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Iron-on vinyl is often referred to as Heat Transfer Vinyl (HTV) or t-shirt vinyl. This vinyl can be heated and applied to just about any surface that can withstand the heat without melting. HTV (usually) comes on a carrier sheet, certain speciality HTV does not have a backing sheet, but the vinyl you'll get from us will have a clear carrier sheet stuck on the FRONT of the HTV. The carrier sheet is sticky and holds the vinyl in place while you cut. It also aids in transferring the vinyl to your project surface. The SHINY side of HTV is the carrier sheet, the dull side is the adhesive (on the back):



Some heat transfer has a white (or other color) adhesive side, but it is usually the same color as the vinyl, just duller in color. If you are uncertain which side is the vinyl and which side is the carrier sheet, you can peel the corner of the sheet and see which side is clear plastic when you peel the two layers apart. The clear plastic side is the carrier sheet and it should always be face down when cutting (facing your machine).

When cutting HTV, some machines will allow you to cut without a cutting mat, but I would recommend cutting with a mat even if is optional. The cutting mat will help stabilize the material and ensure a good cut.

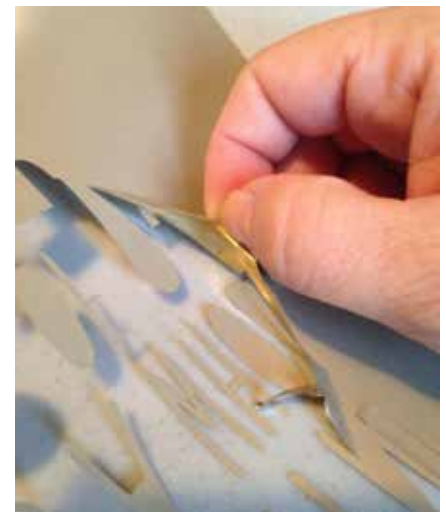
Before you have your machine cut, make sure you reverse your design in your software. Since you are cutting it vinyl side down, you are cutting it backwards, so it is necessary to reverse the design before cutting to ensure it is cut the correct way when you go to finish your project.

Let's make a shirt to demonstrate. This is one of our heat transfer designs and I am going to use gold metallic heat transfer to put it on my plum shirt:



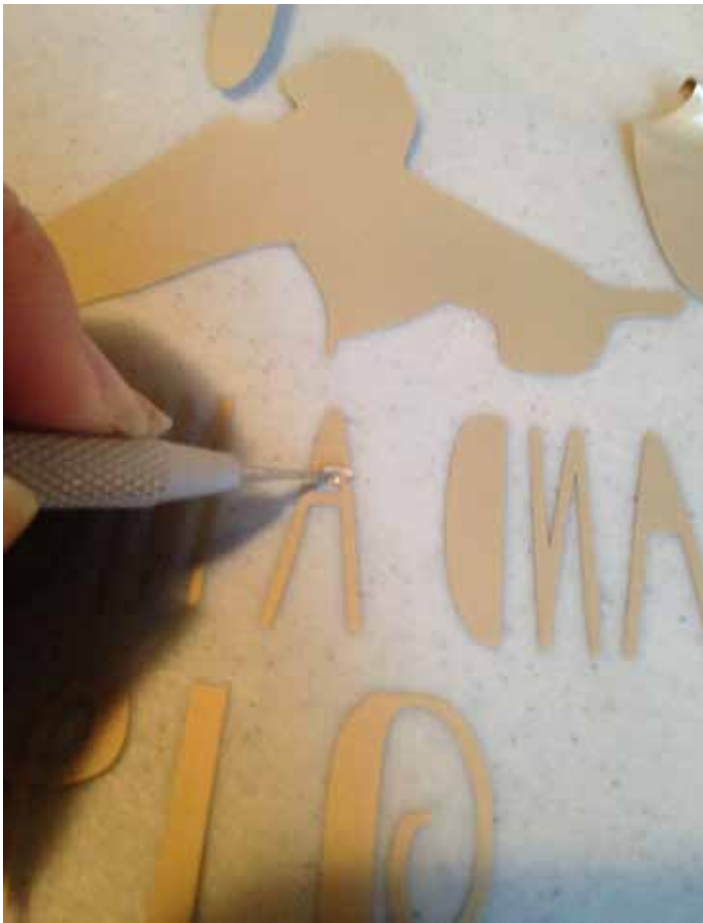
You do not need to prewash your shirt before adding heat transfer to it. Ensure that you are using a shirt that can handle heat. 100% polyester, for example, would not be a good choice for regular HTV. This shirt I am using is cotton, so it's perfect for pressing.

Using your favorite die cutting machine, cut the design using your machine's recommended cut settings for smooth HTV. Once your design has been cut, remove the sheet of heat transfer from the cutting mat and weed the design. Weeding involves removing the extra vinyl from your design leaving just the design on the carrier sheet.



Iron-On 101: The Basics of Heat Transfer Vinyl

A sharp hook tool can help get into the little designs on your design.



Now that you have the entire design weeded, you can ready the design to transfer to your shirt. To ensure you have it centered on your shirt, fold the carrier sheet in half and make a small crease in the middle at the top and bottom of your design. It's okay if you fold the vinyl too, it will flatten when you iron it. Make sure you fold the NON sticky sides together (save your sanity on that one, trust me!):



Next, fold your shirt in half length wise and iron it down the middle, creating a crease. Line the notches in your carrier sheet up with the line you ironed on your shirt and stick the heat transfer sticky side down to the shirt where you want it. :



Next, move your shirt over to your heat press or ironing surface. The carrier sheet is sticky on the back so it will hold in place your shirt:



Cover your project with a Teflon sheet or, in my case, a thin flower sack towel:



Make sure you cover the design, heat transfer vinyl will melt if touched with a hot iron! Next, press the design. I am using my heat press here. Directions for pressing will vary based off your particular press, but mine has a cotton setting and no pressure to adjust, just close it:



If you do not have a heat press, no worries! Crank your home iron up as hot as it will go and make sure you do not use steam! Once the iron is heated, cover your design and press down firmly on your design. Hold the iron in place for 10 seconds then move to the next section. Continue the process until you have ironed over the entire design. Once your design has been pressed, you can peel off the carrier sheet:



TIP

Some heat transfer is cold peel and some is hot peel. That means that some HTV requires that you let the design completely cool before removing the carrier sheet. If you're not sure what type of HTV you have, you can try peeling the edge of your design and see if it adheres to the shirt. If it does not, let it cool completely. Once it has cooled, try peeling it again. If it still does not release from the backing sheet, try pressing again. This HTV is hot peel, so I was able to peel it up as soon as I opened my heat press.



Heat transfer vinyl (HTV) is great for personalizing your own shirts, bags and more. It is a versatile material! I love my new shirt!

Do you NEED an Easy Press?

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The question I hear the most often when it comes to heat transfer vinyl is "Do I NEED an Easy Press?" The answer depends a lot on the materials you work with, how much you do and if you sell your creations.

Check out the flow chart to see if you need to invest in an Easy Press.

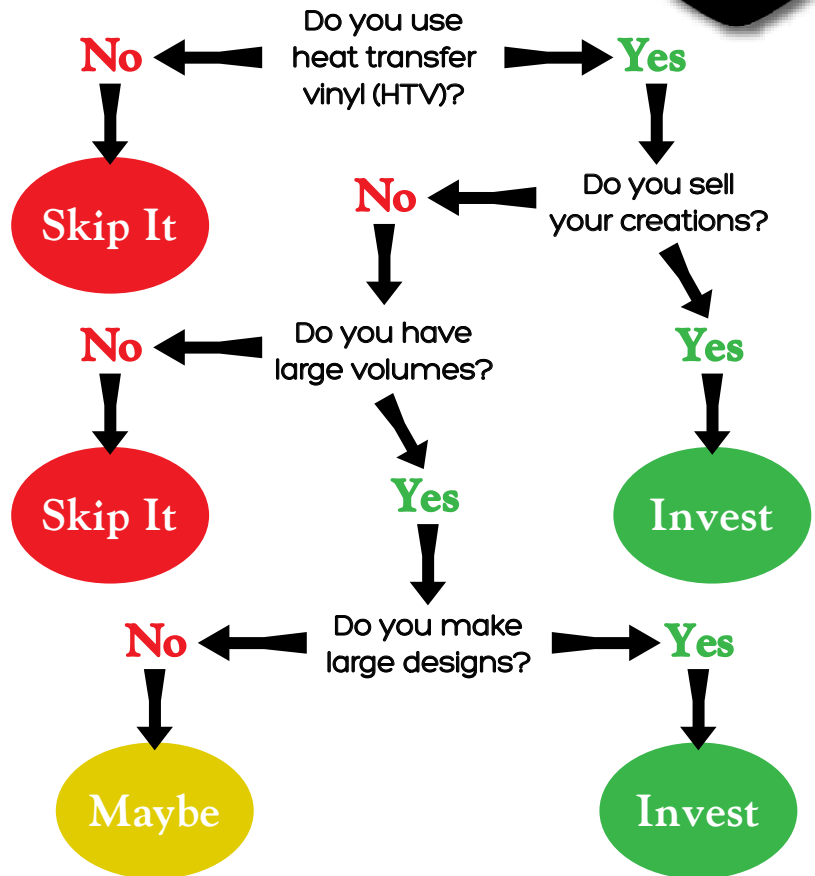
This flow chart starts with the most basic of questions- do you use heat transfer vinyl? If you do not, then you don't need an Easy Press. If you work with regular adhesive backed vinyl, it comes ready to stick onto your project, no heat required. If you work with heat transfer, move on to the next question.

Do you sell your creations? If you're making items to sell, you probably want to invest in an Easy Press. While you can iron your items on with a regular iron, an Easy Press will give you a more professional finish and ensure that your heat transfer stays on your product. If you sell your items, invest (and write it off as a business expense).

If you do not sell your creations, the next thing to consider is how much heat transfer do you work with. **Do you have large volumes?** If you only do a thing here or there for family or yourself, you don't need an Easy Press. If you make a lot of stuff for family or yourself, you might want to look into an Easy Press. You can get by with an iron, but takes more time and effort. How valuable is your time? Consider that you may be spending over a minute per garment with your iron, so you might want to look into a Easy Press if you have a lot of things you're making.

Finally, **do you make large designs?** If you have small designs that fit under your iron,

Do you need an Easy Press?



you can transfer with one press, so you might not need an Easy Press. If you have larger designs, and you have to move your iron several times to cover the whole design, you will probably want to consider investing in a press.

In short - if you make items to sell, make a lot of items or make items with large designs, you may want to invest in an Easy Press. If you only make items for yourself, with smaller designs or don't mind spending time ironing, you probably don't need an Easy Press.

While an Easy Press is certainly an investment, it will help you transfer vinyl quickly and easily and give you a polished product in the end. If you can splurge, you should!



The second most popular question I am asked about heat transfer vinyl is how to know what size to make your design and where to line it up on the shirt.

Preferences in design sizing and where to center your design might vary depending on what you are working on, but there are some general sizing and placement guides you can follow.

In general- adult sized shirt designs should be between 11 and 14 inches. For kids sized shirts, you only need between 5.5 and 9 inches. Of course, the design size can change depending on what you're making, but these are good sizes to start with.

Where to place your design once you have it cut is a little easier.

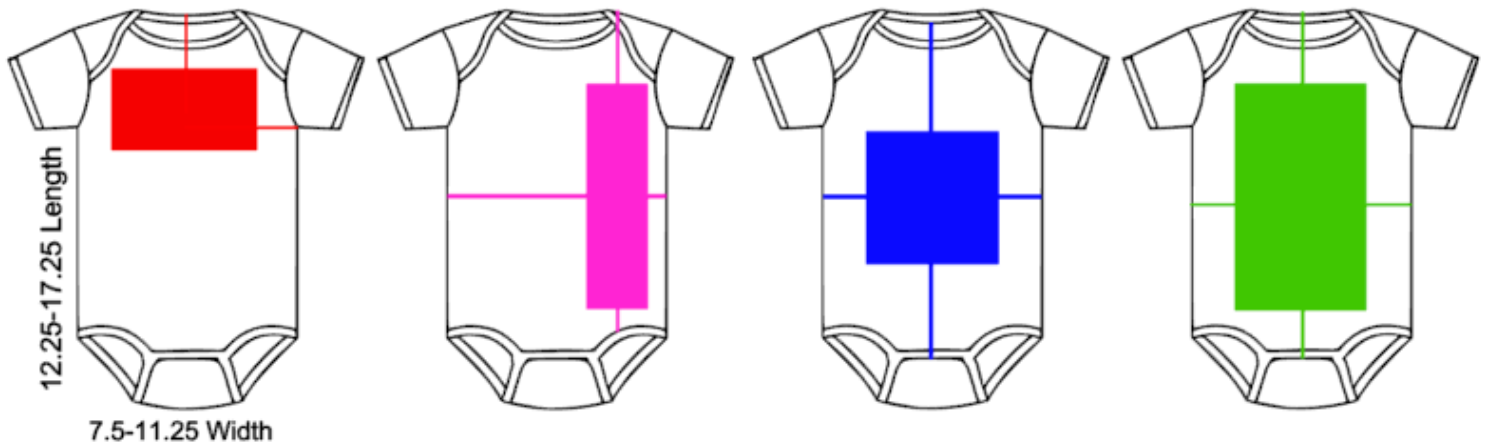
Start by folding the shirt in half and make a crease down the middle with your iron or heat

press. Fold your design in half (fold the non-sticky sides together and make a small crease in the middle of the backing sheet) and then line the two up. To determine how far down on the shirt to go, most people start by lining the design up with the bottom seam of the shirt sleeves. Adjust based on how tall your design is. If you have a very tall skinny design, on most adult shirts, you can measure about 3 inches down from the collar for top placement.

If your shirt has a pocket that you want to put a design on, consider that most pockets are 3.5-5.5 inch square. If you are adding a design to a shirt with a pocket, that is not incorporated into your design, you can usually just pretend the pocket is not there and line up your design like above. Make sure to mind the top of the pocket though, you don't want your heat transfer to cover the top as it will eventually tear when the pocket is utilized, wrecking your design.

How to Align and Size Heat Transfer Designs

If you are working with baby clothes, the rules are a little different:



Baby onesies differ in size based on manufacturer, but on average they are about 7.5-11.25 inches wide and 12.25-17.25 inches tall (depending on size and brand). The diagram above gives you some ideas on alignment options for different shaped designs. In general, you can crease the onesie in half with your iron, similar to how we aligned the design for the full sized shirt. Unless you have a smaller chest design, crease the onesie in half the other way to get cross hairs to align your design with.

Placement and sizing makes a big difference in the end results of your project. If your design is too small or too large, people will notice (and not the way you want them to!).

Let's take a look at an example. For this outfit I used the "I am brand new" design. This design comes sized to fit a typical 0-3 month onesie. If you are making a body suit for a smaller baby (maybe in a premie or newborn size) you will need to make the design a little smaller (5 inches would work well). You probably won't need to size this design up, since you wouldn't put it on a toddler, but shrinking it would be good for smaller shirts.



Making your own custom shirts is a lot of fun and can make great gifts. You may even be able to start up your own small business! Making sure your designs are the right size, and aligned properly, can make all the difference in the end product. I hope you have found these tips helpful!

HOT TOOLS FOR HEAT TRANSFER



EASY PRESS

- Great for large projects.
Must have for a small business.



IRON

- Suitable for small projects.
Remember to apply lots of pressure.



WEEDER

- Helps weed extra vinyl from design.
Must have for intricate designs.



TEFLON SHEET

- Covers design when pressing.
Non-stick surface.



ADHESIVE REMOVER

- Helps remove pressed vinyl.
Have on hand to correct mistakes.



PRESSING PILLOW

- Gives extra support for heat press when
pressing seams, zippers or collars areas.



HEAT TAPE

- Heat resistant tape that helps hold
your design in place while pressing.



BRIGHT PAD

- Useful when weeding glow in the dark
or glitter vinyl or detailed projects.

There are a lot of tools you can use to work with heat transfer, some are a must have and others are just "nice to have." Let's take a closer look at some HTV tools...

DIE CUTTING MACHINE

The first tool you'll need is a die cutting machine. If you have this book, it's likely you have picked your machine already.



EASY PRESS

- Great for large projects.
Must have for a small business.



IRON

- Suitable for small projects.
Remember to apply lots of pressure.

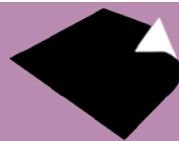
Once you have a die cutting machine, you'll want to look at heating tools. You can apply heat transfer vinyl with either an Easy Press or an iron. Which you chose will depend on how much you heat transfer vinyl you plan on working with and if you plan on selling your creations. You can "get by" just fine with an iron, but if you can splurge, an Easy Press is a great investment to make and a must if you are doing large volumes or selling items!



WEEDER

- Helps weed extra vinyl from design.
Must have for intricate designs.

One of the tools that you'll reach for most often when working with heat transfer is the weeder, also sometimes called a hook tool. The weeder will help you weed (remove) all the extra pieces that aren't part of your design.



TEFLON SHEET

- Covers design when pressing.
Non-stick surface.

A Teflon sheet covers your design while you press it. It is non-stick, so bits of heat transfer vinyl don't get stuck to your press and they help protect your design so it doesn't melt to your press. Don't have a Teflon sheet? No worries, they are fairly inexpensive to pick up. You can use a thin tea towel instead if you wish. It's not non-stick, but it will do the trick. If you're using an iron, you'll still need to cover your design, so a Teflon sheet or tea towel will be a must if you are planning on working a lot with heat transfer material.



PRESSING PILLOW

- Gives extra support for heat press when pressing seams, zippers or collars areas.

Another tool you might use with an Easy Press is a pressing pillow. I used the pressing pillow to help adhere my design when I had the magnetic button in the way (see above). It's also helpful if you are trying to heat press a hat or over the seam of a shirt. Maybe not a must- but a real plus depending on what you make! Alternatively sub out a folded towel for a similar use.



ADHESIVE REMOVER

- Helps remove pressed vinyl. Have on hand to correct mistakes.

Let's face it, mistakes happen. You are bound to make one at some time. Adhesive remover will help you fix them with heat transfer material. Once you get the vinyl off your project, a little adhesive remover will get rid of any residue.



HEAT TAPE

- Heat resistant tape that helps hold your design in place while pressing.

Heat tape is heat resistant and can be pressed or ironed without melting into your material. Use a little bit of heat tape and it will help keep your design in place while you transfer the design to your project surface. Heat tape is especially helpful when working on an awkward surface such as a hat or stuffed animal.



BRIGHT PAD

- Useful when weeding glow in the dark or glitter vinyl or detailed projects.

A Bright Pad is helpful when you are weeding your designs. Cutting heat transfer will leave the slightest of lines for you to weed by. Glitter heat transfer vinyl is even harder to see the lines. Add a Bright Pad behind your cover sheet and those lines will be easier to see which will make weeding a breeze!

Some additional tools you might find helpful:

A sturdy table. Heat presses are heavy, and if you are using an iron, you'll need to press down firmly to make the vinyl transfer over. A sturdy table is a must!

A (sliding) tee square. These are usually used in architecture or industrial design, but they'll help you line up your design and make sure it's on straight.

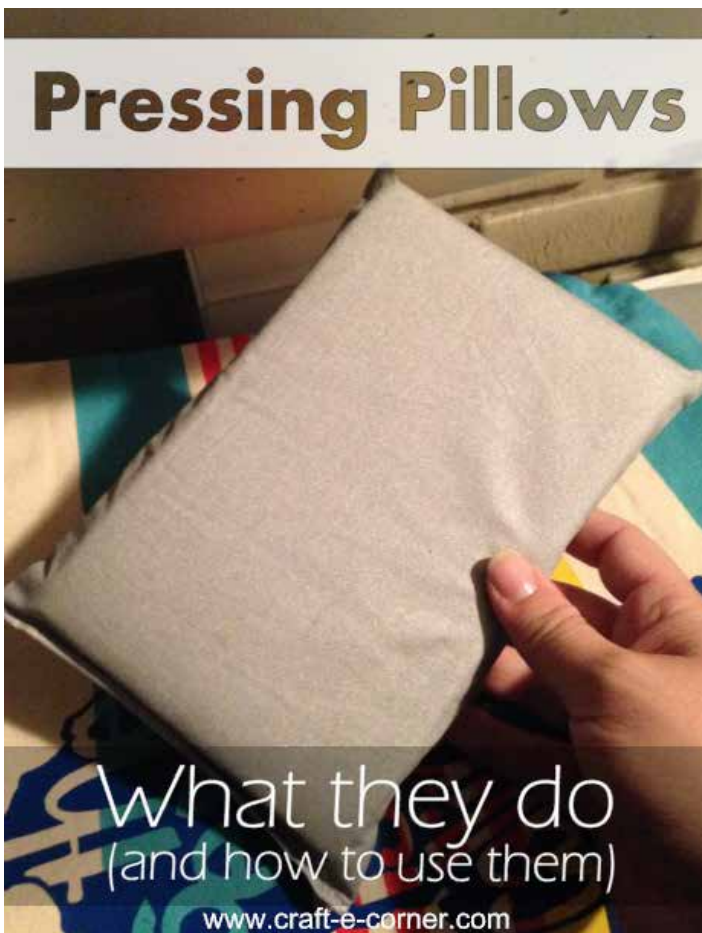
A three ring binder with plastic dividers. This is helpful for storing all your cut and weeded designs. If you have a lot of designs to cut at once, this will be a life saver because you can weed everything at once and stick the designs to the dividers in your binder until you are ready to press everything. If you make designs ahead of time, this will work for storage too!

Heat proof gloves. Heat transfer is all about getting things hot. Whether you're just working with a freshly pressed shirt, or if you're trying to press an awkward project to the top plate of your heat press, heat proof gloves would save your digits from getting burned.

A flat iron. A flat iron is used to flatten/straighten hair. It's also quite useful for small heat transfer jobs or hard to get to spots. That flat iron in your bathroom is like a mini heat press when you think about it! They're great for adding monograms to sandals, initials to a backpack strap or even putting on Girl Scout patches!

A fresh blade. This is more for your die cutting machine, but if you work with a lot of glitter heat transfer especially, and have problems cutting, a new sharp blade will be your best friend.

Baby powder. Speaking of glitter HTV, baby powder is a great "tool" to have on hand. Sprinkle a little on your design and you'll find the lines you need to weed in no time.



This pressing pillow came with my heat press and, besides a thin towel or Teflon sheet, it is probably the most helpful thing that I have for my press! Pressing pillows are squishy, heat resistant pillows that help give you extra squish for your projects. While you don't need it for every project, it comes in handy when you have something bulky in your press or if you are adding HTV over a seam on a shirt, over the stitching on a hat, by a zipper or button. They also help when you have a weird magnetic clasp thing in your bag like I did in this project. If you press something and there isn't enough pressure on your HTV, your material will not stick correctly. Pop a heat press pillow under the trouble spot and press your design again. The pressing pillow will give you the extra pressure you need.

One of our 12 designs is a cute sea horse that I thought would be perfect to add to a beach bag for the summer.



John Muir, the famous naturalist/photographer/founder of the Sierra Club, is known for saying "The mountains are calling and I must go." I decided to change the classic saying to fit our beach bag, so this little sea horse says "The sea is calling and I must go." This design utilizes negative design space, cutting the words out of the shape.

To add the sea horse to my bag, I reversed the design in my die cutting machine software and then cut it from smooth navy colored heat transfer vinyl. I removed all the extra pieces from the design and then lined the design up on my bag where I wanted it. I covered the bag and design with a tea towel and pressed it like I would press anything else normally, I wasn't expecting any hassle. I looked at the bag and then noticed that the top part of the sea horse didn't stick well when I was done. It

was hard to take a picture of it, but the very top part on the sea horse was not stuck down. When heat pressing, you want to see the texture of the fabric in the HTV in this case, I could not see the texture and it was lifting up slightly.



Pressing Pillows: What They Do



I opened the top of the bag and discovered the problem- a magnetic button was on the inside of the bag. The button prevented my press from getting pressure on the part of the design that didn't stick well. This is where the

pressing pillow will come in quite handy! I popped the pillow under the button and covered the entire design with a tea towel before pressing again:



This time, the vinyl stuck correctly and in all spots! If you don't have a pressing pillow, no worries, you can fold up a towel too and use it the same way. I just love the way the bag turned out! We are beach ready (just in time for winter <wink>).



If you're up for a weeding challenge, you'll find it here with this mandala design!



For this sample project, I cut the mandala from silver glitter heat transfer vinyl and layered it on top of fabric to make a very sparkly shirt! The fabric shows through where the mandala has empty space:



When you cut fabric with your die cutting machine, you cannot just stick the fabric to the mat and cut. You need to stabilize the fabric first.

I used iron on fabric stabilizer that has glue on both sides. You iron one side to the fabric and then there is a paper backing which peels off and you can iron the cut fabric to the project. The best part of using an iron on stabilizer? No sewing! I ironed the stabilizer onto the fabric and left the paper backing on to cut:



Follow the presets for cutting fabric with your die cutting machine. It is helpful, if you can, to have a reserved blade for cutting fabric. Paper dulls blades very fast. If you are going to cut fabric with your machine, a blade just for fabric will make that blade last longer than one that is used for paper and fabric. Once the machine cut my outline, I removed the backing sheet from the fabric:



Fabric + Glitter Heat Transfer

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I put the cut fabric shape off to the side and then started working on the mandala. I used glitter silver heat transfer vinyl (HTV) for this part. The shirt I put the design on is gray, so the silver blended a little, but it really sparkles and looks great in real life (glitter is so hard to photograph...).



The fabric layer should NOT be flipped before cutting, but the HTV mandala needs to be because you are cutting the HTV upside down/backwards. When I designed this mandala, I tried to make it symmetrical, but it isn't a perfect mirror so **you need to flip the HTV layer before cutting or it will not line up when you go to press it.**

Once the design is reversed, make sure you tell your machine that you are cutting glitter heat transfer and make any adjustments necessary before cutting. Load your glitter heat transfer shiny side down.

After the design was cut, I weeded it using a sharp pick tool. When weeding it was helpful to have the design pulled up on my computer so I could make sure I was weeding the correct pieces. For this design, I found it easiest to start from the outside and work inward:



Doing all the same pieces of the design before moving onto other sections. It was a process to weed the design, but also a little therapeutic.

It got a little difficult in the middle the design. I ended up having to put some pieces back into place, but they stick right back on to the backing sheet.



Now I was ready to add the layers to the shirt. I started by pressing a line down the middle of the shirt. I folded the shirt in half and pressed it with my heat press:

Folding the shirt in half and pressing will give you a visual to see where the middle of the shirt is.



Next, I lined up the fabric layer with the lines on the shirt making sure that it was centered. Once I was sure the fabric was centered, I lined up the heat transfer. Lining up the heat transfer reminded me of putting the lid back on a carved pumpkin...you have to get it just right to make it fit! Keep rotating those bumps until they line up and then stick the HTV to the fabric layer.

The HTV has a sticky backing sheet so this held the fabric in place and I pressed both layers at once. Alternatively you could press the fabric then the heat transfer:



I covered the design with my towel and pressed once, which stuck the heat transfer to the fabric layer and the fabric layer to the shirt. Next I removed the heat transfer backing sheet, covered the design with the tea towel and then pressed everything again to make sure everything was stuck down.



I covered the design with my towel and pressed once, which stuck the heat transfer to the fabric layer and the fabric layer to the shirt. Next I removed the heat transfer backing sheet, covered the design with the tea towel and then pressed everything again to make sure everything was stuck down.

Although not necessary, you can stitch the fabric layer onto your shirt before covering with your heat transfer. This technique works best with glitter or flock HTV as it hides the seam from the fabric layer better than smooth HTV would. Plus it sparkles.



Cutting HTV Without a Backing Sheet

At some point, you may end up with a piece of heat transfer that has come off the backing sheet. Is it garbage? No! Keep that piece and USE it!

Heat transfer vinyl normally comes on a clear backing/transfer sheet. It's sticky and it holds the vinyl in place so you can put it on your project surface without it moving. If you should ever get a scrap of HTV that comes off the backing sheet, you can still use it, let me show you how!

TIP This technique only really works with Glitter HTV or other thicker material. Smooth heat transfer vinyl gets stretched and distorted as you pull it off the backing sheet and would get stretched out even more when you try to get it off the cutting mat without the carrier sheet- so stick with something that is thicker.

I got a small piece of orange glitter heat transfer vinyl from a trade show that was "garbage" because it didn't have the backing sheet anymore. I thought it would be perfect to use on a shirt so I took it home and used it! Here's a sneak peak at that finished shirt:



When working without a carrier sheet, you may have to more selective of the design that you cut. Once you cut the design, you'll have pieces stuck to your cutting mat without any way to transfer those pieces as a group, so choose what you will cut with that in mind. The "cat nap" design I used on this shirt was perfect for using this backless HTV:



I love these designs. I had a lot of fun designing them and I hope you love punny designs too! I thought the dog tired or cat nap designs would be perfect for a new puppy or kitten's bed! But I have no puppy or kitten to make a bed for, so let's get to making the shirt...



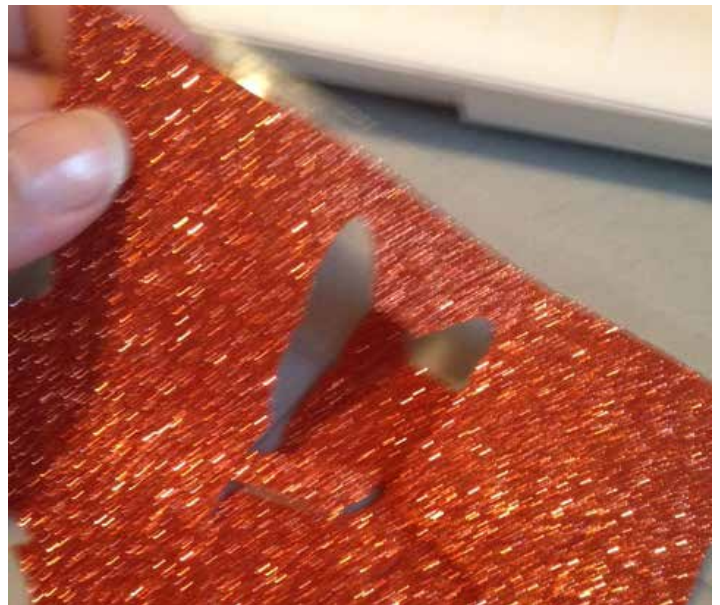
Cutting HTV without the backing sheet breaks all the typical HTV rules. Normally when cutting HTV you:

- cut shiny side down (the shiny side is the transfer sheet). **Since we have no transfer sheet, we're going to cut glitter side up.**
- reverse the design before cutting (because the material is face down and if you don't reverse the design, it would be backwards when you iron it on). **When you don't have a backing sheet on your HTV, cut material side up, so don't reverse the design.**

Let's start by sticking the vinyl directly to the cutting mat, glitter side up:



Size the design to fit your scrap of vinyl. In this case I made this 3 inches by 4 inches. Do not reverse your design (resist!). The cut setting you use will be the same for any heat transfer project since you would normally be cutting through the vinyl and not the backing sheet. When my machine was done cutting, I had two pieces (because the word "nap" cuts the cat in half (poor kitty):



The picture is a little blurry, but you can see when you pull up the extra HTV, you'll be left with your cut pieces stuck on your cutting mat. Ever so gently pick up those pieces, a spatula tool is helpful to work it off the cutting mat. I moved the top then the bottom piece to my shirt and aligned them:



TIP

I put the design in the upper right hand corner of the mat because it was quite sticky in that corner. If you change where you cut on your cutting mat, you will get more life out of it.

Cutting HTV Without a Backing Sheet

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The heat transfer won't be sticky at all, so you'll want to align the pieces of your design where you will iron or press them in place. If you have a scrap of HTV backing sheet, you can stick that over the top to hold it in place:



The HTV backing sheet I put over the design is hard to see in the photo above because it's clear- but whenever I have a larger project with heat transfer vinyl, I save the backing sheet and use them when I need a piece to hold things in place.

If you don't have a scrap of backing sheet, no worries, press the top layer for a quick second (just to tack it in place), then put the bottom piece in place and then do a full press over the whole design. Make sure to cover your vinyl before pressing with a Teflon sheet or thin fabric!

I almost never throw away glitter HTV scraps. Big or small! Adding a little bit of glitter to a project can make such a difference, so I hoard those scraps! I hope you'll hang on to your "garbage" too, now that you know how to cut without the backing sheet!



These designs are super cute for shirts for you or your pet! What sleepy puppy wouldn't love a snug pet coat with a dog tired design on it?



Of course, you can also cut these designs from HTV that is on the backing sheet and treat it like a normal sheet of HTV.

I read somewhere that you can use heat transfer vinyl on wood. This is supposed to make it so it's less obvious that it's vinyl because the heat transfer vinyl melts into the surface and it looks a little more like it's painted on instead of being vinyl. I was intrigued to try this technique out and wanted to see how it would work.

Here's a sneak peak at the finished project that I made while testing this technique:



I found this chunk of wood floating around in the lake and fished it out. You never know when you might come up with a good project for beat up drift wood so I grab it up whenever I see a piece!

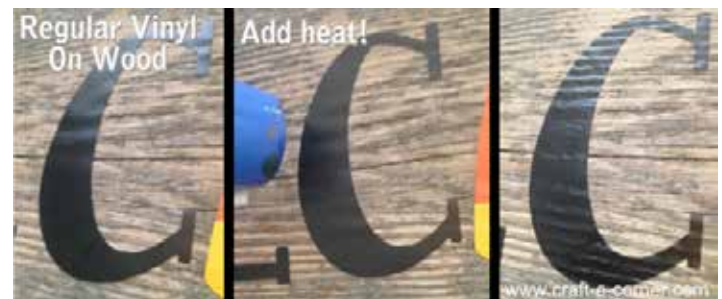
I painted the wood with teal and white acrylic paint. I used light coats and sanded it once the paint dried to make the wood show through more.

Normally I would use adhesive backed vinyl for this type of project, but I wanted to test out the heat transfer vinyl and see how it would work. There are a few reasons why I could see using heat transfer vinyl over adhesive backed vinyl...mostly if you had a color in heat transfer vinyl that you did not have with regular vinyl, I could completely understand using what you already have on hand. Having never put HTV on wood, I was curious to see how it would work. I grabbed a scrap of wood and used some scrap vinyl I had around to test it out:

I tested adhesive backed vinyl (regular vinyl) with heat, adhesive backed vinyl without heat, glitter heat transfer vinyl and smooth heat transfer vinyl. Here are my results!



The adhesive backed vinyl with heat is the method I would probably recommend if you want to add vinyl to a wood project. For the best results, lightly heat up the vinyl with an embossing heat tool (or blow dryer) and press the vinyl into the wood as you go. Heating the vinyl will slightly melt it and allow you to see the wood grain resulting in a painted on look. You might think it was painted on if you didn't know any better:



Next I wanted to see what just adhesive backed vinyl (no heat) would look like on wood. This worked, but it really looked like a sticker. If you were working with very smooth wood, this would be fine, but if you have grain in your wood, the vinyl might have trouble sticking with all the grooves.

Next I moved into heat transfer vinyl. I tried glitter heat transfer first and it worked wonderfully. I could see using this if you wanted to add some real sparkle to your project without making a mess with glue and glitter. The glitter heat transfer really adhered well to the wood. It is thicker so you cannot see the

Adding HTV to Wood

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wood grain through the design. While this didn't make it look painted on, it gave a nice solid glitter shape without any mess. It worked better than I expected it to.

Smooth heat transfer vinyl was my final test. This is what the person in the post that I read used, and she really liked the results. After trying it for myself, this would probably be my least recommend method on something with wood grain. For my experiment, the smooth heat transfer just did not give a nice result. You can see the one corner kind of melted... this could have been a fluke and it might work well if you want to try it out, but I would skip it in this case. The end result also kind of looks like melted plastic. On super smooth wood, it would probably work well, but then why not just use regular vinyl (unless you didn't have that color)?

I decided to use glitter heat transfer vinyl for my project. The design I am using is one of four skeleton keys included in the file. You can use all the keys together or use just one or two at a time:



I love skeleton keys and thought they would be very versatile designs that you could use for many different holidays. For this project, I thought I could use all four keys and tile them across the board:



But then decided that four sparkly keys might be overkill, so I chose just one key to be my accent. I aligned the heat transfer design with my plaque and used my iron to iron it in place (this piece of wood was way too thick to close the top plate on my heat press, but the iron worked well too!).



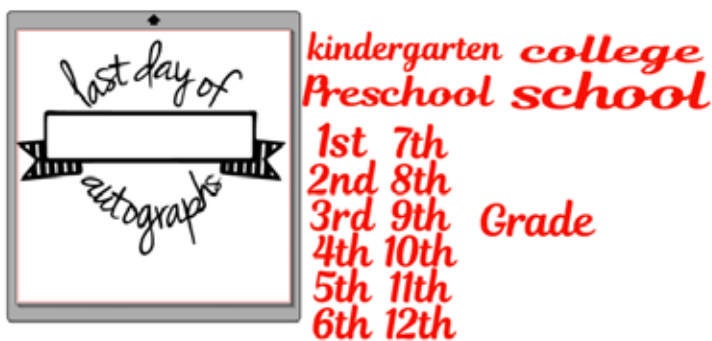
Once I had the key in place, I removed the heat transfer backing sheet and then I added some key hooks. I found a 4 pack of screw back hooks at the hardware store and I added them to the sign by screwing them in by hand.

To finish the project, I added in "hello" at the top with regular vinyl that heated up and pressed into the wood grain:



Personalizing a stuffed animal is so easy, you'll wonder why you didn't do it before! Use a heat press or an iron and make a stuffed animal for any occasion from last day of school, baby shower gifts, wedding mementos and more! With a little heat transfer, you can make a custom gift that they are sure to love.

I decided to create some fun stuffed animals for the kids to use on their last day of school. To create these custom autograph animals, I used some plain white stuffed animals and added the design with Heat Transfer Vinyl (HTV) using my heat press. For this project, I used the "Last day of Autographs" file:



This file was saved so you can see the all the pieces (so it's quite zoomed out). You will probably need to resize the design. The size you need will depend on what project you are putting it on (more on that later).

This design is perfect for collecting last day of school autographs. I have included all the school grades all the way through college, just in case you have a need for a project. I decided to veer away from a t-shirt like so many people do and created these cute lil puppies instead:



Autograph stuffed animals are the same concept as a shirt, but they're so much cuter! I know, who needs another stuffed animal? But the kids are dying over them and can't wait to have their friends sign their dogs.

Adding heat transfer vinyl to stuffed animals isn't much different than adding HTV to just about anything else, but I have a few things I learned while doing these, so let's get into it.

First thing you'll need to do is measure your stuffed animal. These dogs are on the small size so this decal ended up being pretty small. I measured my puppy and decided I needed the overall design to be about 2 by 4 inches at most. I resized the design to fit making sure to resize all pieces of the design at the same time so the words still fit inside the design box.

TIP Changing where you cut on your mat will help prolong the life of your mat, even if you're not cutting through the material.

Once I had the designs cut, I removed all the pieces that weren't part of the design (weeding). Good light and a sharp hook tool helped, especially because this design was so little.

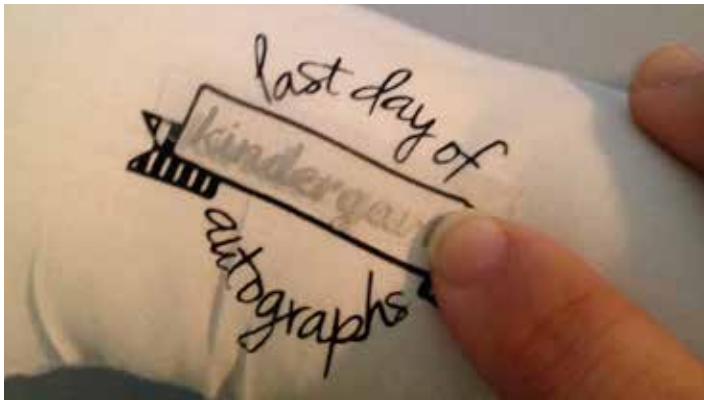
When the design was all ready, I lined it up the black "Last Day of Autographs" piece and stuck it right to the stuffed animal taking advantage of the sticky backing sheet the HTV comes on.

If you have heat resistant tape, this would be a great time to utilize it. Heat resistant tape can withstand the temperatures needed to transfer heat transfer designs to fabric, and a little goes a long way. You just need to hold it in place while pressing. Once the design was lined up, I put it in my heat press and gave the pup a squeeze:

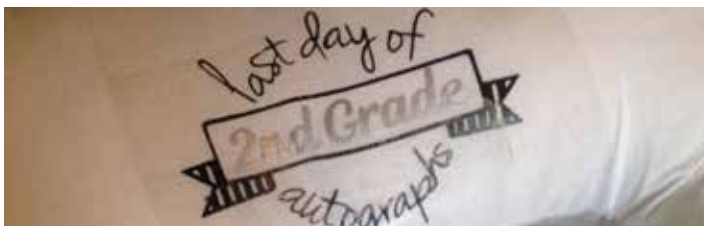
Personalizing Stuffed Animals with HTV



Make sure to cover your design with a Teflon sheet or thin fabric. Next, I peeled the backing sheet off and lined up the grade inside the little box:



It was going pretty well, so I didn't think twice when I stuck this in place, covered with a tea towel and gave it another press. I used a larger piece of HTV backing sheet that I had left over to ensure that it stayed in place.



Also, instead of closing the dog between the plates on the heat press, I pressed the stuffed animal against the top plate being careful to watch my hands:



I rolled the dog slightly while pressing the animal against the hot plate.



These dogs have no fur (they are actually made to be written on), but you can personalize stuffed animals with some fuzz too. Look for shorter fuzz so your HTV will stick well and not have weird patches of hair sticking up. This is a zebra I made as a personalized baby gift. It has nice short fuzz and worked really well with the HTV:



If you have a slightly longer fur on your stuffed animal, you can try trimming the fuzz down in the area where you are going to put the design.

TIP

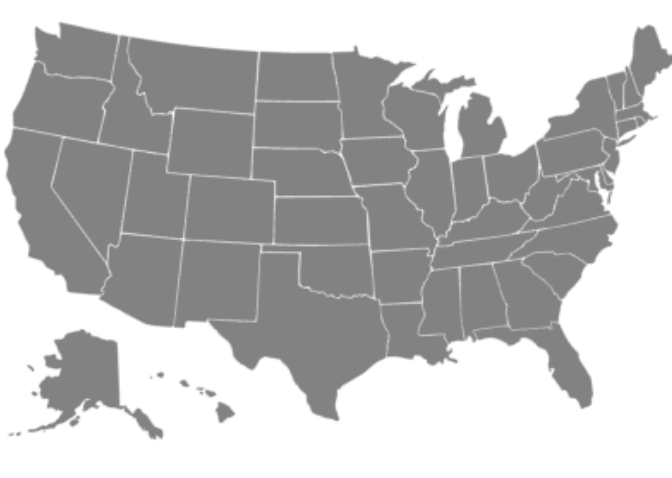
Keep in mind that the eyes and noses on most stuffed animals are plastic. Make sure that you do not get the nose or eyes under your iron or heat press because they will melt (and it's not pretty!).

Distressed fonts and shapes are so on trend. While you can always buy pre-created distressed fonts and shapes, learning how to make your own will give you artistic freedom (and it's easier than you think).

I wanted to create a distressed design for my newest reusable shopping bag. It was just a plain bag and it needed something on it! Here's a peak at the finished project:



To create this bag, I used the "U.S. Map" design. This design includes all 50 states and you can manipulate the file so you can separate the individual states.



We are located in the frozen tundra, so I am going to work with the Wisconsin state shape.

Before cutting my design, I considered my options to achieve the distressed look I wanted. There are several ways one can distress vinyl, a few options:

Option #1: You can use a distressed style font or pre-distressed shape, but I don't like to rely on what is already out there. I like making whatever I want.

Option #2: Build the distressed pattern into your design for your machine to cut. I think this technique would work, but it would take forever for the machine to cut all those little details and then there would be tedious weeding afterwards. Plus, it's too predictable if you wanted to make more than one of the same project. I like that distressing is random!

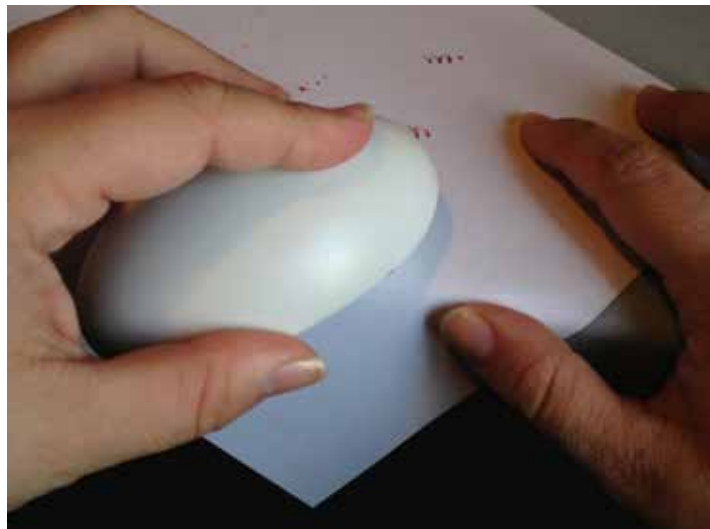
I decided on Option #3, distressing the vinyl manually after the machine cuts the undistressed design. I cut the design and then before I weeded anything, I used a PedEgg (a pedicure tool) to take random chunks out of the heat transfer vinyl (I use this PedEgg for this purpose only):



How to Distress HTV

Test the technique out before you go full tilt into it and make sure you are achieving the results you like. I found that holding the vinyl over the edge of the table made it easier for the file to take small pieces of the heat transfer vinyl.

TIP This is red heat transfer vinyl, but the backing of it (which is facing up in the photo below) is white. Most HTV has the same color on both sides, one is usually shiny and the other dull, but that is not always the case:



Make sure you go all the way through the vinyl to the sticky clear carrier sheet. If all you do is scuff the back of the vinyl, it will not give you a distressed look.

Once I felt like I had enough random chunks taken out of the vinyl, I weeded the design. You could weed the design and then distress it, but the carrier sheet is sticky and all those little bits you are removing will stick to the carrier sheet. I didn't want extra little pieces on the inside of my letters or around my state, so I waited to weed until I was done distressing to keep all those little bits from becoming part of my final project.

Once I fully weeded the design, I pressed like normal and the project was complete:

I think there is a method to the distressing madness and I need to experiment a little more, but I'm pretty happy with the level of distressing that I achieved:

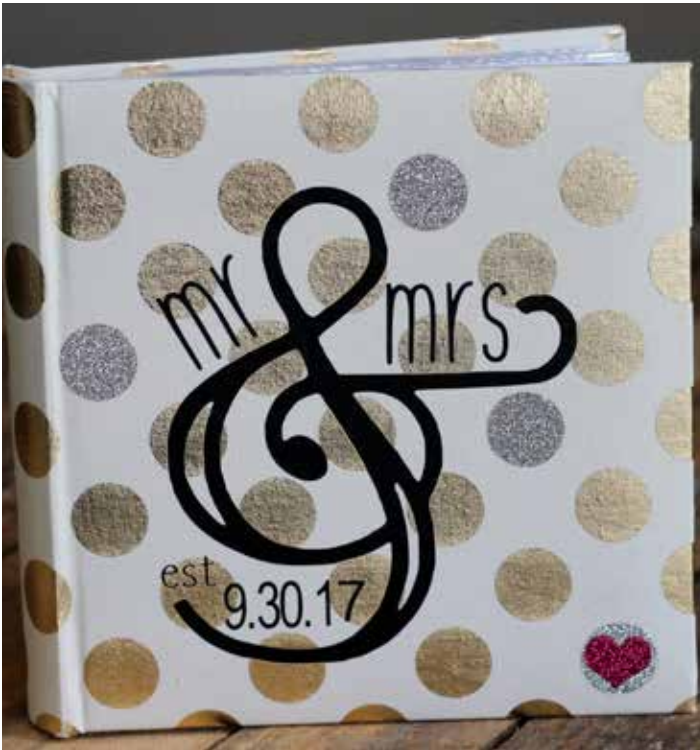


Don't have a PedEgg? No problem- you can use other "distressing" tools. All you need is something with "teeth" to scrap pieces of the vinyl off. A cheese grater would be a good alternative. You could probably find all sorts of tools to use for this purpose, experiment on a scrap piece of HTV to see what gives you the look you like most!

To get the words cut out of the shape, simply overlap the words with the design. When the designs overlap, you'll be able to remove the words from the solid shape which will give you the negative space design like I used in this bag.

Weddings are all about the bride and groom and celebrating them. Who wouldn't want a custom album for their wedding pictures? This would be great for guest photos:

For this project, I decided to use the Mr. & Mrs. design, which is perfect for weddings! The design is already made, just add in a date or name and instant present!



You can add vinyl designs to something that already has a design on it - for example - I found this pretty gold polka dotted photo album and thought it would look great with a custom cover:

For my project, I decided to add the wedding date in the bottom of the &. I added a type box and put the date in, then flipped the design and cut from smooth black heat transfer vinyl (don't forget to mirror the design before cutting!):



Customizing Wedding Gifts

To heat press the design onto the album, I lined the design up on the cover then hung the plastic pages inside the album off the side of my heat press so they didn't melt. This also let me close my heat press on the cover and get enough pressure on the book to transfer the vinyl:

This design would also be great for a pillow or wooden sign as well! If the est. doesn't fit into your project, you can just delete it and put the last name instead of an established date!:



I love snarky coffee cups, don't you? And if that funny cup is a little sparkly? Yes, please! Personalizing a coffee cup is an easy gift idea, and is actually pretty easy.



I've always been a crafter. I enjoy doing different types of crafts. Especially using materials in unexpected ways, I love a good challenge. So when I heard about putting glitter heat transfer on a coffee cup, I thought it sounded like a fun idea and gave it a whirl. I love the way it looked, but I have to say, it was actually an utter failure. Don't let my pretty picture fool you:



Sadly this mug only look this way for about a day or two. I'll show you how I added the heat transfer and then what I did instead because the heat transfer failed me.

The design I used on my mug is a strong coffee design:



I measured my cup and sized the design to fit below the brim of my mug. I've actually tried this design three times on this coffee cup and I'll tell you what I learned from each go round.

First try: I cut the entire design out of smooth black heat transfer and pressed. Complete failure. I took no photos. I was never going to speak of it again...but I figured this was a good time to tell you about it...the smooth heat transfer moved and twisted and didn't transfer right at all. I would not recommend using smooth heat transfer on a mug. Moving on...

Second try: I switched to glitter heat transfer. It's thicker, I've seen it done on Pinterest, this is going to work (I said with hope to myself). So I cut the arrows and regular text out of black glitter heat transfer and the "strong coffee" layer out of silver. I trimmed the carrier sheet around the strong coffee layer as small as I could around the words and stacked the two layers by sticking the silver layer in the middle of the black layer:

How (not) to Make Custom Coffee Cups

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Next I lined the design up on my mug:



I used a tape measurer to keep the handle steady (because it was handy). I heated up my home iron as hot as it would go and relied on the carrier sheet from the heat transfer to hold the design in place (which worked really well actually). I covered the mug with a tea towel and pressed down as hard as I could while ironing in sections and rolling the iron as I went.

Everything seemed to be going well. The vinyl took a bit to adhere to the cup, but It WAS working. Once I got the vinyl to come off the carrier sheet, I used the nose of my iron to press down on some of the parts that refused to stick (apparently glitter heat transfer doesn't melt the like smooth heat transfer does when you touch it with your iron...)

I finally got it all in place and I was super excited. I mean, look at this cup! It was going to be my "Monday Mug." (grin):



But then it all went wrong...I don't know what happened, really, but about a week later the vinyl started coming up in several spots. I tried re-ironing it, I even used my heat press, but it just would not stick. I couldn't help myself:

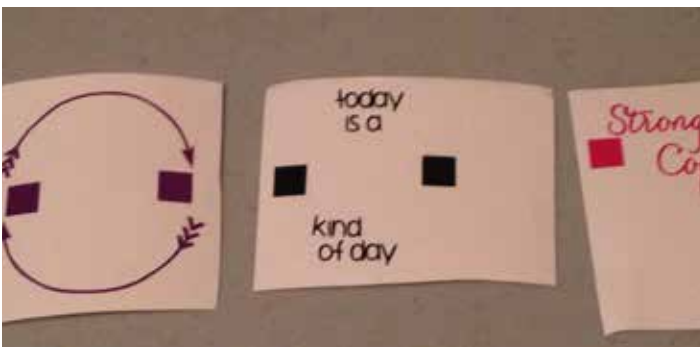


Oh the horror (sad face):



It literally peeled right off. So sad...it was pretty while it lasted.

Third try: This time I was determined to just make a mug. I really love this design and I really wanted on a cup. So I switched gears and changed from HTV to permanent adhesive backed vinyl. I added some alignment boxes to my design and cut my layers:



I layered the vinyl and then, balancing the mug in my lap, I transferred the vinyl:



In the end, I would not recommend using heat transfer vinyl on a mug. Save your glitter HTV, it's too pretty to be wasted! If you want to personalize a mug for someone, use some permanent (glossy) adhesive backed vinyl and you'll be golden.



How to: Knockout Designs + HTV

Knockout designs are so much fun! You have one shape or word "knocked out" of another. In this case, I created a knock out of a reindeer:



To work with a knock out design, cut your image from the separate colors then piece them together:



Cut your first color, in my case green, then weed out the extra. Next cut the second color, red, and remove the extra vinyl. Put the design together like a jig saw puzzle. I layered the pieces on top of each other to see that they all fit properly and plan the best way to reassemble them on my pillow sham:



Once I figured out my plan of attack, I prepped my pillow sham. To make sure my design would be straight, I folded the sham in half and ironed a crease down the middle. I folded it the other way and creased it down the middle again. This gave me a bulls eye to line up the design with. I started off with the layer of green vinyl. I started with the largest piece and then pressed each of the smaller pieces until the entire green layer was completely transferred to the sham:



I covered the design with a thin cloth and used my heat press to press the design one more time. Next I removed the clear carrying sheet and lined up the red deer and pressed the deer in place.

I started piecing together the smaller pieces. Aligning and pressing each piece into place. I started with the top letters (ER), Next, I moved onto the antler pieces:



Some of the last row of green was easier to line up after I pressed the antlers:



Make sure to cover the vinyl with a sheet or towel before pressing. A Teflon sheet is handy here, but I usually use a flower sack towel. It is important to cover the vinyl because glitter heat transfer vinyl can melt when it comes in direct contact with an iron or heat press. While a heat press is not necessary for doing this type of project, it really came in handy when putting together all the pieces for this pillow. This sham was a lot of work, but I was able to cut a larger design than what my size vinyl would allow for using this piecing technique, so totally worth it!

Once I was done piecing it all together, I put the pillow in the sham and this project was d.o.n.e!



If you were working with a smaller sized design, simply press the green layer and then line up the red layer and press again- ta-done!

How to Heat Press HTV to a Hat

I don't make many hats, but wanted to create a custom one for "hat day" at school, without investing in anything more than heat transfer vinyl and the hat. No fancy attachments, no special tape...I didn't have to pick up anything special for this project, but it turned out great!

Adding heat transfer vinyl to a hat is completely doable with a regular flat heat press or household iron, you just have to find a way to support your project so you can get enough pressure on the vinyl.

This project highlights the cute owl design:



I measured my hat and sized the owl to fit between the seams. Glitter heat transfer is a completely different animal than smooth heat transfer. It's much thicker so you have to make sure you adjust your blade to cut through the thicker material. Go with the settings your machine has for glitter HTV.

TIP For hats, glitter heat transfer or flock heat transfer are recommended. I didn't go over any seams with this project (just because the size of the owl fit within the seams), but if you did go over seams, glitter or flock heat transfer would hide the seam better than smooth HTV.

Once the owl was cut, I weeded the design:



I heated up my heat press and grabbed a towel. The type of towel does not really matter, I grabbed this beach towel because it was colorful (truth). Fold the towel in half once or twice length wise and then roll it up towards the middle. I opted to roll it from both ends, but you can do whatever works for you:



I put the hat on the towel and lined up my design:



I slightly rolled the design while heating it. If you do not have a heat press, you can use a regular iron as well with similar technique.

Next, I wanted to add "I'm a real hoot!" to the bill of the hat. I cut the design out of silver glitter heat transfer and lined it up, relying on the sticky carrier sheet to hold it in place while I pressed the design. I used a towel to press it against the top plate of my press again. Easy peasy lemon squeezy, as my daughter would say!



You can use this technique for just about any awkward item you want to add heat transfer to. The important thing is to keep your hand protected. Heat presses get over 300 degrees, as long as you protect your hand, you can hold just about anything to the top plate of your heat press, apply pressure and transfer the design! If you need to use an iron, just protect your surfaces so you don't end up with an iron print on the table! This hat was a big hit at "hat day" and it was pretty simple to do!

Did you know that glitter heat transfer vinyl is magic? When you cut it, the cut lines magically disappear! I've learned a few tricks to help reveal the lines to make weeding easier, and you might be surprised, click below for some ways to make glitter HTV easier to work with.

If you've ever worked with smooth heat transfer vinyl, you have probably relied on the lines that your blade leaves behind as a guide on where to weed...when you work with glitter heat transfer, those lines are quite hard to see. It's like magic, they just disappear! Here are some suggestions I've tried to try to make them reappear (thus making glitter heat transfer easier to work with).

When I cut the design for my hat, I got ready to weed and noticed there were no lines in sight! The machine had cut the material, but there were no cut lines to help me weed the interior parts of the design. I did some research and pulled together some suggestions on how to uncover the weed lines once again. Here are my findings:



Trick #1: Use a light table

Methodology: If you put a glitter heat transfer design on a light table, you may be able to see the light shine through where the design was cut.

My results: I don't have a light table, so I tried holding the design up to a brightly lit window. It actually helped a little, but wasn't project friendly. If you're doing a lot of glitter heat transfer, it's totally worth the investment

to get a light table. Helpful, but not helpful today.

Verdict: Plausible.



Trick #2: Freeze the vinyl!

Methodology: Throw your cut design in the freezer for a little bit. The thought is that vinyl shrinks when it freezes which should pull the design pieces away from each other, creating a larger gap that is easier to see with glitter heat transfer.

My results: I tried it out, popped the vinyl in the freezer while I was making dinner. After we were all done eating, I grabbed the vinyl from the freezer and was excited to see the results. Unfortunately, it didn't work that well. The design warmed up to room temperature (which did not take long), and then I was right back a square one.

Verdict: Fail.



Trick #3: Use a sketch pen on the back of your design to see where you need to weed.

Methodology: Before unloading your design from your machine, swap the blade for a sketch pen and have the machine draw the

design with a sketch pen. This will leave you with a visible outline that you can then use to weed.

My results: I did not attempt this. I was putting my design on a lightly colored hat and did not have another hat, nor more heat transfer to do it all over again should the pen bleed through the vinyl or show on the inside of the hat. I'd give this a go with dark vinyl and dark project surface, but probably not otherwise.

Verdict: Plausible.



Trick #4: Use baby powder.

Methodology: Cut the design and dust with baby powder.

My results: This sounded harmless and easy enough, so I gave it a whirl:

Verdict: Perfection!

Give a (very) light dusting of baby powder, rub it around on the design and it "magically" highlights all the cut lines making it easy to see where you need to weed.

The baby powder did not seem to have any effect on the vinyl. The vinyl stayed stuck to the carrier sheet without any problem and transferred to the hat easily as well. Regular corn starch would likely work as well.

