

SNAPSHOT

TIPS FOR BETTER TIRE DECALS AND REALISM

WHILE WATER-SLIDE DECALS have been common in automotive model kits for decades, placing them on tires is difficult. It is a good idea to apply the decal late in the build to avoid handling and flexing the tire. Here are a few tips to achieve that and better-looking tires overall.

By Jeff Bloomhuff



1

Begin by scuffing the tire tread (not the sidewalls) with a 100-grit sanding stick. This will turn the tread slightly gray with a worn look. This Cragar mag wheel was treated with a light coat of Tamiya Smoke (No. X-19) to give it a realistic sheen.



2

Using a raised white-letter decals, such as this Winston Winner G/T set (No. WL-76) from Fireball Modelworks, trim each decal as close to its edges as possible. These decals lay down nicely using a generous amount of Micro Set and a little heat from a heat gun.



3

Cut discs from thick cardstock the same size as the wheel with a circle template. Attach the discs to the wheels with a small amount of white glue and then apply a wet coat of flat clear to the sidewall to protect the decals and provide an accurately dull sheen.



4

What about tires with raised-letter details molded in? Starting with a sharp No. 17 chisel blade, carefully shave off most of the raised detail. Follow with 180, 240, and 320-grit sanding sticks to smooth the sidewalls. Now, apply your decals.



5

Here, a mist coat of Tamiya Rubber Black (No. XF-85) over the tires and decals contrasts with the glossy wheels. The letters look chipped and worn thanks to some Rubber Black dabbed on with a brush and a swipe of Oil Stain from Tamiya Weathering Master D set (No. 87088).



6

Use Micro Sol to help wide, whitewall decals to conform. Make sure to insert the wheels first, or you'll cause the decals to crack and lift! Orange Rust from Tamiya Weathering Master C set (No. 87085) dirtied up the decals for a worn look. **FSM**