

Using KW Decals

The KW Trams decals are produced at home on a standard inkjet printer using decal paper.

There are limitations on the colours etc. that can be printed on an inkjet printer – I can't print gold, silver, white etc. Also the colours come out quite thin, so in particular light coloured transfers cannot be seen on dark painted backgrounds. Therefore almost all of the decals are produced on white decal paper. In order for them to be useable, I try to match the decal background colour to the paint I recommend in the kit instructions.

The decal paper is quite thin, and although the decals are sprayed with multiple coats of clear lacquer, they need to be handled correctly or the edges of the decals can fray and the decals can stretch. But if they are treated gently and you follow the suggestions in this document, you should find that they give a reasonable result.

But they are homemade and are not as easy to apply as professional decals, but the price reflects that.

Preparing the surface.

The decals should be applied to a gloss surface. If your model is to be matt or semi-matt, then apply gloss varnish to the section that the decals will be applied to, and then when they are all done, apply matt varnish.

Cutting out the decals

The decals are printed on a large sheet of decal paper, so need to be trimmed to the correct size. I have found that using scissors or snips gives better edges than using a knife to cut them out as a knife can drag the edge of the decal causing a ragged edge. If you must use a knife, use a new very sharp blade.

Applying the decals

The decals do not need long to soak. If you leave them too long, the decal will start to fray at the edges, the colour will run and they will be more likely to stretch when you apply them.

Soak them for the minimum amount of time. For small items such as crests and numbers, they should only need around 20 seconds in cold water. Larger decals will take a little longer.

If applying large decals, then use a brush to put a thin coat of water onto the gloss surface of the model before applying the decal, this should allow a small amount of slide so that you can position the decal properly.

If you need to move the decal once it has been applied, then use a soft paintbrush dipped in cold water to get under the edge of the decal and slide it underneath. Attempting to pull or push the decal is likely to damage or stretch it.

Be careful when using tweezers or a knife etc. to move the decal into place as it can damage the surface or edge of the decal.

Finishing the decals

To protect the decals once they have been applied, give them a couple of coats of varnish. A thick varnish is better than too thin (which may cause the colours to run). I use Humbrol 35 gloss enamel varnish.

Some of the decals for side panels do not include the lining. When using these I apply the decal, then 2 coats of varnish and then I use HMRS pressfix lining. Then more coats of gloss varnish.

I try to match the decal to the paint colour as best as I can, but you may find that it is not a perfect match or that the decal has white edges. I usually trim the decals to have the minimum amount of background before I apply them. Even so, a small amount of paint may help to mask the edge of the decal and match the colours.

Final words

The above notes may suggest that it is difficult to use our decals, but they are not actually too bad as long as you are gentle with them and pay attention to the tips above. Certainly with practice they can produce a reasonable result.

I usually apply 4 coats of lacquer to the transfers when I make them. You may find that applying additional coats of lacquer or clear varnish helps to make them easier to use.

ABS Transfers

A number of the transfers came from ABS. These are professionally produced transfers and are produced on clear backing. They will require longer soaking to get them to lift off the backing than the KW Trams transfers.

If they curl up in the water, let them continue to soak. Be very gentle in straightening them or they may crack and fall apart. You may find that giving them a couple of coats of clear lacquer or a coat of clear varnish before soaking will make them strong enough to use. If you do this, you will need to cut the transfers out to use them.

In some cases the carrier film has become discoloured. The discolouration may not matter depending on what you are putting the transfer onto. If necessary you may be able to trim the transfer so that there isn't any excess film.

Most of the transfer sets contain more transfers than you actually need, so we suggest using one of the excess ones to test how they will work.

Once the transfers have been applied and allowed to dry, then a coat of Decal Cote may be applied, followed by a coat of clear varnish.