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Custom Rod Decals

Make fingerprints and decal edges disappear with this quick and simple technique! by Pat Barnard

The PEARLabel decal printer is a fantastic machine but I was having trouble with the decal edges remaining visible on the rod. After much trial and error this is the method I use to virtually eliminate the visible edges on decals used for custom fishing rods printed on the PEARLabel 270 & 360 printers.

1. Print decal. Using scissors trim as close as possible to the letters/object. Very sharp scissors are a must to ensure a clean precise cut. The goal is to remove as much of the material surrounding the decal as possible without compromising the letters/object (photo 1). Do not score/cut the decal backing with the supplied tool; leave backing on, this will be removed in step 5.

2. Prior to decal placement on blank, place a thin coat of finish where decal will be placed and allow to cure completely. I have used Flexcoat and ProKote with good results.

3. Obtain clear "mild tack" transfer tape and place on TOP of trimmed decal. Press decal into transfer tape to ensure decal is adhered to tape completely; leave paper backing on for now (photo 2). *Owners of the Pearl Label Decal Machines may request free transfer tape from LRT Group at lrtgroup@comcast.net.

4. After finish has cured and just prior to decal placement, warm the finish slightly with a heat gun or blow dryer, use caution, only a few seconds is adequate. *Do not "cook" the finish* (photo 3).

5. Now remove decal paper backing. A slight bend in the transfer tape will cause backing to pull from decal. Use tweezers for backing removal (photo 4). *Do not touch decal adhesive during this step.* Carefully place decal in desired location (photo 5) and roll decal/transfer tape to embed decal in warm finish, I use a Brayer roller (6). This melds the decal into place roughly level with the current finish level.

CAUTION: Be precise in decal placement and work slowly. Once decal contacts the slightly softened finish it is nearly impossible to remove and reposition. In the event that decal has to be removed due to placement error, removal of decal adhesive from finish is difficult. "Goof Off" used gently on a lint free coffee filter has worked best for removal. Alcohol was ineffective but can be used as a final wipe once adhesive was removed.

6. Gently remove transfer tape. A gentle wipe of the decal edges with rubbing alcohol is all that is needed to remove any adhesive that has been pressed out during the rolling step, use a lint free coffee filter for this.

7. Coat decal with your favorite finish (7). 🪄

