DTF HEAT TRANSFERS

PRESS SETTINGS CHEAT SHEET

Verified starting points for 22 fabrics — compiled from leading film and press manufacturers' guides and cross-checked against independent sources, July 2026. Start from the baseline below, adjust per fabric, and always test one garment first.

155–160°C	12–15 s	Med-firm	Warm
TEMP	TIME	PRESSURE	PEEL

The baseline, start to finish: pre-press the garment 3–5 s > position the transfer print-side down, film up > press > peel > cover with parchment and re-press 3–5 s to lock it in.

Everyday fabrics

Where 90% of jobs live — cotton and its close relatives.

FABRIC	TEMP °C	TIME	PRESSURE	PEEL	TIP
100% cotton	155–160	12–15 s	Med-firm	Warm	The most forgiving fabric — baseline spec as-is; heavyweight tees can take up to 165°C.
Cotton hoodie / fleece	155–160	15–18 s	Firm	Warm to cold	Pressing pillow inside the body to level seams; keep artwork bold — fine detail blurs on fuzzy pile.
Sweatshirt / loopback	155–160	15 s	Med-firm	Warm	Treat as cotton with a pillow; the re-press is what makes it survive the wash on textured loopback.
Cotton–poly blend (50/50)	145–155	12–15 s	Medium	Warm (cold on darks)	More polyester = more dye-migration risk — stay at the bottom of the range on dark blends.
100% polyester	140–150	12–15 s	Medium	Cold on darks	Dye halos on dark poly (reds, royals) can appear 12–24 h later — QC the next day before shipping.
Sports jersey / mesh	140–150	12–15 s	Medium	Cold on darks	Solid panels only — DTF can't bridge mesh holes; wicking coatings can block adhesion, so test first.
Tri-blend	140–150	12–15 s	Medium	Warm	Rayon content scorches above ~150°C; thin heathered fabric — don't over-press.
Linen	160–165	15–18 s	Firm	Warm	Coarse weave shows through the print — bold simple designs; pre-press hard to flatten wrinkles.

Tough & textured

Thick, coarse or curved — these want more dwell, a pillow, and patience.

FABRIC	TEMP °C	TIME	PRESSURE	PEEL	TIP
Denim	155–165	15–20 s	Firm	Warm	Pressing pillow to clear rivets and seams; thick fabric needs the longer dwell time.
Canvas / tote bags	155–165	15–20 s	Firm	Warm to cold	Board or pillow inside the bag so seams don't rob pressure; never skip the pre-press.
Terry towelling	150–160	10–15 s	Medium	Cold	Small bold designs on the flattest area; heavy pressure crushes the pile — wash-test first.
Structured caps	132–146	10–15 s	Medium (cap)	Cold	Curved cap press + no-melt heat tape; drop to ~132°C on foam-front trucker caps.
Hi-vis workwear	145–150	12–15 s	Medium	Cold	Fluorescent dyes migrate above 150°C; keep the print 2–3 cm clear of reflective tape.
Wool blends	140–150	12–15 s	Light-med	Cold	Blends only — pure wool can felt or scorch; Teflon sheet plus a hidden-area test.

Heat-sensitive — handle with care

Everything here stays at or below 150°C with light pressure, a cover sheet, a cold peel, and a test on a hidden area before production.

FABRIC	TEMP °C	TIME	PRESSURE	PEEL	TIP
Nylon	120–135	10–15 s	Light-med	Cold (wait 30–60 s)	PTFE cover sheet always; if the transfer lifts, wipe the water-repellent coating with IPA and re-test.
Nylon jackets / windbreakers	120–135	10–15 s	Light-med	Cold	Pillow to bridge zips and seams; keep the re-press to 5–8 s through a Teflon sheet.
Spandex / lycra activewear	130–150	10–15 s	Light	Cold	Press the garment relaxed, never stretched; avoid waistbands and high-stretch zones — prints crack there.
Softshell jackets	143–149	10 s	Firm	See tip	Coating plus dye migration — use a blocker-type transfer, or test standard DTF on a spare panel first.
Faux leather / PU	130–140	12–15 s	Light-med	Cold	PU can bubble above ~140°C — scrap-piece test first; short, protected re-press only.
Genuine leather	130–145	10–15 s	Light-med	Cold	Wipe with isopropyl alcohol first — natural oils repel the adhesive; bring heat up gradually.
Waterproof / coated fabrics	120–135	10–15 s	Light-med	Cold	Only DWR-sprayed shells bond — membranes (Gore-Tex) and rubber coatings won't; hidden-area test.
Silk & delicate synthetics	130–140	10–12 s	Very light	Cold	Small logo-size prints only; silk shows press marks — rayon/viscose max 150°C with a warm peel.

The 10 rules that save prints

01 Set the temperature to your film first, the fabric second — the spec supplied with your transfers always overrides any chart, including this one.

02 Pre-press every garment for 3–5 seconds — driving out moisture is the single biggest adhesion-failure preventer there is.

03 The second press (3–10 s through a cover sheet) is non-negotiable for wash durability: parchment gives a matte finish, Teflon gives gloss.

04 When in doubt about peel, go cold — it bonds stronger on every tricky fabric; the only cost is a minute of patience.

05 Heat-sensitive rule of thumb: nylon, softshell, leather, silk, spandex and hi-vis all stay at or below 150°C, light pressure, cover sheet, cold peel, test first.

06 Dye-migration halos often appear 12–24 hours after pressing — check dark polyester and hi-vis batches the next day, not straight off the press.

07 Press displays lie: they're commonly 5–15°C off. Verify the actual platen temperature with heat strips or an IR thermometer before blaming the transfer.

08 No pressure gauge? Close the press on a sheet of paper — it should slide out with firm resistance, not tear free or lock solid.

09 Don't fold, stack or bag garments for at least 60 seconds after pressing — the adhesive is still setting and prints can ghost.

10 Aftercare: wait 24 hours before the first wash, wash inside-out at up to 40°C, no direct ironing on the print.

Troubleshooting quick hits

THE PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	THE FIX
Transfer won't stick / lifts with the film	Moisture in the garment, or too little pressure	Pre-press 3–5 s, check pressure with the paper test, then press again before fully peeling.
Cracks after the first wash	Skipped the second press, or washed too soon / too hot	Re-press 3–5 s through parchment; wait 24 h before washing, inside-out at up to 40°C.
Colour halo around the print on dark polyester	Dye migration — too much heat for the fabric	Drop to 140–150°C, peel cold, and QC the batch the next day (halos appear late).
Edges lifting on jackets / outdoor fabrics	Water-repellent (DWR) coating blocking the adhesive	Wipe the press area with isopropyl alcohol, test a hidden spot, and peel cold.
Scorch marks or a shiny press box on the garment	Too hot, or no cover sheet	Lower the temperature for that fabric and always cover with parchment or Teflon.
Print looks matte when you wanted gloss	Parchment gives matte — that's normal	Do the second press through a Teflon sheet instead: Teflon = gloss, parchment = matte.

READY TO PRESS?

Transfers certified by Intertek for over 50 washes. A5 sheets from £2.04, metre gang sheets from £10.38 (exc. VAT) — order before 11am (Mon–Fri) for same-day dispatch. New to DTF? Grab the **free sample pack** at futuretransfers.co.uk.

Settings are starting points, not guarantees: every press, film batch and garment differs. Always follow the spec supplied with your transfers and test one item before a production run. © Future Transfers 2026 — futuretransfers.co.uk