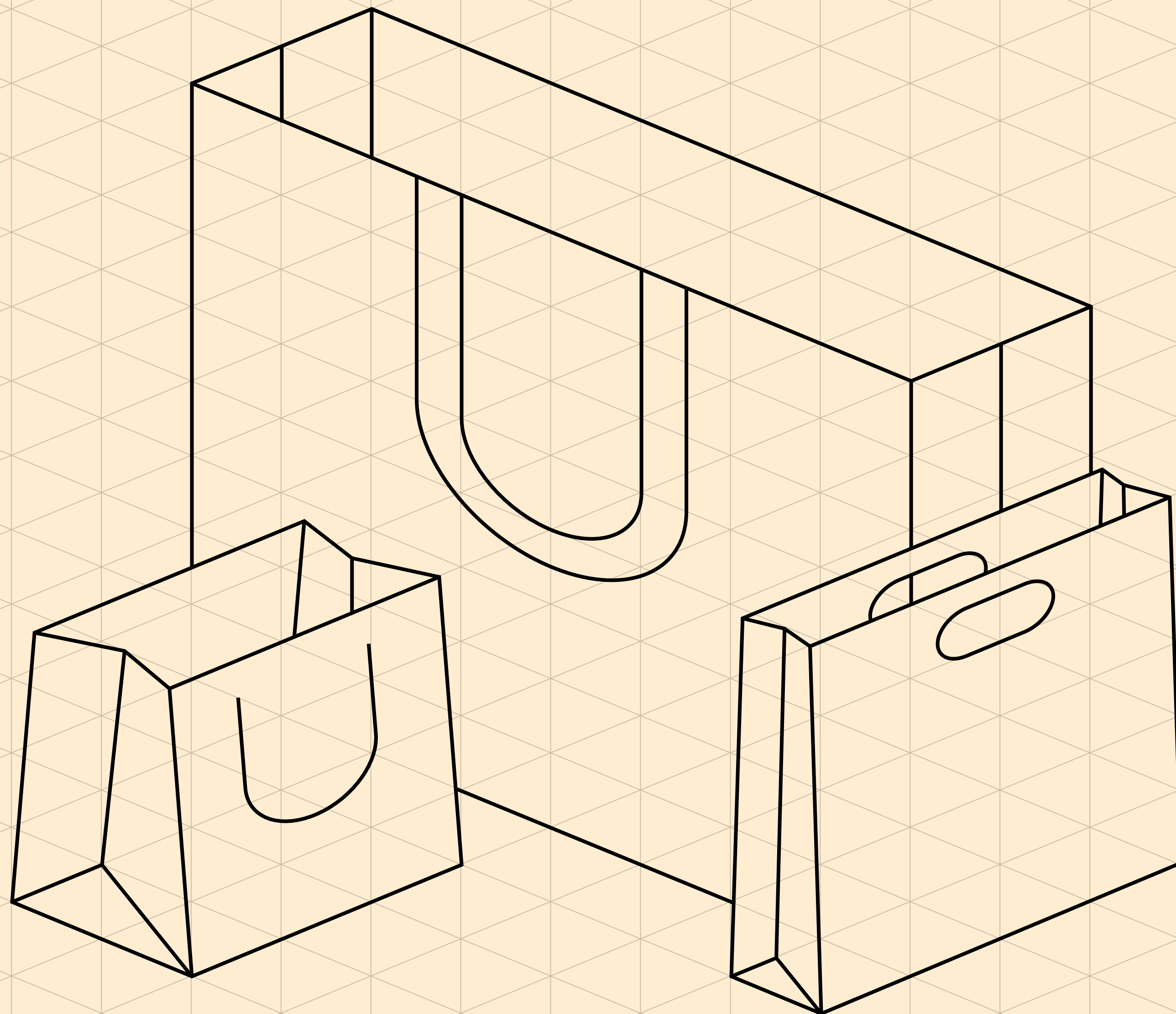


HOW TO SPECIFY PAPER CARRIER BAGS

Your 4-step help guide to custom paper carrier bag styles, materials, print processes and embellishments.



PROGRESS

PACKAGING > PARTNERS

STEP 1

CHOOSE THE BEST PAPER CARRIER BAG STYLE FOR YOUR BRAND

With over 25 years of experience in luxury packaging manufacture, Progress specialises in working with designers, brand teams and production managers to produce custom paper carrier bags and branded paper shopping bags for sectors including fashion, beauty, jewellery, homeware, gifting and lifestyle sectors.



Custom carrier bags for
Enlighten, incorporating
long ribbon handles.



Custom retail paper bag for
Toast, made with a folded top
and die-cut handle.

We manufacture a wide range of bespoke paper carrier bags and custom shopping bags to suit every requirement. Each element of the bag can be customised – from size and structure to materials and handles – including paper, rope and ribbon options. This flexibility allows every custom printed retail carrier bag to be tailored precisely to your brand identity and retail operations.

Our luxury carrier bag production process combines premium finish with sustainable integrity. We produce high-quality paper carrier bags using eco-conscious FSC® materials, alongside plastic-free handle solutions including twisted and flat paper handles. This ensures your custom packaging is fully recyclable.

We can also produce retail carrier bags using more responsible finishing options such as water-based varnishes, soy-based inks and foil-free detailing that deliver strong visual impact while maintaining sustainably-considered production standards. From initial specification through to manufacture and global delivery, Progress support brands of all sizes at every stage of their retail carrier bag production journey.

If you're looking to produce custom paper carrier bags or branded shopping bags in larger quantities, or in smaller MOQs, our team can advise on the most suitable format, materials and finishes for your project.

GETTING STARTED

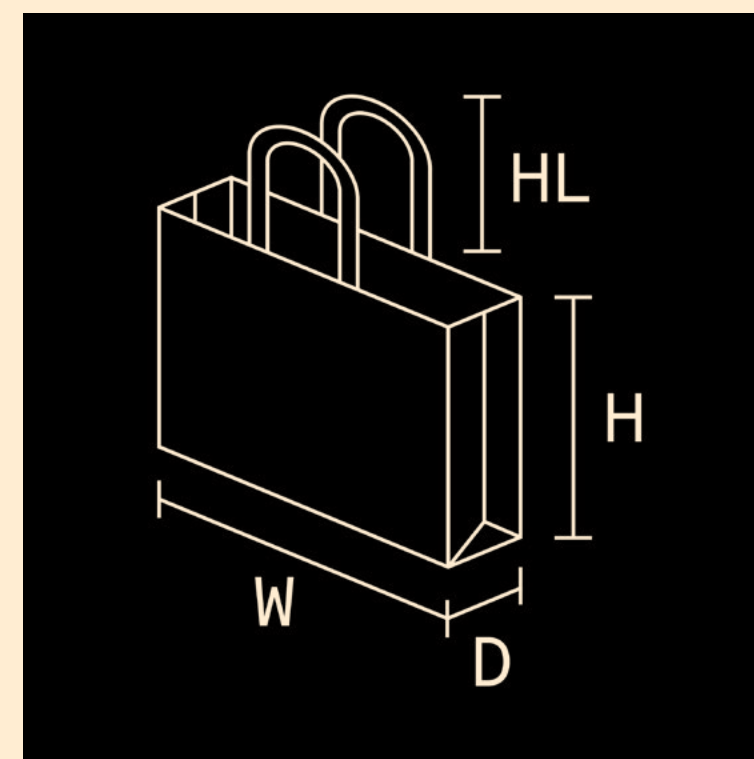
At the early stages of specifying your custom paper carrier bag or bespoke retail shopping bag, it's important to establish the correct format, size and construction. Key aspects to consider include; what the bag will carry, how it will be used in-store, and how it should reflect your brand positioning.

Whether you require luxury paper shopping bags for premium retail, durable branded carrier bags for everyday use, or sustainable carrier bags for eco-conscious brands, getting these fundamentals right ensures efficiency in production and consistency across every order.

MEASURING YOUR BAG

Start by measuring the products your paper carrier bag needs to hold, considering whether items will sit upright or flat. From here, define the width (W), height (H) and depth (D) of the bag to ensure optimal fit and usability.

Handle length (HL) is also an important consideration – whether for hand carry or shoulder use – as this impacts both functionality and customer experience. Accurate sizing ensures efficient production, reduces material waste and guarantees consistency across production runs.



Our team can help you define the most efficient bag size and specification to optimise both cost and performance in production.

SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUR BAG

Sustainability is central to modern paper carrier bag design and production. At Progress, we help brands specify eco-friendly carrier bags and sustainable paper shopping bags using responsibly sourced materials and recyclable constructions.

Avoiding plastic-based laminations and opting for FSC® certified paper stocks ensures your custom carrier bags are fully recyclable. We also offer plastic-free handle options and low-impact printing processes such as water-based varnishes and soy-based inks to reduce environmental impact without compromising on quality or brand presentation.

Speak to our team to explore sustainable retail carrier bag options that align with your brand's environmental goals.



RETAIL CARRIER BAG HANDLES

Selecting the right handle is key to both the functionality and perceived quality of your custom paper carrier bag or branded shopping bag.

LONG HANDLE

Designed for shoulder carry, long handles typically range from 50-90 cm. Ideal for heavier items or larger retail purchases, they provide comfort and practicality.



SHORT HANDLE

Short handles (20-40 cm) are designed for hand carry. Ideal for lightweight products, gifting and premium retail environments, offering a clean and refined aesthetic for luxury paper carrier bags.



TWIST PAPER HANDLE

Twisted paper handles are a durable, cost-effective and fully recyclable option for custom paper carrier bags. Available in natural kraft or custom dyed colours, they offer strength while maintaining a sustainable profile.



PAPER RIBBON HANDLE

Paper ribbon handles provide a premium, eco-friendly finish to retail carrier bags. Paper ribbons can also be custom dyed to match your brand colour, and are available in variety of widths.



GROSGRAIN RIBBON HANDLE

Grosgrain ribbon handles provide a premium, luxury finish to paper carrier bags. Popular options include satin and herringbone finishes, all of which can be custom dyed to match your brand colour. Grosgrain ribbons can also be custom printed with your branding or design for a highly refined, detail-led finish.

ROPE HANDLE

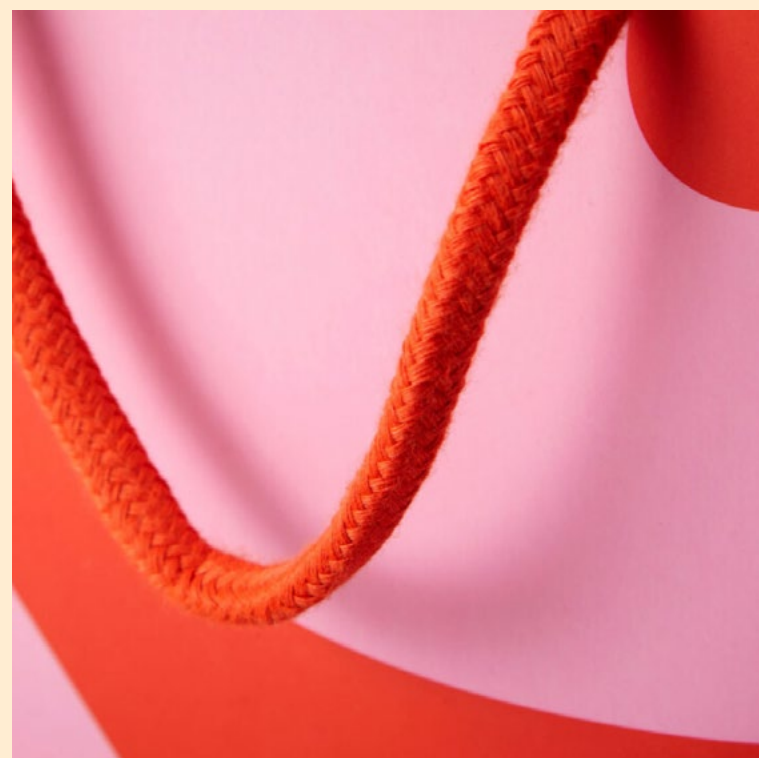
Rope handles offer a strong and high-quality feel, ideal for luxury retail packaging and bespoke paper bags. Available in natural cotton, polyester or paper rope, these handles can be produced in a wide range of standard colours or custom dyed to align with your brand.

DIE-CUT HANDLE

Die-cut handles are created by cutting directly into the bag structure, offering a clean, minimal aesthetic often used in modern retail packaging. Reinforced or folded tops can be added to improve durability.



White grosgrain paper bag handles for Wildsmith Skin.



CARRIER BAG GUSSET STYLES

Choosing the most suitable base gusset format is key to creating the right look and feel of your luxury paper carrier bag. There are 2 common styles most suitable for custom branding opportunities of your paper bag.

Premium paper carrier bag for Yauatcha, featuring an intricate laser-cut and deco base gusset.



DECO BASE GUSSET

The deco base gusset, or Japanese inverted base as it is sometimes referred to, removes the need for creasing or folding to one of the faces of the bag when folded flat. This style of gusset is best for paper carrier bags where a 'clean look' is required across both faces of the bag.



STANDARD BASE GUSSET

The standard base gusset is the most common style used for creating a lay-flat style of carrier bag. This format of base delivers a 'clean look' to one side of the bag, with a horizontal crease approx 70mm (depth) across the other side.



STEP 2

SELECT A MATERIAL FOR YOUR CUSTOM PAPER CARRIER BAG

Selecting the right material is a key part of paper carrier bag production, influencing durability, sustainability and overall brand perception.

At Progress, we manufacture custom paper carrier bags and branded shopping bags using a wide range of materials including coated, uncoated and coloured stocks. Material selection should reflect your brand positioning, intended usage and sustainability goals.

We offer extensive stock options alongside bespoke material solutions, including custom colour matching and specialist finishes, ensuring your retail packaging stands out in-store.

If you're unsure which material is right for your custom carrier bags, we can guide you through the most suitable options for your product and brand.



Premium paper carrier bags for The Luxe Bureau, made from custom coloured heavy-weight paper.

COATED PAPERS

Gloss, silk and matt coated papers offer a smooth surface that enhances print clarity and colour vibrancy. These materials are ideal for printed paper carrier bags where strong branding and detailed graphics are required.

UNCOATED PAPERS

Uncoated paper stocks provide a natural, tactile finish while remaining fully recyclable. These materials are ideal for eco-friendly retail carrier bags and brands prioritising tactility and sustainability.

COLOURED PAPERS

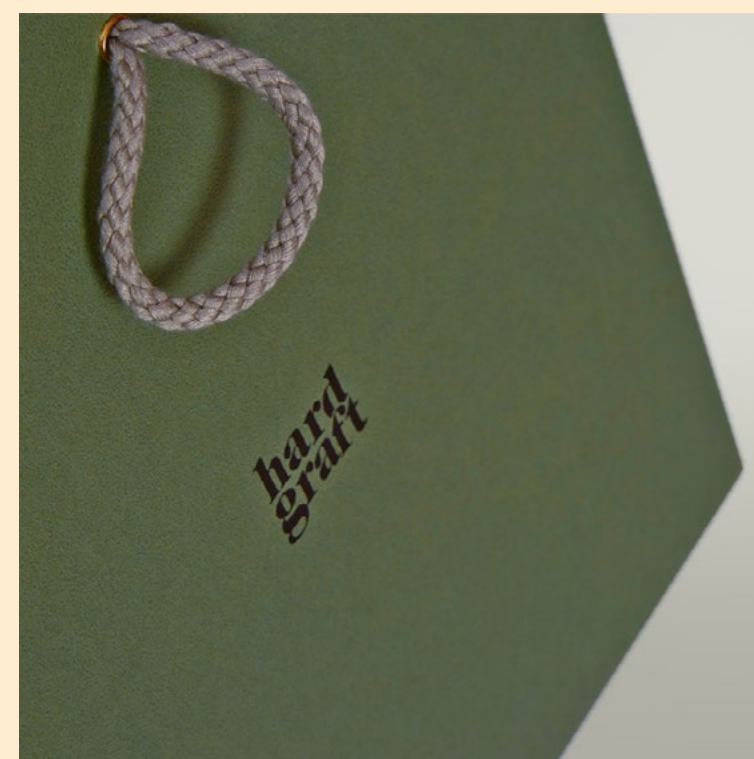
Coloured paper stocks offer a premium finish with inherent colour throughout the material. This reduces the need for heavy print coverage while delivering a refined aesthetic for bespoke paper bags and luxury shopping bags.

CUSTOM PAPERS

Custom paper options allow for complete creative control. Embossed textures, specialist finishes and bespoke colour matching can be developed to align perfectly with your brand identity, creating unique custom paper carrier bags.

ECO PAPERS

FSC® certified and recycled paper stocks are a staple of sustainable retail packaging. These materials ensure responsible sourcing while maintaining the strength and quality required for luxury paper shopping bags and branded carrier bags.



STEP 3

SPECIFY PREMIUM PRINT PROCESSES & FINISHING TECHNIQUES FOR YOUR CUSTOM PAPER CARRIER BAG

Specifying your custom paper carrier bag or branded shopping bag involves balancing materials, printing processes and finishing techniques to achieve the desired brand outcome while remaining commercially viable.

We help brands navigate the most suitable print processes for paper carrier bag printing, ensuring quality, consistency and efficiency.

Get in touch with our team to discuss the best printing and finishing options for your custom retail paper bags.



Luxury paper carrier bag
for Harrods, featuring gold
foil-embossed branding.

PRINTING PROCESSES

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LITHO PRINTING

Lithographic printing is ideal for high-quality, full-colour paper carrier bags. It delivers excellent detail and colour accuracy, making it perfect for printed paper shopping bags with complex designs. Litho printing becomes cost-effective MOQ's from 500 units upwards.

CUSTOM BRAND COLOUR MATCHING

We can match your exact brand colours across custom retail carrier bags and printed paper shopping bags using litho printing processes, ensuring consistency across your wider packaging range.

SOY & VEGETABLE-BASED INKS

These environmentally friendly inks reduce VOC emissions and support fully recyclable packaging, making them ideal for sustainable paper carrier bag production.



FINISHING TECHNIQUES

Choosing the right finishing technique allows you to elevate your custom paper carrier bags while balancing cost, quantity and sustainability. Finishes should be selected based on both functional performance and desired brand perception.

FOIL BLOCKING

Foil blocking adds a premium, luxury finish using metallic or pigment foils applied with a heated die. Available in a wide range of colours and finishes – including gold, silver and custom tones – this process enhances brand perception and visual impact for luxury retail bags.

EMBOSSING / DEBOSSING

Embossing creates a raised, three-dimensional effect by pressing artwork into the paper surface to make your design stand out. Debossing presses a design into the surface of the paper to create an indented, or sunken effect. Both are effective on bespoke carrier bags for logos and typography – particularly when also foil-blocked – adding subtle depth and tactility to your bag design.

DIE CUTTING

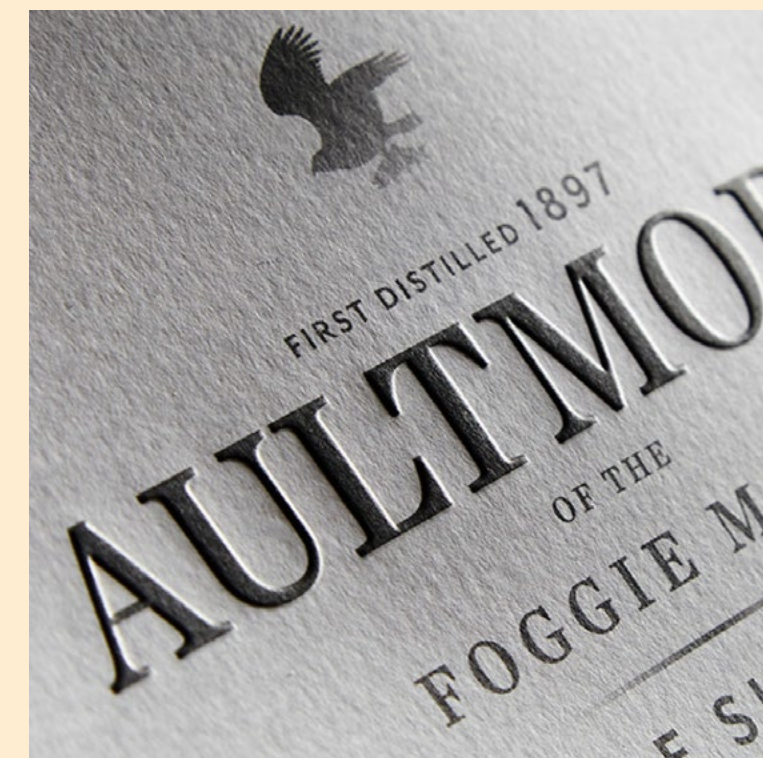
Die cutting allows for custom shapes, cut-outs and structural details within paper carrier bags. This can be used to create distinctive shopping bag designs or enhance branding through unique visual features.

LAMINATION

Lamination adds durability and a refined surface finish, available in gloss, matt or soft-touch options. It enhances longevity and protects printed paper carrier bags from wear.

SPOT UV

Spot UV highlights specific design elements with a high-gloss varnish, adding contrast and depth to logos and key branding details on paper carrier bags.





Paper carrier bag for Vaara,
with embossed logo.



Custom paper bag for
Joonbyrd, printed litho in
2-colours with gold foil.

STEP 4

ADD CLOSURES & EMBELLISHMENTS

Embellishments and additional features can enhance both the functionality and perceived value of your custom paper carrier bags and branded shopping bags. These details help create a more considered and premium retail experience.



Luxury paper carrier bag for Finematter, with a black satin ribbon tie closure.

RIBBON TIE

Ribbon ties add a luxury, tactile detail to retail carrier bags, enhancing presentation and reinforcing a premium brand feel.

STICKER CLOSURE

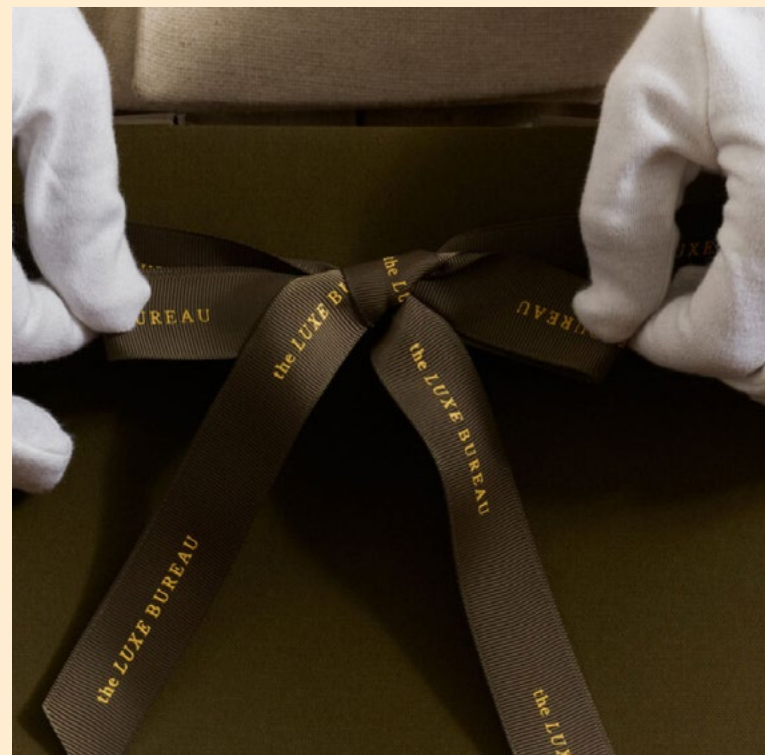
Custom printed stickers can be used to seal or enhance retail bags, adding an additional branded touchpoint. Options include foil blocking, embossing or custom shapes. Stickers can be supplied individually or on rolls for efficient application.

LINING TISSUE

Progress can produce custom tissue paper colour matched to your brand and printed with your design. Tissue adds protection while enhancing the unboxing experience, creating a more elevated retail moment inside your carrier bag.



Custom paper carrier bag for Hard Graft, incorporating a printed tissue paper.



CHECK- LIST

START PLANNING YOUR PAPER CARRIER BAGS

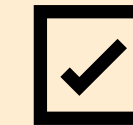
Creating your paper carrier bags will require some early organisation and planning. This checklist will help you to assess and consider all the main aspects before moving into production.

TYPE & SIZE



- Decide on dimensions based on what the bag will hold, from lightweight retail items to heavier products.
- Choose the most suitable gusset base style: deco or standard.
- Select long or short handle length.

MATERIALS



- Select the right bag material: coated, uncoated, coloured, custom and eco papers.
- Select handle material: twist paper, paper ribbon, grosgrain ribbon, rope handle and die-cut handles.

BRANDING



- Plan how your logo and artwork will appear on the bag.
- Explore print methods such as litho, embossing and foiling.
- Add embellishments: ribbon ties, sticker closures or lining tissue.

SUSTAINABILITY



- Use materials that are FSC®, recycled, or responsibly sourced.
- Choose water-based or eco-certified inks and dyes.
- Avoid plastic coatings or trims that reduce recyclability.

BUDGETING



- Set your budget early and decide where to prioritise spend – fabric quality, print detail, or volume.
- Compare material and print options to balance cost and quality.
- Speak to your supplier about ways to optimise production quantities.

PRODUCTION & TIMINGS



- Allow time for sampling, testing, and approvals before full production.
- Confirm lead times and delivery schedules with your supplier.
- Plan ahead for storage, shipping, and future reorders.

TALK TO OUR PACKAGING EXPERTS

**START PLANNING YOUR PAPER
CARRIER BAGS**

We can help you with all aspects of your custom packaging, from advising on the design, specifying and budgeting, prototyping and engineering, printing and production, to fulfilment and worldwide delivery – we've got it all covered.

Progress have over 25 years experience across all aspects of luxury packaging and understand what's involved in producing high specification complex projects.

GET IN TOUCH

contact@progresspackaging.co.uk

+44 (0)1484 608 600

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