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YOUR CUSTOM PRINTING & PACKAGING PARTNER FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES



Custom Printed Scratch-Off Code Labels for Promotions, PINs, and Prize Codes

Product Image













Details

Custom printed scratch-off code labels keep a coupon, PIN, or prize code unreadable under an opaque, coin-removable layer until the recipient reveals it. The right build depends on what the hidden data is worth. Low-stakes reveals can use applied stickers. Redeemable codes need opacity, tamper evidence, and unique serials, all proven on samples before production.

Who Buys Custom Scratch Off Labels, and for Which Jobs? [↑](#)

Buyers fall into four groups, and each group needs a different level of protection. The largest group is promotion teams at retailers, DTC brands, restaurants, real estate offices, salons, and dealerships. They turn a discount into a reveal on package inserts, counter handouts, direct mail, and door hangers. One use-case page sums up the reasoning: "[A coupon code in an email gets skipped. A scratch-off card in the bag or the shipping box gets opened.](#)"^[1]

The second group is gift card, prepaid, utility, and activation-code issuers, along with personalization bureaus. For them, the label is a security component. One PIN-label supplier describes the gift card trade as a market "[where every concealed PIN is a target](#)^[2]." Any attempt to lift and replace the label must therefore leave visible damage. Bilingual prompts such as "Raspe Aqui" are common on cross-border card faces.

The third group is HR managers, sales leaders, and nonprofits running bonus reveals or fundraising incentives. Their main risk is a leaked prize file. That is why suppliers emphasize [unique control numbers on every piece and careful handling of prize files](#)^[3]. The fourth group is wedding and small-event hosts ordering tiny runs. This page focuses on business programs where the hidden data has real value.

Why Do Cheap Scratch-Off Stickers Fail Promotions? [↑](#)

The problem usually appears after launch. Buyers of low-cost foil dots report coverage so thin that "[even after we applied 2 stickers we could still see through to the image](#)^[4]." Other buyers hit the opposite failure. One seller tested four products before putting any on customer items. The seller said the worst one "[was hard to scratch off... and it left smear marks all over the paper](#)^[5]."

Each of these failures costs more than the label itself:

- A see-through panel exposes the prize before anyone buys.
- A coating that is too hard makes customers dig. A guide on PIN covers warns that rushing the reveal can "[gouge the digits underneath, which turns a loaded gift card into a worthless piece of cardstock](#)^[6]."
- Cash-value codes can lead to legal disputes. In a federal case over scratch game cards costing more than \$700,000, one expert testified the cards could be compromised "[with a readily available light source](#)^[7]." Another expert estimated the coating's shelf life at one year or less.
- Weak prize design backfires. If everyone reveals "Try Again" or 5% off, customers "[feel tricked or unimpressed](#)^[8]."

The industry also lacks a shared benchmark. One patent filing notes that scratch-off opacity levels "[are not well-defined within the industry](#)^[9]."

The fix is to specify by risk, not by color. Tell us what sits under the panel, what surface it goes on, and how it travels. We then scope the build and prove opacity, scratch behavior, and adhesion on samples before any production run. MOQ, unit price, and lead time are quoted per artwork after sampling, not promised in advance.



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What Is a Custom Printed Scratch-Off Code Label? [↑](#)

It is a label or panel that keeps printed information unreadable until someone removes an opaque coating with a coin or scratcher. Two structurally different products share the name:

- **Printed panel:** layers are applied directly to the item. The stack is substrate, printed content, protective varnish, and a scratch-off coating that is [normally latex-based](#)^[10]. On paper, printers usually add [a base coat that stops scratch ink from penetrating the fibers](#)^[11].
- **Applied label:** a pressure-sensitive sticker with a scratch layer, placed over content that was printed or written earlier.

The difference shows up under attack. The same panel guide states that labels "do not provide the same level of tamper resistance as screen-printed latex coatings." Card security labels close that gap by adding slits and an aggressive adhesive or destructible acetate, so any peel attempt fractures the panel. Lottery tickets go much further. They use [a heavy black light-blocking layer, a varnish seal over the numbers, and multiple elastomer layers](#)^[12]. A promotional label should borrow only the features that match its risk.

How Do You Specify a Label That Hides Codes Reliably? [↑](#)

Step 1: Grade the risk of the hidden data

Fun reveals with no redemption value can use an applied label. Codes, prizes, PINs, and balances need more. Inprint's checklist for secure panels says the panel must hide content under bright light, resist peeling, lifting, and tape tests, and come off in one clean pass. If the code unlocks money, ask for tamper-evident construction and unique serials, not just "opaque silver."

Step 2: Set size, color, and readability

The dominant retail size is a 1 in (2.54 cm) round. Larger panels can carry short phrases but cost more per unit. Follow these readability rules:

- Make hidden text bold and high-contrast, ideally black on white.
- On printed panels, allow [about 2 mm of coating overlap around the target area^{\[13\]}](#), because latex spreads slightly beyond the drawn shape.
- Avoid thin script fonts. The Ohio lottery [reprinted a ticket in a clearer font^{\[14\]}](#) after players complained the digits were hard to read.
- Gold panels need extra light testing, because [gold usually covers less well than silver^{\[15\]}](#).

If you handwrite codes under an applied label, use permanent markers or gel pens. Ballpoints and stamps leave raised marks that show through the sticker. One maker also recommends [a coin or scratcher rather than a fingernail^{\[16\]}](#).



Step 3: Match substrate, adhesive, and surface

For printed panels, coated stock of 200–400 gsm is the working range, and promo cards use 300–400 gsm, per the Inprint guide. Uncoated paper absorbs latex and is not suitable. PVC, OPP, and other films need an adhesion trial on the final material.

For applied labels, temperature and surface energy decide adhesion. Security-label guidance links residue problems to [application below 0°F \(−18°C\) or above 120°F \(49°C\)](#)^[17], and to high-energy surfaces such as glass or bare stainless steel. The same guidance recommends applying at +25°F or warmer (about +70°F is ideal) and cleaning the surface with 90%+ isopropyl alcohol first. Any code with value needs a permanent adhesive. A 2026 buyer guide quotes a manufacturer warning that "[cheap scratch off labels peel due to temperature changes or tampering](#)"^[18].



Step 4: Preflight the artwork file

Before the file goes to press, check four things:

- The scratch area is built as [its own mask layer, with the shape marked in the file](#)^[19], and includes the 2 mm overlap.
- No saturated color blocks sit under the panel, since they can show through from the back or side.
- Overprinted prompts such as "Scratch here" use 100% black.
- For variable data, the code list and prize table are locked, two people have proofed them, and the first, middle, and last pieces match the control file.



Step 5: Respect the production sequence

A printed panel goes through these stages in order: base print, release or lottery seal, optional varnish or laminate, scratch ink and curing, die cutting, and sampling. Each layer must dry before the next is applied.

Ink maker Printcolor advises [curing pre-print varnish for at least 24 hours and keeping stacks at or below 35°C^{\[20\]}](#), because the ink is thermoplastic. It lists UV energy of 100–200 mJ/cm² for silver and 400–600 mJ/cm² for gold.

One printer advertises [registration within ±0.3 mm^{\[21\]}](#). Treat a figure like that as a written acceptance clause, not an industry standard. Rushed schedules are a common cause of adhesion failure, which is why lead time is quoted only after sampling.



Step 6: Apply, cure, and pilot

Applied labels need firm pressure and time. The My Scratch Offs listing cited above asks for about 48 hours of adhesive cure before scratching or mailing. Before you release a campaign, run a pilot:

1. Apply labels to the real stock and wait for the adhesive to cure.
2. Scratch at least four pieces, using a coin, a fingernail, and a plastic scratcher.
3. Record any residue, digit damage, or odor.

Which Format Fits Your Program: Printed Panel, Applied Label, or Security Label? [↑](#)

Build	Tamper resistance	Moisture durability	Best fit	Verify at sample
Printed latex/UV panel on card	High when layered	Low-medium on paper	Coupons, prize and member codes at volume	Bright-light opacity, clean one-pass scratch
Applied silver/gold label	Lower; can lift whole	Depends on adhesive and surface	Inserts, invitations, mail, short runs	See-through, cure time, scuffing
PET/PVC/BOPP film code label	Medium-high	High	PINs, device codes, cosmetics, logistics	Ink adhesion on film, code legibility
Holographic + scratch composite	High	High	Recharge codes, high-value seals	Serial match, hologram alignment
Security label with slits	High; fractures on peel	Depends on facstock	Gift and prepaid card PINs	Peel test leaves visible damage

This table ranks structures, not brands. Public pricing varies widely:

- Made-in-China listings show [custom scratch-off labels at about US\\$0.02-0.15 with a 1,000-piece](#)

[MOQ^{\[22\]}](#).

- A 2026 Alibaba comparison puts [most professional makers' MOQs at 1,000–10,000 units^{\[23\]}](#), with standard cards estimated at \$0.12–\$0.18 each for 10,000 pieces.
- One US stock-sticker brand [sells from 100 pieces^{\[24\]}](#) but requires about 150,000 units for custom shapes or colors.

These are seller listings, not audited prices. Your quote will depend on size, number of layers, variable data, and security features.

What Should You Check Before Approving Production? [↑](#)

Check	Method	Pass criterion
Opacity	Bright light from front, back, and an angle	No hidden text or code visible
Scratchability	Coin, fingernail, plastic scratcher	Clean in one pass, digits intact, minimal residue
Adhesion	Tape test and handling	Prize area cannot lift whole; no dusting
Overprint	Visual read of panel prompt	Legible, ideally 100% black
Stack storage	Pile temperature check	At or below 35°C; no pressure marks
Variable data	First, middle, and last pieces vs. control file	No duplicate or missing codes
Transit	Arrival photos	No scuffed or exposed panels

Agree on these criteria in writing at the sample stage. The approved sample then becomes the reference for every batch. Final values depend on the ink's current data sheet and the test results on your own stock.



To compare quotes fairly, every request should state the same fields:

Field	What to state
Size and shape	Diameter or W×H; round, rectangle, or custom die
Substrate	Coated paper (gsm), PVC, PET, or BOPP
Panel color and coverage	Silver, gold, white, or black; easy-scratch or anti-peek
Base coat	Required on paper and absorbent stock
Adhesive	Permanent or removable; acrylic or rubber; target surface
Variable data	Codes, serials, QR; file format and control numbers
Delivery format	Sheets or rolls; core size; labels per roll
Sample tests	Opacity, scratch, adhesion, tape, odor

If a field is missing, the resulting quotes cannot be compared. Sheet versus roll delivery alone changes how the labels get applied and what packaging they need.

Transit is a hidden failure point. One print-quality review traces sticker scratches to [stacking, roll winding, work surfaces, and tight packaging](#)^[25], not printing. Specify interleaving for sheets, controlled winding tension for rolls, and no panel-to-panel friction in cartons. Photograph shipments on arrival, and agree in advance who is responsible for transit damage.

Security programs should also train staff on [visual tamper cues](#)^[26]: uneven coating, misregistered panels, lifting corners, and gloss that differs from the rest of the batch. For reorders, keep the approved file, the signed sample, and one unused retained piece so the next run matches.



Which Rules and Standards Actually Apply? [↑](#)

In the US, a promotion that combines prize, chance, and consideration can be treated as an illegal lottery. That is why sweepstakes guidance centers on offering a ["no purchase necessary" entry route](#)^[27]. Get legal review before you print prize odds or redemption terms.

Lottery standards do not cover promotional labels. The [WLA-SCS:2024 security standard](#)^[28] governs

lottery operators and their ticket suppliers. A promotional label should never be marketed as "WLA compliant."

Material rules apply only in specific cases:

- **Food contact:** if the adhesive becomes the food-contact surface of a label applied to food, [21 CFR 175.125](#)^[29] limits which pressure-sensitive adhesives are allowed.
- **Children's products:** a removable coating on a children's product counts as a surface coating. [16 CFR 1303 bans coatings with more than 0.009% lead](#)^[30], a limit in force since August 14, 2009. Adult promotional labels should not claim CPSIA compliance unless they have been tested.

Key Takeaways: What Matters Most for Your Order? [↑](#)

- **No shared industry definition of scratch-off opacity exists, so test it yourself** — patent EP3471846A1 ([Source](#))
- **Printed panels need coated stock and coating overlap** — 200–400 gsm stock, about 2 mm overlap ([Source](#))
- **Curing and storage limits protect adhesion** — varnish cure of at least 24 h, stacks at or below 35°C ([Source](#))
- **Children's products need lead-tested coatings** — 0.009% lead limit since 2009-08-14 ([Source](#))
- **Lotteries dominate scratch-off ink demand; security labels are a small niche** — US\$531.42M market in 2025, security labels about 5.01% (paid research estimate) ([Source](#))
- **Professional MOQs typically run in the thousands** — 1,000–10,000 units per public 2026 comparison ([Source](#))

Ready to Quote Your Scratch-Off Code Labels? [↑](#)

Reliable scratch-off code labels come from matching the build to the value of the hidden data, then proving opacity, scratch behavior, adhesion, and code accuracy on samples before the run. Applied stickers work for fun reveals. Redeemable codes and PINs justify layered panels or tamper-evident security labels. **Send your artwork, the type of hidden data, the target surface, and an estimated quantity to request a sample-based quote.**

^[1]Mr. Scratch Off: Retail and e-commerce scratch-off use cases.[↵](#)

^[2]Scratch Off Systems: Tamper-evident security labels for gift card PINs.[↵](#)

^[3]Scratch Off Guide: Control numbers and prize-file handling.[↵](#)

^[4]Amazon.ca reviews: Buyers report see-through foil stickers.[↵](#)

^[5]Amazon review: Hard-to-scratch label leaving smears, February 2023.[↵](#)

^[6]4OVER4 guide: Removing PIN covers without damaging digits.[↵](#)

^[7]CaseMine: Emirat AG v. High Point Printing security testimony.[↵](#)

^[8]Promo Printing Group: Prize structure in scratch-off promotions, 2025.[↵](#)

- ^[9]EP3471846A1: Patent noting undefined scratch-off opacity levels.[↵](#)
- ^[10]Inprint Group: Scratch-off panel types and tamper resistance, 2026.[↵](#)
- ^[11]SIMSA: Base coating for scratch-off printing on paper.[↵](#)
- ^[12]Lottery USA: Multilayer lottery ticket security, 2026.[↵](#)
- ^[13]Inprint latex guide: Stock weights, overlap, and overprint guidance.[↵](#)
- ^[14]News 5 Cleveland: Ohio lottery reprint over an illegible font.[↵](#)
- ^[15]Printcolor: Scratch-off ink range and coverage notes.[↵](#)
- ^[16]My Scratch Offs: Pen choice, cure time, and scratching tools.[↵](#)
- ^[17]NovaVision: Temperature and surface guidance for label adhesion.[↵](#)
- ^[18]Just Scratch It: 2026 buyer guide on label peeling.[↵](#)
- ^[19]SDS Print Finishing: Mask layer requirements for scratch-off latex.[↵](#)
- ^[20]Printcolor TDS: Cure times, UV energy, and stack temperature, 2022.[↵](#)
- ^[21]Inprint production page: Self-stated ± 0.3 mm registration.[↵](#)
- ^[22]Made-in-China: Public custom scratch-off label price listings.[↵](#)
- ^[23]Alibaba: Scratch card price and MOQ comparison, 2026.[↵](#)
- ^[24]My Scratch Offs site: Stock quantities and custom-order threshold.[↵](#)
- ^[25]The Print Reviewer: Where stickers get scratched in transit.[↵](#)
- ^[26]4OVER4 FAQ: Visual signs of scratch-off label tampering.[↵](#)
- ^[27]Priiize: Sweepstakes compliance and no-purchase-necessary rules.[↵](#)
- ^[28]World Lottery Association: WLA-SCS:2024 Code of Practice.[↵](#)
- ^[29]21 CFR 175.125: Pressure-sensitive adhesives as food-contact surfaces.[↵](#)
- ^[30]16 CFR 1303: CPSC lead limit for surface coatings.[↵](#)
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Product Option