

Installation Tips & Techniques

There are many ideas about applying vinyl. I've tried to simplify this method for the average installer. These are the methods I use. The two most important factors in applying vinyl are to be patient and take your time. This will pay off in the end with a pro-like installation. I've divided this document into several sections. Each section may contain alternative methods to accomplish the task.

First Thing.....

Unpack your order and check it for accuracy. Are the colors correct? Right size? If your decals came in a roll, lay them out flat in a warm area. Be careful if you place them in the sun. You don't want them to get too hot. If you give them time to flatten out, you will have an easier time installing.

Surface preparation

You want a very clean surface. Wash the surface as you normally would. Then use a cleaner that will not leave any residue. I recommend Dx330 Wax & Grease Remover, Isopropyl alcohol, or Acetone in that order. Be careful with these products and check a small discrete area first. If the surface has ever been waxed, the wax **MUST** be removed. Vinyl will form a poor bond when applied over wax.

Preparing the Graphic

Now is when you want to mark the graphic for positioning. The best way to do this is to measure the graphic vertically and horizontally at its widest points. Mark half this distance in both directions and draw lines from edge to edge(fig. 1). ****Be sure you are measuring the graphic, not the size of the paper backing.**



fig. 1

Pre-fit your graphic

Time spent in this step will be seen in the final product. First do a trial fitting. Here you are looking for correct sizing and orientation. Tape it in place, step back, and see how it looks. Adjust as necessary. You can combine this step with the next.

Final positioning

Now you will want to mark the exact position of the graphic where it is being installed. You have to be creative here. If there is a straight line on the car or trailer, you can measure from it. If it is to be applied on a vertical surface, you can use a level to draw a vertical or horizontal line. Do whatever is necessary to establish the horizontal and vertical centerlines on this surface. Use a grease pencil to draw these lines. Be sure the lines are long enough to extend beyond the backing paper of the graphic(fig 2). Tape in place.



fig. 2

Hinging the graphic

Hinging will assist you in applying the graphic. This can be done in either the horizontal or vertical plane. You accomplish this by placing a strip of tape across the center of the graphic either horizontally or vertically(fig. 3). This allows you to fold one side of the graphic back to the hinge and remove the backing paper from that half. Then you will apply that side to the surface. After removing the "hinge" tape, repeat the process for the other half.

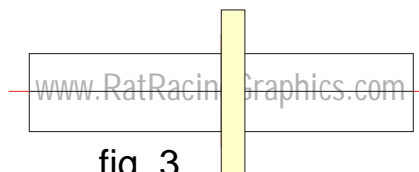


fig. 3

Applying the Vinyl

Now you are ready to apply the vinyl. There are two basic methods, wet or dry. Each has its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Wet application gives you time to reposition the vinyl during installation but can have a slightly weaker bond. This weaker bond is nothing to worry about in most cases. The dry method forms a stronger bond but as soon as the vinyl touches the surface, it can not be repositioned. If you try to reposition it, you will most likely stretch or tear the vinyl. I recommend the wet application method for the beginner unless the graphic is very small and easily managed.

Wet Method - Peel back one half of your hinged graphic. Carefully cut the backing paper at the hinge. Spray both the back of the graphic and the surface with an application fluid. This can either be purpose made application fluid or a home brew. Save your money and mix your own. All you need is a spray bottle, 32oz. of water, and 2 drops of mild dish soap. After spraying both surfaces, lay down the vinyl and smooth out. Use a squeegee to remove the fluid. Start at the hinge and work your way out. Do this several times. The more fluid you work out, the better the bond will be and easier to remove the app. tape. Work out any air bubbles you can see. Now, remove the hinge tape and repeat the process for the other side. After you've removed all the fluid you can, let it sit for 5-10 minutes before removing the app. tape.

Dry Method - Same as above without the fluid. However, this time, as you use the squeegee, hold the vinyl away from the surface and let the squeegee put it down. Move slowly to avoid air bubbles and mistakes.

**** A note about air bubbles. If, after removing the app. tape, you still see small bubbles, this happens. Don't be too concerned. As the vinyl sits in the sun and heats and cools, most will disappear. Larger bubbles can be removed by piercing the vinyl with a small pin and using the squeegee to push the air out.

Remove the App. Tape

Slowly peel the app. tape back on itself. Don't pull out on the tape, you may lift the vinyl. If the vinyl starts to lift, smooth it and the tape back down and rub with the squeegee.

It seems like a lot but it only takes a little time to become proficient. Don't hesitate to call us if you have any questions or need further assistance.