

Waterslide Decals Application Guide

Unlike many mass-produced decals, in which the carrier film onto which the decal itself is printed only extends for a small distance around the edge of each decal, the carrier film of Aardstorm Models decal sheets extends across the whole sheet. You will therefore have to cut the film around each decal during application.

For transparent-backed decals, this is not critical as any excess film will be almost invisible once in place on your model, and it is therefore largely a matter of personal preference how close you cut around the decals.

For white-backed decals, however, any excess film will be visible as a white border around the decal. You therefore have to cut accurately around the edge of each decal. To help with this, Aardstorm Models decals either incorporate a printed background colour that matches a specified paint colour, in which case they can be cut in a similar manner to the transparent-backed ones (just make sure you cut within the printed background), or are designed with a small border the same colour as the adjacent part of the decal and cutting guides (small lines at each end of each decal edge) to show exactly where to cut: position your ruler (or whatever you're using as a straight edge) on the decal side of the cut and align it with the edge of the guides on the decal side. Your knife should then run along the centreline of the guides.

Unfortunately this only works with straight decal edges, for curved edges you will have to carefully follow the outline of the decal. Where a decal is white to its edge, a black line is provided to define the edge of the decal; this has to be cut off completely. With care, gentle curves can generally be followed fairly easily freehand; tighter curves are generally best cut as a series of frequently-spaced tangent lines.

Where decals have been provided with a background colour intended to match that of the surrounding surface, the white decal edge, although very thin because it is only the thickness of the carrier film, can sometimes be noticeable, especially where the background colour is dark. This is easily hidden by

carefully painting over the edge of the decal with the background paint colour, but a margin has to be allowed for this when cutting out the decal.

Note that when cutting out decals, you do not need to cut all the way through the paper at the edge of the decal. It is often better, especially for small decals or those with tight curves, to only cut through the film with a light cut, then make a separate cut all the way through the paper further away from the edge of the decal. Once the decal has been soaked to release the backing paper, the excess film can be removed before the decal is applied to your model. The extra backing paper can then act as a convenient "handle" to assist with placing the decal onto your model.

Where ink is printed right up to the edge of a decal, it is very vulnerable to damage during the cutting operation and can easily tear and lift off the carrier film, leaving a ragged white edge to the decal. The risk of this happening can be minimised by using a very sharp knife (a scalpel with a fresh blade is ideal) and making a series of light cuts rather than one heavy one. Placing your straight edge on the decal side of the cut also helps. A blade with a fine point will also help when following curved decal edges.

Once you've cut out your decal, it needs to be released from the backing paper. This is done by simply soaking it in water until the decal slides easily over the paper. 15 seconds is often sufficient for small decals while larger ones can take up to 45 seconds to release. It is particularly important to soak larger decals well as the carrier film is quite stretchy, resulting in a distorted decal if it doesn't slide off the paper easily.

Once the decal has released, shake off excess water and slide the decal so that it projects over one edge of the paper. Position this part of the decal in its correct place on your model and gently hold it in place (e.g. with a small paintbrush with short bristles). Then carefully slide the backing paper away from under the decal. The final position of the decal can then be adjusted by gently pushing or dragging it around with a small brush. Be careful with this, as the decal is very fragile at this stage. If it's reluctant to move, further water can be added to help it slide.

Once in position, dab off excess water and remove any air bubbles with a soft lint-free cloth or paper towel, taking care to avoid moving the decal. Applying pressure with a "pad" produced by folding your cloth or towel over several times can help the decal follow small bumps, ridges or hollows on your model's surface. A commercial decal fixing fluid can also be useful for this.

Finally, allow the decals to dry for at least 24 hours then apply a coat of varnish or lacquer to protect them from subsequent handling or moisture.