

Applying waterslide transfers

You will be aware that we now have approaching 100 different waterslide transfer sets within our range. Between 30 and 50% of the total have been instigated by customers requesting a specific livery who were prepared to buy a minimum of 10 sets of the 50 that I have to initially order, which are then added to the RTI range.

In conversation with a number of experienced modellers I have become aware that there is a certain “fear” of using waterslide transfers, the usual complaint being that they look fine on the transfer film but when put in water, they shrivel and are impossible to apply to the model.

I experienced this some years ago, when purchasing transfers from a couple of the major suppliers and also some that have been supplied with construction kits. I believe the problem to be that the transfers are either old or “stale” or the carrier film is too thin.

The RTI range consists of two types of transfer: silk screen, which are good for multicolours and have carrier film around each transfer piece (Walls Ice Cream as illustrated), and computer generated (Tate & Lyle as illustrated), which are better if silver or gold is included in the design. Computer generated must be cut tightly around each set of words or motif as the printing is directly on to the A4 carrier film sheet, whereas silk screen will slide off the paper as individual pieces, and doesn't need to be cut so precisely. All of the RTI cabs supplied with transfer badges are computer generated, which you will have discovered need to be cut tightly around the motif or text before application.



You may have found that some transfers need to soak in water for absolutely ages or when they come off, the carrier film has yellowed and discolours the area around the lettering or motif that you have applied. Old or “stale” transfers that either should not have been sold to you in the first place or that you may have squirreled away for years previously cause both of these effects. This does not and will not happen with RTI transfers. All of them, either silk screen or computer generated, should be dipped straight in and out of water and allowed to rest on a dry surface at the side for a few seconds but no longer than a couple of minutes prior to application. This should ensure most successful results.

Successful application of RTI transfers

Two important requirements are a fine set of tweezers and a small pair of scissors, as illustrated above. Round nosed tweezers and the scissors Auntie uses for dressmaking are really not suitable for cutting out very tiny transfer pieces! Once you are equipped with these items, proceed as follows:

1. A small shallow dish of cold water and a No.2 or 3 old paintbrush that has lost its fine tip.

2. Plan to apply transfers to the front and rear of the vehicle first and then both sides to enable you to hold the model by top and bottom, keeping your hands clear of the four vertical sides.
3. Do not cut the sheet up into all of the individual pieces in one go. Experience has taught me that the odd bit disappears, never to be found again!
4. Cut the items for the front of the vehicle from the main transfer sheet. Put the sheet to one side.
5. Using the fine tipped tweezers, hold each individual piece, dip into the water, hold for 2 or 3 seconds then remove and place to the side of the water dish but out of the water.
DO NOT allow the transfer to float in the water, as this is what causes separation and shrivelling.
6. Place the paintbrush in your mouth and wet with saliva. Apply over the first area to which a transfer piece is to be applied.
(If you are not happy using saliva, a separate container with water and washing up liquid will substitute. My choice is saliva, as it is one less container on the bench).
7. Pick up the transfer piece with the tweezers and place on the end of your forefinger. Gently with the tweezers or another finger marginally slide the transfer from the backing paper to ensure that it is free to apply. If it is a very small piece, use the tweezers to remove the transfer and apply in position on to the model. Pre-wetting the surface of the model is essential to ensure that it can be moved into the exact position you require. If it is a larger piece, move the transfer slightly off of the paper to left or right, hold the backing paper with the tweezers, position correctly on the model and slide directly from the backing paper on to it.
8. Add all transfers required for the front, and then repeat the same method for the rear of the model.
9. Leave the front and rear for 5-10 minutes, then apply a coat of Klear or the new brand name Pledge Multi-Surface Wax, over the front and rear transfers to seal them. This is my preferred method of sealing transfers, but if you prefer another proprietary brand that is equally effective then the choice is yours.
10. The same method as detailed above is also applicable to both sides of the vehicle. It is sometimes better, depending on the amount of detail, to have a break and seal one complete side before starting the other, as it is not unknown for the odd piece to brush off unknowingly onto your hand from the side that you have just completed.
11. At this stage your transfer application should now be complete. I am confident you will agree that the small outlay and time involved greatly enhances the finished appearance of the model concerned and really helps to bring it to life.
12. Hopefully by following these guidelines and using easy to apply RTI transfers, you will have overcome any anxiety you may have had prior to this exercise and be confident to move on to a new project - bring on the next model and set of transfers!