



 real thread

# Custom T-shirt Buyer's Guide

Version 1.0

**Feel  
confident  
about your  
custom  
t-shirts.**



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# Intro- duction

Section 1

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## **Let's face it: ordering custom t-shirts for the first time can be overwhelming.**

If you're not well versed in t-shirt brands, printing styles, or fabric types, it's too easy to get lost in t-shirt jargon and default to ordering solely based on price-point, because, what's the difference?

But this is exactly how you end up with boxy, ill-fitting t-shirts that get buried in the bottom of your drawer, never to see the light of day.

This custom t-shirt buyer's guide will serve as your go-to reference for all things t-shirt related. We'll cover every t-shirt category—from recommended brands to fabric types to money saving tips—so that you're fully equipped to order the perfect custom t-shirts.

Let's jump in!



love &



# Fabric Types 101

Section 2

**The fabric makeup of the t-shirt you choose is going to have a major effect on the look as well as the feel of your t-shirt.**

Because we specialize in printing with premium water-based inks, the ink actually dyes the fabric of the t-shirt, rather than sitting on top. This means that each ink reacts differently with each different fabric type, so it's helpful to understand how this process works.

When thinking of fabrics, there are essentially three basic categories: 100% cotton, polyester/cotton blends, and tri-blends (cotton/polyester/rayon). In terms of feel, you can generally think of them in this order:



100% Cotton



Polyester / Cotton Blend



Tri-blend

Soft

Softer

Softest

Printed with our SuperSoft  
(waterbased and discharge) ink

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This isn't to say there aren't exceptions. The brand you decide to use will play a big role in softness and quality as well (more on that to come), but generally, this order holds true.

The other thing to consider when picking the fabric type of the shirt is what you want the print to look like. Like we said, different ink types react differently with each t-shirt.

When printing with our **SuperSoft** ink, the ink actually removes the color of the cotton in the fabric, replacing it with the color of the ink. The agent in the ink (known as discharge) only removed the color in the cotton though, meaning that 100% cotton t-shirts lend themselves to bright, vibrant prints, while blends tend to naturally have a cool, vintage effect.

There are, however, ways to achieve a brighter print on a blended t-shirt. Using our **Bold Ink**, we're able to achieve a bright print, regardless of the fabric type. The print itself will have a little bit of a feel to it, but will still be considerably softer than the industry standard.

# Product Recommendations

Section 3

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**If you're new to custom t-shirts, the question of which shirt to print on can be daunting.**

There are literally thousands of garment options available to you! To help, we put together a short list of some of the most popular t-shirts we print on, and a quick overview of each.

## Overview

Next Level Apparel 3600  
Canvas 3001  
Alternative Apparel 1070  
Next Level Apparel 6210  
American Apparel BB401  
Canvas 3413  
Next Level Apparel 6010

## Grades

-  Soft
-  Softer
-  Softest



## **Next Level Apparel 3600** [↗](#)

■ Soft ⚡ Lightning available

### **Overview**

This 100% cotton t-shirt from Next Level Apparel is a great introduction to premium t-shirts. This t-shirt's slim fit and an affordable price point have made it one of the most popular t-shirts we print on. If you're new to custom t-shirts and looking for a standard unisex tee to print on, we highly recommend it.

### **Features**

- Fashion-fit
- 100% cotton
- Tearaway tags
- Lightning available
- 4.3 oz

### **Details**

Tag: Tearaway      Origin: Nicaragua

Sizes	XS	SM	MD	LG	XL	2XL	3XL	4XL
Width	17.5"	19"	20.5"	22"	24"	26"	28"	30"
Length	27"	28"	29"	30"	31"	32"	33"	34"

**Price: \$7.19/shirt** (one color, one location, 100 t-shirts)



## **Canvas 3001** [↗](#)

■ Soft

### **Overview**

This 100% cotton crewneck from Bella+Canvas is a t-shirt staple. Featuring a slim fit, huge amount of color options, and fabric made out of Bella+Canvas' signature ring spun cotton, this t-shirt is worth considering for every t-shirt project.

### **Features**

- Fashion-fit
- 100% ring spun cotton
- Eco-friendly
- 4.2 oz

### **Details**

Tag: Tearaway

Origin: India

Sizes	XS	SM	MD	LG	XL	2XL	3XL	4XL
Width	27"	28"	29"	30"	31"	32"	33"	34"
Length	16.5"	18"	20"	22"	24"	26"	28"	30"

**Price: \$7.19/shirt** (one color, one location, 100 t-shirts)

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## Alternative Apparel 1070 [↗](#)

■ Soft

### Overview

If you're looking for a high-end, sustainably produced t-shirt, this 100% cotton crewneck from Alternative Apparel is your answer. Featuring super soft cotton, double needle stitching, and tearaway tags, this shirt is bound to be worn for years and years.

### Features

- Fashion-fit
- 100% ring spun cotton
- Tearaway tags
- Double Needle Stitching
- Eco-friendly
- 4.1 oz

### Details

Tag: Tearaway

Origin: India

Sizes	XS	SM	MD	LG	XL	2XL	3XL
Width	33"	36"	39"	42"	45"	47.5"	49.5"
Length	26"	29"	32"	35"	38"	41"	44"

Price: \$7.89/shirt (one color, one location, 100 t-shirts)



## **Next Level Apparel 6210**

 Softer  Lightning available

### **Overview**

This Next Level crewneck, stitched together with their premium CVC cotton/polyester blend, is a super soft crowd favorite. With its great fit, soft feel, and low price point, the Next Level 6210 is a great option for a soft t-shirt with a somewhat vintage feel.

### **Features**

- Fashion-fit
- Polyester / Cotton Blend
- Tearaway tags
- Lightning available
- 4.3 oz

### **Details**

Tag: Tearaway

Origin: India

Sizes	XS	SM	MD	LG	XL	2XL	3XL	4XL
Width	17.5"	19"	20.5"	22"	24"	26"	28"	30"
Length	27"	28"	29"	30"	31"	32"	33"	34"

**Price: \$7.28/shirt** (one color, one location, 100 t-shirts)



## American Apparel BB401 [↗](#)

■ Softer

### Overview

The American Apparel BB401 is the original premium custom t-shirt. Any time you wanted a t-shirt that was bound to make people notice, this was the choice. After a couple of tumultuous years, American Apparel is back to producing these beauties as good as ever.

### Features

- Slim-fit
- Polyester / Cotton Blend
- 3.7oz

### Details

Tag: Woven	Origin: USA					
Sizes	XS	SM	MD	LG	XL	2XL
Width	16.5"	18"	20"	22"	24"	26"
Length	28"	29"	30"	31"	32"	33"

Price: \$10.60/shirt (one color, one location, 100 t-shirts)



## **Canvas 3413** [↗](#)

 Softest

### **Overview**

When it comes to softness, this tri-blend from Bella+Canvas is the *crème de la crème*. Trust us, once you put this t-shirt on, you will not want to take it off. With a modern, slim fit, crew neck and Bella+Canvas' signature tri-blend material, choosing to print on this shirt is one of the best choices you can make.

### **Features**

- Slim, retail fit
- Tri-blend material
- Eco-friendly
- 3.8oz

### **Details**

Tag: Tearaway

Origin: India

Sizes	XS	SM	MD	LG	XL	2XL	3XL	4XL
Width	16.5"	18"	20"	22"	24"	26"	28"	30"
Length	27"	28"	29"	30"	31"	32"	33"	34"

**Price: \$9.58/shirt** (one color, one location, 100 t-shirts)



## **Next Level Apparel 6010** [↗](#)

■ Softest ⚡ Lightning available

### **Overview**

This soft, breathable, and all-around great t-shirt from Next Level is one you should consider for any t-shirt project. If looking for a nice, vintage look to your t-shirts, you'd be hard-pressed to find a shirt that looks, fits, and feels better than this one. Available in 13 different colors, you'll definitely want to check this one out.

### **Features**

- Fashion-fit
- Tri-blend
- Tearaway tags
- Lightning available
- 4.2oz

### **Details**

Tag: Tearaway

Origin: India

Sizes	XS	SM	MD	LG	XL	2XL	3XL
Width	16.75"	18.25"	19.75"	21.25"	22.75"	24.75"	26.75"
Length	26.5"	27.5"	28.5"	29.5"	30.5"	31.5"	32.5"

Price: **\$9.33/shirt** (one color, one location, 100 t-shirts)

# Money Saving Tips

Section 4

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**No matter what, t-shirts are going to be an investment; particularly if you're looking for a t-shirt that your customers, prospects, or coworkers will actually enjoy wearing. That being said, there are a handful of money-saving tips that first-time t-shirt buyers might not be aware of.**

## **Pick a value t-shirt.**

There are loads of different t-shirt manufacturers out there. Like we mentioned earlier, there are literally thousands of products available -- some coming at heftier price points than others. Whether it be for special reasons like Made-in-the-USA, or organic fabric, t-shirts that look and feel comparable can have sizable price differences. Brands like Bella+Canvas and Next Level Apparel are great options for an affordable t-shirt that feels high-end.

## **Keep color count low.**

Given the nature of screen printing, the more colors that are in your design, the higher your cost will be. For each color and print location, a new screen needs to be created, requiring additional time for setup. So keeping your color count low can end up saving you a good bit of money.

**Use price breaks to your advantage.**

When buying t-shirts in bulk, you always want to be aware of the different price breaks and whether or not you're close to one. Say your company has 45 employees. You could order 45 t-shirts, but if you were to add on five more, you'd hit the 50 piece price break, which would actually end up making your order less expensive overall, and you'd have five extra shirts to give out to friends or customers.

**Avoid rush fees.**

Having your ducks in a row early on can save you a substantial amount. Avoiding rush charges by staying ahead of the game is probably the easiest way to ensure you don't pay a premium for your t-shirts.

We know mistakes happen and sometimes you're caught in a bind -- that's why we have our 2-day turnaround service, Lightning -- but on the whole, being prepared and getting your order in on time will save you loads of money.

At Real Thread, our standard turnaround time is 10 business days, plus transit time. And of course, when you are in a bind, we have a variety of rush options to make sure you get your t-shirts when you need them.

# Getting Started

Section 5

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**Getting a t-shirt order started at Real Thread is incredibly easy! All you'll need are:**

- Your t-shirt design (.ai or .psd files preferred)
- The t-shirt style you'd like to print on
- Your size breakdown

And of course, our team would love to assist! From design advice to t-shirt recommendations, we're here to guide you through every step of the way.

**Ready to start a t-shirt project?**

**Get in touch! Or head here to get your order started online.**



