

# The Art of Laminating- Tips to cold laminating - Part I

**Understand that laminating and using a laminator is a learning process. It is more or less a-learn-as-you go situation and any piece of information can help ease the pain of the learning curve.**

By [Daniel A. Keegan](#)

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**It is hopeful that either the manufacturer or those in which the laminator was purchased would provide some form of training, at least the basics, to help you get up and running. Also, it is doubtful that any individual, including myself, knows everything there is to know about laminating and all the various aspects thereof. Listen and learn from those that have experience and take notes if necessary, because someday you may need that little piece of knowledge.**

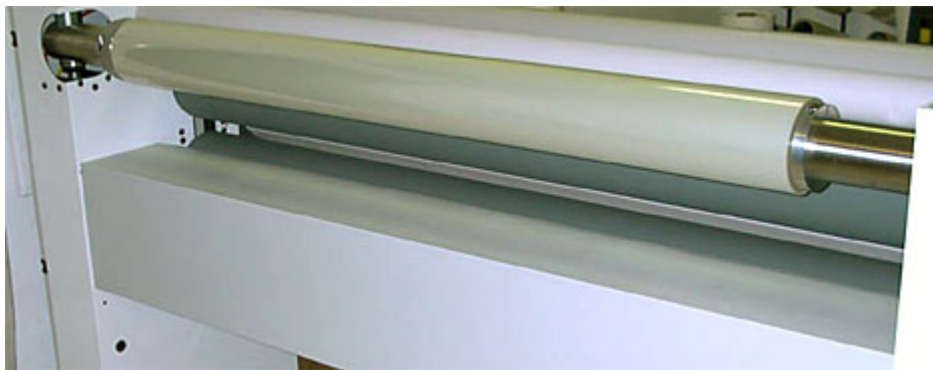
## **Webbing the laminate:**

No wrinkles in the beginning, means no wrinkles at the end! To achieve this, the laminate must have some tension placed upon it. Once the roll of laminate is placed upon the roll holder bar, which should be centered whenever possible, use the tensioning brake to restrict the roll of laminate from turning freely. There should be enough tension in the beginning so that the roll is difficult to turn with one hand. This helps to web the release liner of the laminate onto the take-up bar.

There are two types of release liners available for cold laminates. A paper (wax coated) liner that is fairly easy to separate the laminate from the liner by bending a corner over and using your fingernail to separate the two. The second is a poly-liner that can be a little more difficult to separate. One trick to this is by using two pieces of high-tack masking tape. Place a small piece of masking tape on each side of a corner of the laminate, and then pull apart. This is much quicker and less aggravating than the fingernail method.



The next step is webbing the release liner onto the liner take-up bar. Be forewarned that the release liner can create as many problems as wrinkles in the laminate! It is important that every precaution is taken to get the release liner straight and smooth, especially for those longer runs. With the rollers in the UP position, you should separate enough material so that the liner wraps  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way around the release liner take-up bar. Use your hands to turn the take-up bar as you are wrapping the release liner around it, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 turns. Sometimes it helps to turn the laminator on a very slow speed while doing this, just make sure that the laminate does not stick to the bottom roller and starts to wrap around it. If your laminator has a foot peddle, this is the time to use it. The goal is to get the take-up bar to start to pull the laminate from the laminate roll. Make sure that the edges of the liner are even and not wandering to one side. Wandering to one side can cause the laminate to wander or cause wrinkles down the road.



The next step is to feed the laminate between the rollers. Some may choose to do this as they are wrapping the liner on the take-up bar. The goal here is to feed enough laminate through or in between the rollers so that you can tack the laminate to the backside of the laminator. You want to pull enough through to create tension on the top roller and eliminate wrinkles. Remember to keep the

liner tensioned on the liner take-up bar at the same time as pulling the laminate through by turning the take-up bar by hand or turning the laminator ON and OFF.

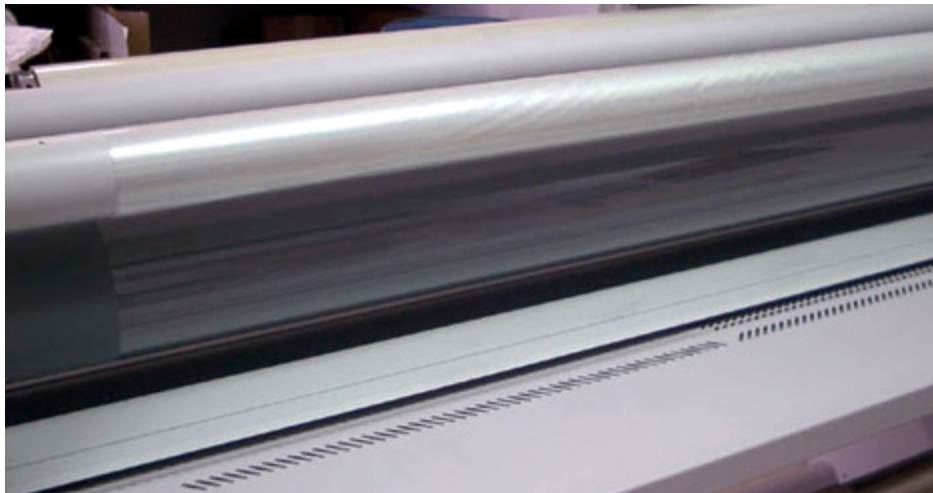
**TIP #1:**

Sometimes it is easier to work from the backside of the laminator once the liner is started on the take-up bar. From the backside, place one hand in the middle of the take-up bar to keep the liner from coming off. Use the other hand to pull the laminate around the top roller. Either pull the laminate at the same time as you turn the take-up bar or use the foot pedal to advance the laminate. If you squeeze or press the liner to the take-up bar, you will feel it grab the bar and start to pull itself.

**Tip #2:**

If you plan on laminating a long run or intend to use more than 20 feet of laminate and don't want to unroll the liner from the take-up bar afterwards, slip a cardboard core/tube over the take-up bar so that you can then toss the core/tube in the trash afterwards. Before slipping the core/tube onto the take-up bar, crush or pinch one end of it. This causes the core/tube to grab the take-up bar so that it does not slip as it turns.

In the process of doing this, more tension may be needed on the roll of laminate. One person can accomplish this task by taking their time, but in the beginning it is helpful to have a second person until a comfort level is developed.



Once you have enough laminate fed between the rollers, hold it taut and tack it to the back of the laminator. Check the front of the top roller to make sure that there are no wrinkles and everything looks fairly smooth. At this point you may need to add a little more tension to the laminate holder or lift and re-tack the

laminator to eliminate wrinkles. Generally, 3 to 4 feet of laminate is wasted in this process, but it is cheaper to waste laminate than to re-print an image.



Through this whole process the top roller has remained in the UP position and you are now ready to laminate.

Keep in mind that each brand and model of laminator is a little bit different and that you may need to use variations of the above information to accomplish the same goals. It does not hurt to experiment. Use caution and take your time, because this is all part of the learning curve!

It is now time to feed the print through the laminator...