

DIY Application Fluid

Application fluid can be used to precisely apply vinyl graphics. Normally, when you apply a pre-masked vinyl graphic to a surface, you remove the release liner, then position the vinyl on that surface. This positioning is the tricky part. If you're applying vinyl to a fixed-position surface like a vehicle or window, the letters must be placed precisely. This can be done with careful measuring and the hinge method. Or, you can move the vinyl around until it's just right.

Of course you can't re-position the vinyl in this way with the adhesive touching the dry surface. That's where application fluid comes in. Application fluid provides a temporary lubricant that allows you to move the vinyl around or pick it up and repeatedly re-position it until you get it exactly where you want it to be.

Here at RG Graphix we prefer to apply graphics dry whenever possible, but sometimes it's helpful to use the wet application method. To that end we've come up with our own DIY application fluid. Normally we mix it up one gallon at a time, but most folks won't need that much so we'll also break it down into smaller quantities along with the one gallon mix.

The ingredients needed for one gallon are: 1 Gallon of distilled water, denatured alcohol and Dawn dish soap. The water will let the graphic slightly float on the surface so it can be positioned. The alcohol will help the water to evaporate and make clean up easier and the dish soap will allow the graphic to slide easily for positioning.

To mix: Remove 8 oz of water from the gallon jug. Add 8 oz of denatured alcohol and 1 teaspoon of Dawn dish soap to the water jug and mix well. And there you have it, one gallon of DIY application fluid.

For smaller quantities refer to the chart below.

To Make	Use		
½ Gallon	60 oz of Water	4 oz of Alcohol	½ Tsp Dish Soap
1 Quart	30 oz of Water	2 oz of Alcohol	¼ Tsp Dish Soap
1 Pint	15 oz of Water	1 oz of Alcohol	1/8 Tsp Dish Soap
8 oz	7.5 oz of Water	.5 oz of Alcohol	1/16 Tsp Dish Soap

How to use Application Fluid

The basic rule of thumb for successful wet application is to use the fluid sparingly and quickly. Using too much fluid or leaving it on the substrate too long can retard vinyl adhesion and cause problems with the application tape.

Don't flood the surface! Spray a fine mist on the tacky bottom of the vinyl after removing the release liner. Spread it around with your fingers to get a thin, evenly applied coat of fluid. You can also wet the substrate, but do it in the same way; a fine mist spread with your fingers to assure a thin, even coat. **Do not create puddles!**

When you place the graphic on the substrate, you should feel a little tack, but you should be able to easily lift and re-position the graphic. If you're swimming the vinyl across a wave of application fluid, you've overdone it.

As soon as you have the graphic positioned where you want it, begin forcing the fluid out from under the masked vinyl with your squeegee and soak it up with paper towels. You'll find that you have to squeegee the entire graphic several times before all the fluid is expelled.

Be thorough, but be efficient. This should be done quickly because leaving excess fluid under the vinyl and tape can cause the tape to de-laminate. The adhesive layer will detach from the face film and remain on the vinyl in a goopy residue. It's gross and annoying.

Once the graphic is down and all the application fluid has been wiped up let it sit for a few minutes and then the application tape can be slowly and carefully removed.

NOTE: Do not apply vinyl graphics in temperatures below 60 degrees F.