

Plaque Sublimation Tips

The following information will help you to produce good looking sublimated plaques with consistency. If you are having success by doing something different or not performing each step outlined below and having success, don't change. If you are having trouble or wish to try to improve your results, these instructions may be helpful. If these steps do not produce the desired results, please contact your distributor for additional support.

REMOVE THE PROTECTIVE FILM

Start at a corner using your fingernail to start the protective film (peel coat). Grab the lifted edge between your fingers and pull towards the opposite corner.

HINT 1: If you have already removed the peel coat from some other part you can use the tacky side of that piece to start the corner of the filmed piece. With the tacky side down, start at the corner and drag back toward the center of the plaque.

HINT 2: Place the plaque face up in your press. Place a regular piece of copy paper on top of the plaque. Close the platen so it rests easily on the plaque but is not clamped for 5 seconds. Open the press, remove the plaque and remove the film immediately. This is just enough time to activate the adhesive on the protective film and allow for easier removal.

HINT 3: With the press open, gently touch one corner of the plaque to the heated platen. This activates or loosens the peel coat's adhesive glue line for easier removal, particularly rolling it off towards you with the pad of your index finger.

PREP THE EDGES

Once the protective film has been removed, the edge where the white sublimatable surface meets the black or mahogany foiled edge must be cleaned. This is best accomplished by "scratching" along this edge with your fingernail, credit card, ruler, FRP name badge, etc. You will notice a dusting of black edge foil on your tool and on the sublimatable surface. This must be wiped off prior to taping down the transfer.

REMOVE EXCESS MOISTURE

Place the plaque's sublimatable surface up in your heat press. Place one clean blank sheet of paper over the plaque. Lower the heat platen down until it rests on the plaque. It is not necessary to clamp the plaque tightly. After 15-20 seconds, raise the platen and remove the plaque. Allow the plaque to cool.

HINT: Some people repeat this step twice.

POSITION AND TAPE TRANSFER

Lay the transfer face up on a flat clean surface. Place the plaque's sublimatable surface down on the transfer. Center the plaque in the transfer so there is an equal amount of bleed on all edges. While holding the plaque down with one

hand, grab one corner of the transfer and fold it towards the center of the plaque. Tape this corner to the back of the plaque and repeat the process for the opposite corner. Your plaque with transfer should look like Figure 1 below.

SUBLIMATE THE PLAQUE

You should now be able to sublimate the plaque. We recommend 75 to 90 seconds at 400 F and medium [firm] clamp pressure. Large parts will require a longer dwell time to produce optimal color. For any pieces that are larger than 9"x12", we recommend increasing the dwell time by 15 seconds over the recommended setting for that substrate. If necessary, increase the dwell time in 10 second increments until you achieve optimum color.

Please exercise extreme caution when removing finished items from your heat press. We recommend using an oven mitt or rag when removing products from your heat press. Warping can be minimized by allowing products to cool face down on a firm surface, and by placing a weighted object on the back of the product. If warping is severe, the sublimated piece can be heated a second time from the back side and allowed to cool.

OTHER CONCERNS

A blowout refers to an image whose colors have been "blown out" of its borders and appear smudged. The primary causes of blowouts are uneven heating, overheating and excessive pressure. Heat press accessories, such as a rubber pad or a Teflon sheet covering a transfer held in place with heat-resistant tape will prevent a blowout of your image by lessening the variance in temperature across the surface. Anytime you choose rubber pads instead of a Teflon sheet to prevent a blowout, increase the temperature 25 degrees and the dwell time in 15 second increments until you achieve optimum color.

Figure 1 —taping the transfer

