

## Decaling Tips

By Fritz Milhaupt

- Use distilled water. Municipal tap water contains a number of chemicals which may leave residue underneath decals. Well water is even less predictable and less likely to give good results.
- Let the decal soak until it floats free of the decal paper. You do *not* need to leave any adhesive on the back of the decal for it to adhere to the model, in fact adhesive residue can cause silvering. The adhesive is there solely to keep the decal on the backing paper during shipment and storage.
- Always decal onto a hard, glossy or semi-glossy surface. Floquil Crystal-Cote or Testor's Gloss Finish work well as overcoats if your paint does not dry to a naturally glossy finish. Since some have claimed that Testor's Gloss will yellow over time, Future Acrylic Floor coating has been getting good press as an alternative.
- Avoid applying anything other than a wetting agent (such as Microscale Decal-Set) to the decal until you have it exactly where you want it. Once you apply anything stronger, you've pretty much committed to that placement.
- To move a decal into place, a modeler's knife works well. A clean soft-bristle brush is good for pressing bubbles out from under the decal.
- Stubborn bubbles of air or setting solution can be punctured with a *sharp* modeler's knife, but it's best to wait for the decal to dry to avoid distorting the decal too much.
- Avoid letting setting solutions puddle on the decal. This can cause a ring to appear on the decal, or it to droop in places.

## Decal Setting Solutions

In the order that I use them and their strength

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| Microscale Decal-Set<br>(Blue label)                                 | I use this as a wetting agent between the model and the decal for all brands of decal.  |
| Microscale Micro-Sol<br>(Red label)                                  | I use this as a first-pass solvent to snuggle down the decal onto details, once the air bubbles have been chased out.   |
| Walthers Solvaset Diluted<br>Champ Decal Set Diluted                 | These are the "big guns" – I use either of these diluted 50% with distilled water. If repeated applications of Micro-Sol don't do the trick, I go to this.  |
| Walthers Solvaset (Full Strength)<br>Champ Decal Set (Full Strength) | The tactical nuclear weapons of decal setting solutions. Use only as a last resort. Will melt the lettering on decals printed on an ALPS printer and generally make a mess of Microscale decals. I've had both make the lettering run on Walthers and Champ decals. |

Generally speaking, I don't find it necessary to keep both Solvaset and Decal Set on hand, since I usually dilute them anyway.