



DYNAMIC RC HOW-TO: PAINTING FILM COVERING

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Film coverings have been a staple for finishing models for many many years. They are durable, easy to apply, and lightweight. Most sport models can be covered with a color or two of film, slap on some decals and stripes, and call it good. But sometimes a project, like my Cessna shown here, demands a more intricate trim design; one that is achieved much more easily using paint. Applying paint to film coverings isn't too difficult, but it does take specific prep work to ensure a durable finish that will last.



The example I am using is my Great Planes Shoestring. I was never happy with the way the ARF decals looked and since I had a couple minor repairs to make it was a good time to refinish this bird. The paint work does not affect the application of the film, so cover the model as you normally would. Here the Shoestring fuselage has been recovered and the cowl has been painted to match the Cub Yellow Monokote. The first step to prep for paint is to clean the surface very well. I like to wipe the covering down with denatured or rubbing alcohol. This will remove all dirt, grease, and oil that may have collected on the surface. Now you can first start to see your trim job come together; it is time to start laying out and masking off your design.



For the circles on the Shoestring, I used some vinyl paint masks cut by a decal shop. The rest of the design was laid out using 1/4" wide 3M vinyl masking tape. I highly recommend using a vinyl tape for your design since it will give you a



sharper edge. I have also used and had good luck using electrical tape. Now tape off and cover the remainder of the airframe to protect it from overspray. I



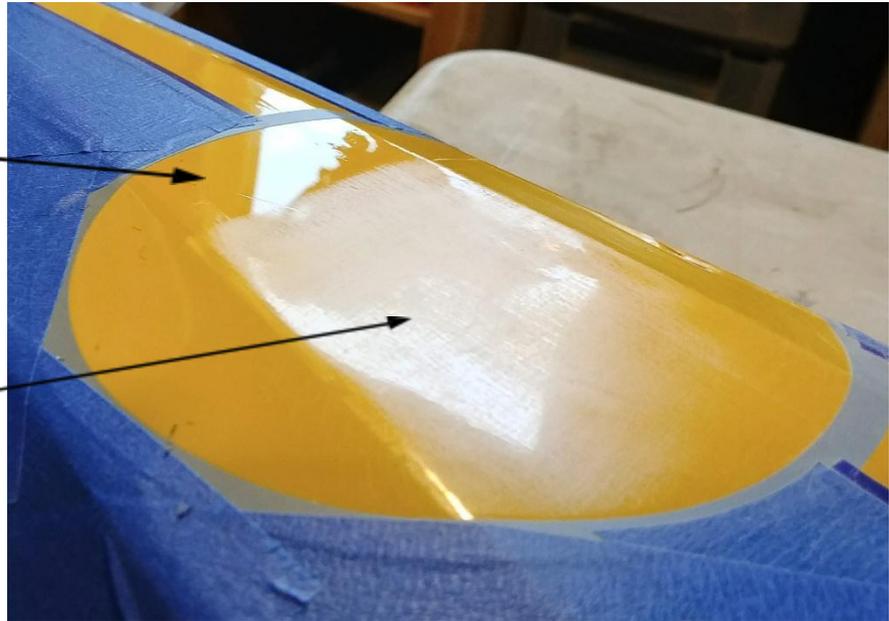
I have found that trash bags work well for this since paint cannot be absorbed into them and transferred to the model underneath. On a normal paint job, you would now be ready to start spraying, but there is another step needed to prep the film covering. Film coverings are nice and shiny which makes them look nice, but also helps keep things like paint from sticking to them. We need to break the surface so the paint can properly bond to the film. Any fine abrasive like sandpaper, steel wool, or scotch-brite will work. My preference is to use a fine sandpaper, the others can scratch or cut the covering a little too easily for my taste.



Make sure you get the whole area to be painted scuffed, right up to the masking. When the film appears dulled, you have scuffed the surface properly.

NOT SCUFFED

PROPERLY SCUFFED



Once every area to be painted has been scuffed, we need to clean the surface one last time. Here I recommend using a gentle cleaner like Windex or windshield washer fluid. A solvent, like alcohol, can soften the adhesive on the masks and allow the paint to run underneath. Now we are finally ready to start spraying. I prefer to use a clear flexible parts primer, sometimes called adhesion promoter, for the first initial coat. This first coat will also seal the edges of the paint masks so using a clear means any paint that creeps under the masks will not be easily detected. I also feel that the adhesion promoter helps strengthen the paint's bond to the plastic. Always test your product compatibility on a test piece first, especially if you are mixing brands. For the color coats on this project I decided to use Painter's Touch spray paint. Use light coats to help prevent runs and sags, same as you would painting on any other surface. Once dry, you can remove your masks and admire your work. In the case of my Shoestring, I finished it off with a set of white numerals and lettering again cut by a decal shop. A final coat of gloss clear over everything, will help seal all of the edges of the graphics and give your final product a nice uniform sheen.



BEFORE



AFTER