

GEL TRANSFER – RECIPE

Materials

a digital photographic print	on soft, high quality paper, or – thin inexpensive quality photo paper
gloss acrylic gel medium	only the gloss is completely transparent
receiver material	paper, wood, metal, ceramic tile, glass, skin, etc.
a spatula	to spread the gel medium (fingers are okay)
a spoon or roller	to transfer the print with pressure
a sponge	to remove the paper backing (fingers are okay)
a tray	to hold warm water

Prepare The Photograph

print the digital photo _____ on high quality digiPhoto paper
with higher contrast using curves
more detail using layer sharpening
more saturated tone (color) using hue/saturation
added grain (optional) using a filter

flip the image _____ horizontal

note: the paper backing will release better if :
using **softer** higher quality inkjet paper
Epson Premium Presentation Paper Matte,
or an Inkpress Archival Rag, or -
using **thin** high quality paper
such as Epson Presentation Paper Matte ☆3,
Epson Double Sides Matte, or -
using iron-on transfer paper (remove the plastic layer beneath the print)
some people consider this cheating!

trim the print _____ to the desired size and remove all white border
cut or tear the paper, depending on the type of edge desired

coat the print _____ with **GLOSS GEL MEDIUM**
apply 1 thin even coat in 1 direction with a spatula, foam brush, or fingers

dry the gel medium _____ **completely** with a hair dryer
the gel will become clear when totally dry

apply another thin coat _____ in the **other** direction
dry completely (until clear, not milky)

apply a third thin coat _____ and dry completely
let it sit overnight so everything is dry through and through
consider the appearance of the 'brushstrokes' on this top layer

Remove the Paper Backing

the prepared print must be **completely** dry

immerse the gelled print _____ in warm water

let it soak _____ 1 to 2 hours

gently apply pressure _____ to the paper backing
use either a sponge with some 'tooth', or – use your fingers
rub the paper vigorously but carefully
a circular motion may help
this will take some time!

continue _____ until absolutely **all** paper is removed
the result will be a print embedded in clear plastic gel medium

GEL TRANSFER – RECIPE, cont'd

Prepare the Receiver

coat the receiver surface _____ with GLOSS GEL MEDIUM
apply a thin even coat with a spatula, foam brush, or fingers
consider the appearance of the 'brushstrokes'
coverage:
the receiver can be the same size as the print
to create a 'photo-object'
if the receiver is larger than the print, this will create a border
consider whether to coat the *entire* surface of the receiver,
or only coat the area where the picture will be

Transfer the Print

The ink embedded in the gel medium will stick to the receiver
apply the embedded _____ print onto the gel medium
some people get better results if the receiver is totally dry
some prefer to use tacky medium to act as a glue
place the print exactly _____ once down it will be hard to move
dry the transferred piece _____ completely
using a hair dryer, or better –
let it sit overnight before apply any finishing steps

if printing with Iron-On Transfer paper
place the print face down on the wet receiver gel
begin peeling the backing sheet from one corner
make sure the ink is sticking to the receiver
continue to peel away the paper backing
AND the adhesive layer behind the paper

Seal the Transfer Print (optional)

coat the final piece _____ in more GLOSS GEL MEDIUM
for Prints onto a Paper Receiver
or -
coat the final piece _____ in MATTE GEL MEDIUM
this will impart a waxy surface, much like encaustic
this will be somewhat translucent, not totally transparent
this surface can be sanded and recoated for different effects

there are many other types of gel medium available,
with many different textures

Other Options

Print onto 3D surfaces that compliment,
but do not compete with the photographic image
Use "fake water" (either the gel or the solid) for different effects

Credit to: Stephanie Simpson who did the first work with this here at TUCC, Chad Wray who developed the 'tacky' method, and Erin McCann who refined this process again after the gel completely washed off her metal pieces.