

Guidelines for use with CitadelSix Custom Design Water-slide Decals / Transfers*

* Please note that in the UK, where CitadelSix Custom Design is located, decals are more generally referred to as 'transfers'.

The sheet of water-slide decals that accompanies these instructions has been laser-printed by CitadelSix Custom Design onto high-quality white decal carrier film.

To obtain the best results, it is highly recommended that you read through all the instructions provided on this sheet **first** and then follow the steps exactly as described:

1. Paint the surface on which the decals are to be applied with a gloss varnish or lacquer. Make sure the gloss finish is thoroughly dry before you apply any decals to the surface.
2. Using a razor-sharp scalpel or craft-knife, and with the decal sheet laid flat on a cutting mat (it's not advisable to use scissors, as these can damage the decal and create a roughened edge which will spoil the finished product), very carefully trace around the outline of the decal shape with the blade (use only a very light pressure on the blade) so that it only cuts through the white decal carrier film but **not** through the backing paper. Use the printed outline shape of the design, such as a shield for example, as a cutting guide, so that the decal will cover the entire shape of the shield and avoid any unsightly edges showing on the finished item.

Note 1: Decals with predominantly white internal fills or backgrounds have a border printed to outline the shape that you need to cut around. Cut along this printed border to obtain the correct shape and size of the decal.

Note 2: For very small decals that have predominantly regular shapes and straight borders, such as Livery Badges, it is easier to cut an entire row of the decals from the sheet at a time. To do this:

- Lay a steel ruler over the top of a row of decals, so that the edge of the ruler lies along and parallel with the bottom edge of the printed row.
- Holding the ruler firmly in place and using its edge as a guide, cut along the row of decals with a razor-sharp scalpel or craft-knife.
- Now do exactly the same for the top edge of the row. You should now have a strip of decals.
- Finally, just cut along the printed borders / edges of each decal in the strip to separate them into individual ones.

Note 3: Some decals may need to be cut into smaller separate sections so that they can be fitted around any raised details modelled onto the surface of the miniature, such as sword belts, chainmail paxanes, armour pauldrons, guardbraces and besagews, horse reins, saddles, harness, folded or flapped-back trappers, barding and caparisons, etc.

Technical tip: If you find that the colour surface of the decal is chipping or flaking off when you are cutting around its edge, then it is probably because you're either holding the knife blade at too steep an angle or the blade is not sharp enough. If the blade **is** razor-sharp, then the cutting angle of the blade is too steep and you're effectively dragging the blade across the surface of the decal and 'scraping' some of the colour off its surface. To reduce this happening:

- a. Hold the knife blade at quite a shallow angle, so that the handle of the craft-knife is about 30° to the surface of the decal, and you're slicing with the blade rather than cutting.
 - b. Try to slice the decal along the outside edge of the printed area. You can always trim the decal off after it's been applied and dried using a very sharp blade (such as a razor blade or scalpel). However, this does require great care and practice to avoid damaging the painted surfaces immediately adjacent to the decal's edges. An easier method is to paint just a little over any ragged edges of the decal so that they blend in with the surrounding surface colour and are therefore hidden.
3. Next, cut out the decal from the backing paper but leaving a border of about a millimetre or two around the outside of the actual decal. The surplus border of decal film can be lifted away from around the decal with the point of the craft-knife or a pair of needle-nose tweezers once the decal has been soaked in warm water (see next step). This border will also provide a convenient edge with which the backing paper can be held with tweezers while the decal itself is slid into place on the miniature.
 4. Fill a saucer or shallow dish with warm water, into which a very small

drop of wetting agent or washing-up liquid has been added. This will help the decal to slide better from the backing paper onto the surface on which the decal is to be applied.

Note: A better alternative to using wetting agent or washing-up liquid in the warm water is to brush a coat of Microscale's Micro-Set Decal Solvent™ (product MI-1) directly onto the surface to which the decal is to be applied. Micro-Set acts as a wetting agent, as well as helping to form a stronger bond between the decal adhesive and the surface on which the decal is to be applied, and softens the decal slightly so that it will conform to the surface shape better. Also recommended is Microscale's Micro-Sol Decal Solvent™ (product MI-2) which softens the carrier film and helps the decal to 'snuggle down' over any raised surface details.

5. Place the decal into the warm water (the decal may curl slightly and then flatten out, depending on the warmth of the water). After about 30 seconds lift the decal out and place it onto some absorbent paper, such as kitchen roll, to soak up most of the surplus water.
6. If you are using Micro-Set Decal Solvent, apply a coat of this over the surface on which the decal is to be applied and, using a small, moistened paint brush, slide the decal off its backing paper onto the Micro-Set Decal Solvent while it is still wet. Apply a coat of Micro-Sol Decal Solvent to the decal at this point to help it conform to any raised surface details.

Technical tip: If the surface on which you're applying the decal is very sharply curved or uneven, the decal will only mould itself to as much as it will naturally stretch before it starts to 'tent', i.e. leave gaps between the underside of the decal film and the peaks and troughs of sculpted details modelled on the surface of the miniature. So, to help the decal fit closer to the surface, you may need to lightly brush on another application of Micro-Sol with the tip of a fine paint brush to help release a little more of the resistance of the carrier film to reshape itself to the contoured surface.

Note 1: Decals will **not** conform well to highly detailed / sculpted surfaces. They only work best on flat or gently undulating / curved surfaces.

Note 2: Very tiny decals, such as Livery Badges for the front left sides of livery jacks and coats, will tend to be quite stiff and resistant to conforming to surface shapes. This is simply because the decals are so small in area which makes it more difficult for the decal film to flex (bend). The problem can be overcome by applying a drop of Micro-Sol or Micro-Set Decal Solvent with the tip of a paintbrush to the decal once it has been applied, then leaving the decal to soften and settle onto the model's surface. A **very** gentle press with an absorbent tissue or piece of paper kitchen towel will help the decal to lie flat. Any visible edges of the decal can be blended-in with the help of an over-coat of clear **acrylic*** varnish once the decal has thoroughly dried.

7. Dab the decal **very** lightly and carefully with a tissue, or some other absorbent paper or soft cloth, to soak up any surplus moisture and to remove any small air bubbles that may have been trapped under the decal, then leave the decal to set. **Don't** be tempted to reposition or touch the decal once you've applied it to the surface and it's settled into its final position, as you may damage the decal while it is still softened by the Micro-Set and Micro-Sol Decal Solvents.

Note: Quite often, especially when using Micro-Set or Micro-Sol, the decal may wrinkle when the liquid is first applied to its surface. **Don't panic** and be tempted to try to smooth the wrinkles out, because they will gradually disappear as the decal and Micro-Set or Micro-Sol dries.

8. Once the decal is thoroughly dry and before applying a final protective coat of gloss or matt varnish to the decal, 'touch-in' the edges of the decal with a matching colour to help blend its edges into the surrounding surface area's colour. This will also help to disguise any chips or damage accidentally caused when cutting the decal from the backing sheet. See the **Matching Paints to Decal Colours** section of the **Guidelines, Hints & Tips** page on the website at <http://www.citadelsix.co.uk/>
9. Finally, it is recommended that you give the decal a coat of clear gloss or matt **acrylic*** varnish to help protect the printed image and produce the final finish you want to obtain.

If you have any comments or suggestions you'd like to make about improving these guidelines or concerning CitadelSix Custom Design decals, then please send an e-mail to: citadelsix@btinternet.com.

Thank you for your custom

Geoff Buss

* Do **NOT** use a solvent-based varnish to over-coat the decals. The solvent may soften the medium used to print the decals and spoil or even damage the decal's surface.