

Decals Application Summary

An extended version of this guide available in the Help & Advice section of the Aardstorm Models website, where it can be viewed on screen, or downloaded for offline viewing or printing out.

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 to define its size. To help with this, many Aardstorm Models decals are provided with cutting guides (small lines around the decal edges) to show exactly where to cut.

The model should have been painted, at least where the decals are to be applied. A gloss or satin paint finish can improve adhesion of the decals, and minimise the risk of “silvering” of transparent-backed decals caused by air being trapped under the decal. The model is best not varnished at this stage to facilitate blending of the decal background with the surrounding paint finish; a layer of varnish may hinder this. The paint should be allowed to dry thoroughly before applying decals.

The following sequence of application is then recommended. The steps are only briefly described here; more detail can be found in the full version of this guide.

Step 1

Using the tip of a sharp knife, define the size and shape of the decal by making light cuts around its edge, as shown in red on the right. These should only penetrate the thin carrier film, not go all through the paper.

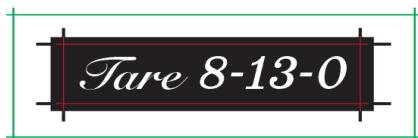


Step 1: Light cuts to define decal edges.
Cuts only deep enough to cut carrier film,
not all through the paper.

To use the cutting guides, position your straight edge against the edge of the guide on the decal side. This helps to protect the fragile ink layer at the edge of the decal. Where guides cross at a corner, extend the cuts a little way beyond the intersecting guide, to make sure the corner of the decal is cut cleanly.

Step 2

Separate the decal from the rest of the sheet by making further cuts deep enough to go all the way through the paper. These should be made a little way out from the edges of the decal, as shown in green.



Step 2: Deep cuts to separate decal from sheet.
These cuts go all through the paper.

Step 3

To separate the carrier film from the backing paper place the decal in water so that the entire decal is submerged. Hold it there until the decal slides easily over the paper. 15s is often sufficient for small decals while larger ones can take 45s or more to release. It is particularly important to soak larger decals well as the carrier film is quite stretchy, resulting in a distorted (or even broken) decal if it doesn't slide off the paper easily.

Step 4

Once the decal has released, shake off excess water and remove the excess carrier film around the edges of the decal itself (shown in grey), for example by pinching it with tweezers. This creates a convenient “handle” with which to hold the decal without touching the surface of the wanted decal area.



Step 4: Remove excess carrier film.
(e.g. using tweezers).

Step 5

Carefully slide the decal so that it projects a little over one edge of the paper.



Step 5: Slide decal to edge of paper.

Step 6

Position this part of the decal in its correct place on your model and gently hold it in place. Then carefully slide the backing paper away from under the decal.



Step 6: Position on your model, hold the edge of the decal in place, and slide paper away.

Step 7

Adjust the position of the decal by gently pushing or dragging it around with a small brush, rubber-tipped tools, or your fingers. 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 using a soft lint-free cloth or paper towel folded on itself several times to create a "pad". Take care to avoid moving the decal. Apply pressure to help the decal follow small bumps, ridges or hollows on your model's surface, and remove any air bubbles. Larger raised or recessed features may need more work to get the decal to sit on your model properly; see the full guide for more details.

Step 8

Repeat steps 1 to 7 for any other decals to be applied to the same model. Then allow the decal(s) to dry thoroughly, at least overnight.

Step 9

For those decals with a background colour designed to match the paint of your model, carefully paint around the edges of the decal to tint the white edge of the carrier film (as shown in red for clarity) and help blend the colours of the decal and model if there is a slight mismatch. Use the same paint that you used on your model, thinned sufficiently to allow it to flow off the brush easily. If necessary, repeat with more coats, allowing each coat of paint to dry.



Step 9: Touch up edges of decal with thinned paint, to blend decal with model if necessary.

Step 10

Finally, allow the paint to dry at least overnight then apply a coat of varnish or lacquer to protect your decals from subsequent handling or moisture. Your model is now finished!