

Creating Tattoo Transfers

Custom temporary make-up effects tattoos are great to have in your make-up effects kit. They can be used on set over multiple days to achieve the same look for continuity, and they can give characters a unique look on camera. These tattoos are easy to use, quick to apply and look great on camera, even high-definition camera.

Purchasing transfer tattoos is a great way to get a quick effect, but the designs can be generic and somewhat limiting.

If time permits, we suggest to create tattoos in Photoshop for a more original design.

You can also download The Gimp Free Software which is available at : www.gimp.org.

If you have the right equipment, it's easy to create these tattoos for your TV, film or music-video production.

You will need...

- Laser printer (with color or not) capable of printing 8.5" x 11" cardstock.
- Water-Slip and Silicone-treated Acetate sheets.
- A permanent marker, cutting blade, flat index or credit card and clear tape.
- Digital Tattoo design on 8.5" x 11" Photoshop document (or other photo-editing program).
- Pros-Aide adhesive, a small cup and make-up wedge.
- Warm water and a sponge.
- 99% Alcohol
- Bond-Off Remover

Preparing the Water-Slip Paper

Step 1 : Cut an 8.5" x 11" sheet out of water-slip paper. You can use a metal ruler and a cutting blade, but you can use scissors in a pinch.

Step 2 : Put the water-slip paper into the printer. You need it to print on the glossy side of the water-slip paper, which has the water-slip solution already applied to it.

So do a test print first, to be sure you've got the correct side.

Step 3 : When designing tattoos in Photoshop, you have to tend to blur the image slightly using a *Gaussian Blur* filter before printing - it seems to give the tattoo a more natural blending effect on the skin during application.

Also, try to match the color to a real tattoo design. Looking at other reference material of tattoos can help with coloration.

If you want to learn basic techniques for editing and manipulating photos with Photoshop, there are many useful tutorials on You Tube.

Step 4 : Once the tattoos are designed and the file is ready to go, print your Photoshop design. Let the printed sheet dry for about 5 minutes. The ink will still be wet, so try not to smudge the print. You can speed up the drying time by using a hairdryer on the cold setting.

Without a dryer, the ink air-dries completely within 5 to 10 minutes. Sheets can be printed in advance and stored for later use.

Step 5 : Cut an 8.5" x 11" sheet out of the silicone-treated acetate. To test which side of the sheet is silicone-treated, mark the edge with a black marker. On one side, the marker ink will bead up, the other will not.

Make sure you are preparing the beaded side of the sheet for use. If you use the wrong side, the tattoo will not release and will be irreparable.

Step 6 : Lay the beaded side of the acetate sheet face up and tape all four corners to the working surface.

Transferring your Design

Step 7 : Once the acetate sheet is secured, take a small amount of Pros-Aide adhesive on a make-up wedge and carefully cover the beaded side of the acetate sheet. Cover the sheet thoroughly, but make sure the Pros-Aide coat is even and not too thick, or you will smudge the tattoo design.
Don't leave any Pros-Aide buildup. Once the sheet is covered, wait 5 to 10 minutes for it to become clear.

Step 8 : Carefully place the water-slip sheet, printed side face down on the silicone treated acetate sheet (with the Pros-Aide coat). Starting at one end, take a flat index/credit card, press evenly on the surface to avoid air bubbles. Once you have covered the sheet, let it sit for about 10 minutes.

Step 9 : After the Pros-Aide has adhered to the ink, you can start cutting out the designs. The closer to the design you cut, the better the tattoo will look on camera. Take your time and make a clean cut.

Step 10 : Now that the design is cut out, you can apply the tattoo. Slowly peel the acetate sheet away from the water-slip paper.

Step 11 : When you peel the acetate away from the water-slip paper, the tattoo with the Pros-Aide layer, still intact, will be on the water-slip sheet.

Then, place the tattoo (+ adhesive) - face down at the desired area of the cleaned skin.

With your wet sponge, moist the non-glossy side of your transfer-paper (water-slip portion).

The Final Product

Step 12 : Hold the paper against the skin for at least 30 seconds
Peel the transfer-paper away **slowly**, so the tattoo won't tear from the skin. Also, try not to move the piece around too much during application, to avoid smudging the design.

Step 13 : If there are edges, blend them out with 99% alcohol and a 2 tips cotton swab. To make a tattoo last longer on set, use a good make-up sealer, such as Green Marble SeLr.

Note : If the actor sweats a lot, or if the transfer is being immersed in water or is rubbing on clothing, it may degrade faster. In most cases, a tattoo will be good on set all day, but if it starts to degrade, simply remove it with **Bond-Off Remover** and apply another one. That's the great thing about printing out sheets. You will always have a lot of extras on hand if you plan well.

