

Here are two methods I use to apply decals.

Note from author:

Read this over before applying your decals. There are of tips and Do's and Don't here. Practice with a decal you really won't be using or want and an old car first. There are many variables here such as paint surfaces, decal companies (the decals differ in inks, paper and thicknesses) and the solvents used. I take no responsibility if you destroy yours! These are merely tips and how I do it.

Check the package or the backing of your decals, they usually put instructions there and you should read them insure a good decal job.

MicroSet is acetic acid based. Think *vinegar*.

(Microset is for wetting the surface and floating the film as you "set" the decal.)

(Microscale's Microset (according to Microscale's instructions) is used to *set* the decal into position, it's sort of a wetting agent and presoftener),

Solvaset is basically, another version of Micro-Set. Solvaset is solvent based, hence the name.

If using Solvaset. I would dilute it by at least 25% with water to use it as a substitute for Microsol. Solvaset was developed at a time when decal film was much thicker (in the 60's & 70's) so it's stronger chemically.

Beware.

(I recommend MiroSet, it is less harsh)

MicroSol is also solvent based, but a bit weaker strength than Solvaset.

(Once set and mainly dry is when Microsol or the stronger Walther's solvaset is used.)

Note: While a decal could dissolve if left in a cup of Microsol, that is not what happens in our modeling situation, it merely softens the decal and allows all the air to escape, allowing the decal film and the paint to bond. A clear finish, flat or gloss is then used to "blend" the decal film into the model.

Here are two ways to apply decals, the wet method and the dry method

The Wet Method:

This method allows some time to move the decal around and adjust its position to exactly where you want it.

- 1) Cut out you decals as close to the decal as possible.
- 2) Wet down the area on the car or loco you plan to put the decal down on with Microset. Soak the decals in water as instructed, some say to let sit. This depends on the manufacture. Try a test decal first.
- 3) Using a tweezers, carefully slide the decals off the paper and onto the model, being careful not to rip them. (Old decals will many times crack or fall apart, use new ones if possible) (Tweezers are recommended, decals love to stick to fingers and then good luck getting them off in one piece again!)
- 4) Position properly and brush lightly with Mirco Sol, allow to dry and put on as many coats of Micro-Sol as it takes to get it so it doesn't look like a decal, could take 1or it could take 5, the more irregular the surface the more you need. After the first round dries, I examine the decal and get a very sharp needle (I actually use dissecting needles) and poke any air bubbles. Then apply the next drop of softening solution directly to the tiny holes I just made. This will soak in and help draw the decal down into those areas.
- 5) Now spray with a Dull-Coat, for a painted on look.
- 6) In theory the Mirco-Set dissolves the coating the decal was printed on leaving the printing, the Micro Sol sticks it down and it really becomes painted on and not pasted on.
- 7) Make sure to lightly help it to sit on the car or loco with a paintbrush. LIGHTLY!

8) Once the decal is positioned and dry, *then* apply as many coats of *microsol* (allowing it to dry between each application) until the decal has conformed to the surface of the model and all the air bubbles are gone.

The Dry Method:

The second method is the dry method. It is more difficult because it has to be done perfectly the first time, but you can get superior results with it. Especially over very rough surfaces (wooden and ribbed sided cars, etc.)

- 1) Free the decal from the backing by soaking in water just as the wet method.
- 2) Once the decal is free of its backing, dry it completely.
- 3) Position it exactly where it is going to be.
- 4) Using a small brush (smaller than the one that comes in the cap of the solvaset.), touch the edge of the decal so that the MicroSet or Solvaset sucks up under the decal by capillary action. It works best if no fluid gets on to the top of the decal.
- 5) This will instantly suck the decal down and make it stick to the paint. The decal will not be able to be moved or adjusted after this. Any attempt to shift or move it will most likely ruin the decal and possibly the paint under it.
- 6) Work around the whole decal until the whole thing has been sucked down.
- 7) The decal will crinkle up a bit - DO NOT TOUCH IT. This is a good thing. It will lay down as it dries.

Note this method will not work if the decal is so large that the fluid cannot be pulled all the way into the center.

Do's

- 1) Make certain the surface is clean, smooth, and most importantly glossy. If the car is already weathered or has a dull or matte finish they won't go on as well. The smoother the better. The car can be dulled back down after the decals are applied.
- 2) When soaking the decals in water. Let them sit there until the backing falls off all by itself. Doing so will ensure the "glue" that holds the film to the backing has totally dissolved. If this is not done there could be some whitish residue halo's around the decal when done. If I am doing a bunch of decals I'll change the water every so often to avoid any concentration build up.

Don'ts

- 1) Don't use tap water. One of the problems I have is minerals in the tap water. This can leave a "halo" around the decal when it dries. I always use distilled water for soaking my decals.

Cautions – Beware ! (a note from another modeler)

It was a Microscale decal of the big red eagle on an American President's Lines container that the Solvaset destroyed for me. I was told that several other guys in the model railroad club had the same problem with using Solvaset on Microscale decals. Maybe the film is thinner or a different material. Solvaset, I believe, was what Walthers came up with to "soften" their thick film decals.

Oh, just one more thing. Microscale decals are made with a tapered edge to the film so don't cut as close to the decal, just where the film ends. It is designed to blend in.