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 not 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

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.
Notes:

if printing on Inkjet paper
  use high quality paper (Epson Enhanced Matte, or an archival Rag)
  place the print face down onto the receiver
  submerge the entire piece in warm water
    if the receiver is too porous, do not submerge
  let the paper absorb some water
  rub the paper vigorously but carefully to begin removing the paper
    a circular motion may help
    this will take some time!
  continue until absolutely all paper is removed

if printing on Iron-On Transfer paper
  place the print face down onto the receiver
  rub with even pressure to begin the migration of the ink
  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

Coverage
  trim the print to remove all white border
    the print can be torn to create a rough border
    the print can be the same size as the receiver
      to create a ‘photo-object’
  if the print is smaller than the receiver, leaving a border
    consider whether to coat the entire surface of the receiver,
      or only coat the area where the picture will be

Tips:

Print special source prints :
  higher contrast, more detail, more saturated tone (color), add grain

Paper backing will release better if :
  using softer paper (higher quality inkjet paper)
  using iron-on transfer paper (remove the plastic layer beneath the print)

Paper border :
  Leave some small border of paper adhered to the print, to make a paper border

Prints will look more translucent if :
  Coat the back of the piece with more gel medium
    (saturating the remaining paper to make it translucent)

Other options :
  Use “fake water” (either the gel or the solid) for different effects
HYBRID SCANNING
Different sizes for alt – proc pix.
Scan rough border pieces with a black background
Make thumbs be close cropped to the image, with a small border of paper space around the edge.

Steph Simpson says :

Print to plain paper

Apply one thin coat in one direction
Dry completely (clear, not milky)
Apply another thin coat in the opposite direction
Dry completely

Apply a third coat
Dry completely
   This can be done overnight!

Tear off any excess paper
Place the print in water
Under running water under a faucet
Peel the paper off the back

The result will be a layer of clear gel with ink embedded

Coat the receiver with gel medium
Lay the pictures down onto the receiver

Coat with another layer of gel medium

Chad Wray says :

Print onto watercolor paper
apply one coat to the pictures

apply another coat to the receiver
   in the opposite direction

dry both until clear but tacky
stick them together

apply hard, even pressure
make sure the layers adhere
let the sandwich sit for 20 ~ 30 minutes

wet the back of the paper and
peel the paper away from the print with your finger

recoat the finished piece
let it air dry