MACHINES PLUS ACADEMY | PRACTICAL PRINTING GUIDE

How to Choose the Right Heat Press

A practical guide to platen size, pressure, opening style, production volume and the features that matter when a heat press becomes production equipment.

FREE TO READ. FREE TO DOWNLOAD. NO PAYWALL.
We share practical knowledge because better information leads to better decisions, better operators and better print businesses.

Prepared by Machines Plus
Australian printing equipment, installation, training and support
machinesplus.com.au/academy
Updated October 2026 | Edition 1 | Guide MPA-HTP-001

The short answer

The right heat press is the one that gives you repeatable heat, repeatable pressure and the working area you actually need at the speed your production requires.

A press is not just an accessory to the printer. In DTF, sublimation and heat-transfer work, the press is part of the production process. A poor or inconsistent press can ruin good printing.

Machines Plus field note	Do not buy only by platen size or headline temperature. Two 40 x 50 cm presses can behave very differently in pressure consistency, recovery time, ergonomics and production speed.

Start with what you are pressing

Application	What usually matters most
DTF / HTV garments	Even pressure, repeatable time, easy garment loading, enough platen area for common artwork sizes.
Dye sublimation garments	Even heat and pressure, clean surface, workflow that reduces fabric movement and ghosting.
Large panels / soft signage	Large platen, heat uniformity, pressure consistency and adequate power supply.
Caps	Dedicated curved platen and pressure geometry.
Mugs / tumblers	Dedicated mug/tumbler heating elements matched to the product diameter and length.

Common press styles

Style	Best understood as
Clamshell	Compact and quick to load; upper platen pivots down. Good where floor space matters.
Swing-away	Upper platen moves away from the lower platen, giving more open access and keeping heat away from the operator while loading.
Slide-out drawer	Lower platen moves toward the operator for easier garment positioning and safer loading.
Dual station	Two lower platens let the operator load one station while the other is pressing; useful for higher production.

Eight things to compare

☐	Usable platen size - large enough for your common artwork, not simply the biggest available.
☐	Heat uniformity - cold edges or hot spots create inconsistent transfers.
☐	Pressure consistency - the press should apply repeatable pressure across the image area.
☐	Temperature recovery - a production press must recover quickly between cycles.

☐	Opening style and ergonomics - consider how many garments an operator will load in a shift.
☐	Automation - auto-open, electric operation, timers or dual stations can reduce fatigue and missed cycles.
☐	Power requirements - confirm the electrical circuit, plug and current draw before delivery.
☐	Serviceability - parts, support and the ability to verify temperature matter over the life of the press.

Electric vs pneumatic

Pneumatic presses can provide consistent pressure and are common in production environments, but they require a suitable compressor and air system. Modern electric presses can deliver automated closing/opening without compressed air, reducing installation complexity. The right choice depends on the model, pressure requirement and workflow.

Bigger is not automatically better

A very large platen can consume more power, take longer to recover and put unnecessary heat around small jobs. A platen that matches the majority of your work is often more productive. If you regularly switch between garments, caps and drinkware, dedicated presses can be better than forcing one machine to do everything.

Questions before buying

- What percentage of your work is DTF, sublimation, HTV, caps or mugs?
- What is the largest image you routinely press?
- How many pieces per hour do you need at peak?
- Will one operator load and unload all day?
- Do you have the required electrical supply or compressed air?
- Do you need a slide-out or swing-away design because of garment seams, thick items or operator comfort?

Production test	Before committing to a production press, test the type of transfer and garment you actually sell. A press that looks good in a showroom still has to work with your garment seams, artwork size and operator rhythm.

References & further reading

Epson SureColor F1070 User Guide - heat press use for DTG and film workflows
https://files.support.epson.com/docid/cpd6/cpd64429/helpcontents.html

Machines Plus - Heat Presses
https://www.machinesplus.com.au/heat-presses23c71967

Important This guide provides general educational information. Always follow the current instructions supplied by the manufacturer of your printer, ink, film, powder, heat press and substrate. Settings and maintenance requirements vary by product.

Machines Plus Academy
Practical printing knowledge. Free to read. Free to download.
machinesplus.com.au/academy