Making your own waterslide transfers

(Contributed by Guild member David Vaughan)

RTI has by far the best range of waterslide transfers and they cover a wide range of some of the most famous names in British transport history. That said there are times when you just want a one-off set of decals for your favourite fleet, or perhaps a few sets for your own fictitious fleet. This is possible using printable waterslide decal sheets that are suitable for use in either a common ink jet printer or a laser printer. It should be understood at this stage that there are certain limitations to computer generated transfers and it is only possible to produce lettering or symbols on a background that is lighter than the lettering itself.

I am by no means an expert when it comes to using computers so if I can do it, so can you! The instructions have been made as detailed as possible so that they are accessible to even the most apprehensive computer users. I hope these notes will help you along the way.

STEP ONE

First ensure you have the correct paper for your intended job. There are various suppliers but we recommend 'Crafty Computer Paper' (details at the end of these notes). Purchase Inkjet Waterslide Decal Paper, clear for light backgrounds, white for dark backgrounds. Do not feed into your printer at this stage.

Ensure that you have opened the 'Word' programme on your computer. You will also need to have open clear pictures of the lettering on the full sized vehicle of your choice to refer to. Don't worry if you only have a front ¾ view of the lorry as you can size the lettering you require with reference to the actual size of the door, headboard or bodywork on your model.

'Zoom' (this button is often represented by a magnifying glass) in on the lettering in the picture and see if you can match the style to a similar font on the 'Word' (or equivalent Apple Mac) programme. Alternatively, if you feel confident enough, extra fonts can be downloaded from the web: type 'fonts' into Google and a range of websites can be accessed where additional fonts can be installed.

STEP TWO

Having selected or downloaded your desired font, create a Text Box in Word. To do this, go to **'Insert'** at the top of the document and select **'Text Box'** from the drop down menu. A cross cursor will appear. Using the left hand button of your mouse, drag the text box until it is an appropriate size to fit the specific panel on the model. Alternatively, you can double click the border of your text box, click **'Size'** on the menu that appears and manually alter the dimensions of the text box. This is likely to be too small to type into, so use the 'Zoom' tool on the far right of your top toolbar. It will be showing 100%, but this can be changed to 150%, 200%, etc. to make things clearer. Regardless of what size you expand it to; it will print to the original dimensions.

Once you have created your Text Box, you can fill in its background by selecting the **'Fill Colour'** key, represented by a paint pot, on the bottom toolbar of the Word document. If you require dark colour letters to apply to a light coloured model, **'Fill Colour'** is not required and you are able to use the clear decal paper. If you require light letters on a darker background, a **'Fill Colour'** is required with the use of white transfer paper, the limitation being you must use a 'fill colour' close to the livery of the vehicle and a certain degree of paint mixing may be required to match the **'Fill Colour'**. RTI information sheet MIS5 will help with painting and colour mixing.

On the toolbar at the top of the Word Document you should find the **'Font Colour'** key, which is represented by the letter A with a block of colour underlining it. Click the arrow beside this button and select the colour from the drop down menu that appears. With regard to font size, you will need to go down further from the 8-point font (that is usually the smallest font size that can be selected on the toolbar) in order to get it to fit a 4mm model. To do this, select **'Format'** at the top of the document, and then **'Font'**. There should be an option on the menu that appears labelled **'Size'**. Here you can alter the font size manually, before clicking **'OK'**. This can be altered as many times as you wish until you are satisfied that the lettering will fit your model. The font size can be varied for each line of text by repeating the above procedure.

Repeat the above for lettering on different parts of the model, creating Text Box sizes to suit.

Print out the sheet on ordinary paper (**'File'** >>> '**Print**' >>> **'OK'**) and see how well it matches your picture. You can print using the same bit of paper several times whilst tweaking, thus helping to save the planet!

Once you are satisfied with both the style and size on your test print, cut it out carefully and lay on the model in the place it will go as a finished transfer. All of this may take a little time and practise but once you have done it for one model it will come a lot more easily next time and it saves wasting decal paper.

To duplicate the text box for both sides of the vehicle or for more than one vehicle, click the border of the text box, hold down the 'Ctrl' button and the letter 'C' key simultaneously, then let go. Then hold down the 'Ctrl' button and the letter 'V' key simultaneously. A copy of the text box will appear. Repeat this procedure for more copies if required. Or use **'Copy'** and **'Paste'** if you find this easier.

Go to **'File'** at the top of the document and select **'Save As'** to save a finished copy to **'My Documents'** or a file of your choice.

STEP THREE
Place your decal paper (white or clear as required) in the printer so that the print lands on the shiny side as you would for a picture print. Go to **File** >>> **Print** at the top of the Word document. A print menu should appear. If it is available on your computer, opt to print on 'Glossy photo paper' as this mimics the surface of the waterslide paper and will allow the ink to settle on the surface, helping to achieve the optimum results. If you are unable to change the Paper Type on this print menu, just print as you would on a normal piece of paper. Retrieve your printed copy. If you wish to print more than one set print in a horizontal line, then when dry (see Step Four) cut horizontally directly below the transfers so that the excess paper can be reused in the printer for your next job.

STEP FOUR
Lay the finished decal sheet aside for **at least 30 minutes** to dry. Alternatively, use a hairdryer on a low setting and apply the heat gently. If you are not using a complete decal sheet, cut the area used from the sheet and spray the transfers with an acrylic matt or satin clear varnish – 'Prism Clear Glaze' is marketed by Crafty Computer Paper and it can be purchased at the same time as the decal paper at the cost of £4.10. Repeat this with 3 coats at intervals of at least 15 minutes, and leave to dry thoroughly.

STEP FIVE
Cut carefully around your transfer and place in a tray or saucer of water. Allow around **30 seconds** for the release of the transfer (this is longer than required for RTI transfers). Slip the transfer slightly away from the backing sheet and position on the model. **DO NOT** remove the transfer completely from the sheet until you are sure it is ready to apply. The backing paper is likely to be thicker than that used for RTI transfers so cut as close as you dare to the lettering. Micro-Set liquid can be used for applying transfers as per the instructions on the bottle (available online from Amazon or from good model shops). If the surface of your model is uneven, ribbed bodywork for instance, then a coat of Micro-Sol liquid, if applied as directed, will soften the transfer and make it mould to the surface – just ensure that it is in the exact position that you want it first. Alternatively, you can apply and varnish in the normal way using RTI instruction sheet MIS13 "Applying waterslide transfers". If you possess Johnson's Klear or its current alternative, this is equally suitable for applying to the model before the transfer is applied and lessens the effect of transfer film being visible on the surface.

Before varnishing or using Johnson's Klear, gently wipe away any excess moisture with a cotton bud or a tissue using minimum pressure and you can gently stroke the transfer with a soft brush to remove any wrinkles.

N.B. Decal paper is delicate and cannot be manipulated in the same way as some mass-produced decals, so make sure your transfer is positioned correctly with a minimum of fine-tuning.

Suppliers

Crafty Computer Paper
For Inkjet Waterslide Decal Paper (white or clear) and Prism Clear Glaze varnish
Web: http://www.craftycomputerpaper.co.uk/
Tel: 0116 2744 755
Address: Hamilton House, Mountain Rd, Leicester, LE4 9HQ

Amazon
For Micro-Sol and Micro-Set liquids
Web: www.amazon.co.uk

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