

Decorating your model... Making your own decals / Water transfers...

As some of you already know, scratch building brings up all sorts of problems and challenges, so “Thanks” to my long various scratch build projects, I have come across at some stage to deal with the question of decorating it...

So, it got me thinking – how will I be able to make all those nice looking flags and symbols that are common to ARF’s and the like, so I thought – how could I make my own decals, and after some Internet and Goggle searches, I managed to find the answer – and more importantly, a way of doing it, and all that you need is a PC and an Inkjet printer (or a colour Laser printer if you are really lucky and can afford one), well – you need some other things too.

So firstly let me point out to you, that there are differences between ready made decals / transfers you buy in the shop, and those I am suggesting you can make yourself, and knowing this small difference will save you some time, money and frustration.

The ready made commercial decals have the following “Layers” from the bottom up

- The background paper
- Glue
- Paint – the actual logo, lettering etc... whatever the image is
- Transparent film

When you transfer / slide the off the paper, the top transparent layer is protecting the “Paint” component from being washed away when you place that into water.

The DIY type on the other hand, is made up of the following “Layers”

- The background paper, as with the above
- Glue
- Transparent film
- And finally, the Inkjet (or Laser printer) Ink that is used to print the logo etc...

Well, you can now see where the problem is... The moment you immerse your new artistic creation into the water – the paint is likely to come off, and bleed into the water, and indeed it does (I found out of course the hard way), unless you protect it with another material we will now call the sealant!

With either of those types, it will also be wise to use some additional material, to make it weather protected, so that the nice logos don’t end up fading in the summer sun, when you come for a flight, your pride and joy is parked outside while you have a chat with the guys in the club house, and very slowly and gradually, the sun rays are eating your images away...

Well, so here is the process in details, please follow those to the letter, to spare yourself the pain I went through, after all – that is why I am taking the time to tell you the story...

Design your logo etc... you can use whatever you fell comfortable with, Paintbrush, Microsoft Word, or a real sophisticated Graphic package. While doing that, think of the “Size” of the picture, and think what else could you fit on an A4 page, so that you don’t end up printing one thing and wasting the rest of the page... the pages cost \$1.65 each inclusive of GST.

Let it dry for 24 hours, if you don’t – you will be sorry, don’t try rushing it. It may feel “Dry” to the touch after an hour or so, depending on room temperature, but – wait 24 hours.

OK, now you have been patient, so on the next day – use the “Sealant” and spray on that page, the application instructions are on the spray can, wait some 5 minutes, and repeat that action. DO NOT TRY SAVING on sealant, repeat that FOUR times...

Wait again for the next day – then, cut the decals out of the page, place those into some water, wait for some 2 minutes or so, and slide the decal off onto the model. Make sure to clear out any air bubbles by smoothing it out with a sponge or some soft tissue paper. Remove all water from around the decal and let it dry for at least an hour.

NOTE: After cutting the decal out of the page, if you decide to give that another cote, be aware that the spray gets around the edges, and your decal will NOT slide off the paper bit, so you have to trim it again before attempting to apply it onto the model.

If all looks OK, it is now time to apply the “Weather protection” spray, which is yet another type of product, it is not mandatory – but if you have long term aspirations about this model, do it.

So, that’s about it, now we move on to the actual products I have used in this exercise:

The actual paper comes in two types, one for Inkjet printing, the other for Laser printers. Once you selected – you have again 2 options:

Clear background, this is so that your model colouring shows through all the places of the logo that are NOT painted. Remember – WHITE is NOT an actual colour, that’s why I needed to print our club logo, on the other paper type.
WHITE Background is the 2nd option.

You can purchase these pages from:

Decal Specialists
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One of Alex’s creations

The “Sealant” is CRYSTAL KOTE Gloss, made in Australia by HELMAR Australia P/L check out www.helmar.com.au

The final finish weather protecting product is KRYLON, Polyurethane Clear wood finish – check out www.krylon.com

I have purchased those two in an Art supply shop in Knox City.

That’s all from me – you are on your way now.

Cheers
Alex Evans



And another one.....its marvelous what you can do with a bit of perseverance.