

1st Choice for Quality and Value

Premium Grade (130 μ) Application Tape

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At trade shows, sign shop people frequently ask me why they should invest in a premium grade application tape, when a standard grade tape allows them to accomplish the same task, at a lower cost. The answer is simple: Premium grade tapes help eliminate headaches; they minimize errors and material waste; and they help you produce a better looking finished product, in less time.

You'll pay more for a premium tape, but the good stuff is worth every penny of the additional investment. Besides the price for a premium tape isn't much more – we're

only talking a few pennies more per square foot. Frankly, I was spoiled on premium grade application tapes, when I first learned how to apply vinyl. It's the only type of tape that I used way back when, and it's the only tape I use now -- especially if I'm performing a vinyl demonstration in front of a group of people. Here's why:

1. Ease of application.

Premium tapes, which are about 30 per cent thicker than standard grade tapes, make vinyl applications easier. That's why truck decal installers prefer them. And, usually, they are upset when they get a job using the cheaper tape. The thinner, cheaper tapes tear more easily, when you remove the tape, following the application process. That slows the installation tremendously. Pro decal installers work essentially on a piece rate basis. When they work faster, they make more money. When the job is slowed down, because the transfer tape is removed from the graphics in little pieces, the installer doesn't make so much money. That doesn't make for a happy camper.

Many years ago, I made the mistake of buying the cheaper grade of application paper. The blame really belonged to the tape salesman, who sold me on price, and who didn't explain to me the differences between the two grades of paper. At the time, I didn't even know that there were two different weights of paper. No salesman had ever taken the time to explain product features and the resulting benefits.

It wasn't long after the installers received the graphics with the cheaper tape, that I received one of those nasty phone calls, and subsequently learned about the differences in paper grades. The cheaper transfer tape was tearing, the installation was taking more time than provided for in the estimate, the installers were frustrated and angry, and as can be expected, the installers wanted more money for the job. In all fairness, they certainly deserved more money. (To be honest, though, they didn't get a penny more...but they deserved it...and I did empathize with them.) That was the last time that I bought the cheap stuff, and the last time that I bought from the bargain basement salesman.



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Because premium tapes are thicker, they laminate to vinyl graphics easier, with fewer wrinkles and bubbles in your vinyl. The next time that you get a wrinkle or bubble in your transfer tape, remove the liner paper from the vinyl and take a look at the adhesive side of the film. You can see where the bubbles and wrinkles have already formed. In the vinyl application process, you typically will transfer these wrinkles and bubbles to the applied graphic.

The premium tapes also make the installation process easier. First, because these tapes are thicker, they give more body to flimsier vinyl films. That heavier body results in a smoother lay down of the vinyl with fewer wrinkles in the squeegee process. If you are doing installations, outdoors, the premium application tapes can be a lifesaver. When a strong wind kicks up, the heavier transfer tapes are less likely to tear, as the graphic flaps furiously in the wind. Fewer mishaps in the shop and on the job site equate to less material wasted (vinyl and transfer tape) and less time spent on remake work. The money you save is a lot more than the additional cost of the premium grade material. Best of all, after you complete the squeegee process, the premium tapes can be pulled off quickly in one sheet, not in bits-and-pieces.

2. Premium tapes exhibit less curl and better lay flat.

In laminating application tape to vinyl, the tape is sometimes stretched in the process. The resulting tension in the stretched tape generates a force causing the tape to return to its original shape. This causes the vinyl graphics to curl. Often the problem can simply be avoided by taking a little extra care when laminating the transfer tape to vinyl.

Still the curling problem is less likely to occur with a premium grade application tape, because the thicker tapes are harder to stretch. Less stretch equals less curl.

3. Premium tapes perform better in humid environments.

In looking over our sales reports, I noticed that a high percentage of premium grade application tape is sold in Florida, Texas, Washington state and Hawaii. My explanation for this is that the premium tapes just work better in humid environments. Extreme humidity causes all types of vinyl graphics problems. As the tape's moisture content increases, the paper "grows". You probably have noticed the effects of humidity in the summer, when the application tape puckers on the roll.

Extreme humidity can contribute to the graphics stretching and curling. Humidity also can make some liner papers grow, which compounds the problem. The thicker premium tapes withstand the humid conditions better. These premium tapes lay flatter and are much less susceptible to problems.

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4. Premium tapes work better in wet applications.

I haven't done many wet applications. I learned to put vinyl on dry and I prefer doing it that way, because I work a lot faster than using the wet method. However, I have witnessed many wet applications. What I often notice is that the people using application fluid use way too much of it, and often the graphic stays wet too long in the installation process. Some of the delays in the process just can't be avoided. Many times an installation is interrupted, when someone has an urgent question that just can't wait, or the phone rings and we can't break away from a conversation, or a customer walks through the door. When these things happen, the graphic remains wet. And the longer the graphic remains wet, the more likely it is for the application paper to disintegrate. Here's another area where the premium grade tapes have all the advantages over the thinner tapes. The thicker tapes just have more substance and hold up much better during wet applications.

Application Tip: To remove stubborn application tape after a graphics installation, lightly spray the tape with application fluid. Wait about 30 seconds, then remove the tape. The application fluid penetrates the paper facestock of the tape, and softens its water-based latex adhesive, causing the tape to more easily release from the graphic.

5. Premium tapes are easier to laminate.

Regardless of how careful you are when working with transfer tape, accidents will happen. You'll minimize your tape lamination lamentations by switching to the heavier, premium grade tape. The thicker tape is less likely to wrinkle in the lamination process.

6. Premium tapes are great for rubbings and tracings.

When you need to do a tracing or rubbing to help you lay out and duplicate an existing graphic, try using an low tack premium grade application paper, such as R Tape's 4500. I have had much better success using an application tape than using tracing paper, especially if you are working outside and the wind kicks up. Tracing paper tears easily. Of course, you could use the cheaper, standard grade application tape. But it's not that much stronger than the tracing paper.

To do a rubbing, squeegee the tape over the vinyl graphic that you are trying to duplicate. Using a soft drawing stick, rub the side of it over the edges of the vinyl graphic to reproduce the image. After completing the rubbing, roll the application paper up on a three-inch cardboard core.



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