http://roadsidehaunt.com/howtos/stencils.html

Stenciling Onto Foam and Wood

Somewhere I read about using wintergreen oil to transfer, but you have to use a laser printer to print the stencil, or a photocopier, since it's the toner that does the trick.

Using an inkjet printer, the only transfer method I knew of were iron on transfers. But an iron would melt the foam, so how would you prevent that? I wondered if a hair dryer would generate enough heat to transfer it enough to use as a guide for woodburning, or even just painting.

Part of the problem is that your standard insulating foam sheet is non-porous, so getting something to stick to it (besides paint) poses a challenge.

First I took a leftover piece of foam from the crypt project. And yes I save virtually everything. You never know when you're going to need it.

This particular piece was in the appropriate shape for a tombstone, even if it's a little cockeyed.

Next I found a good font to use. I wanted one fairly thick. That particular one was "Kelmscott." Another font I like is "Ruben." These were going to be carved out around the letters, which is why thick is better. If you'll be making the letters recessed, any font will do.

Next, I printed out a quick RIP on a sheet of iron-on transfer paper. To reverse the image, in your print options there is usually a setting to "mirror" the printout.

To get the curve, I used the word art function in Microsoft Word. I also just reversed it in there, because it was a simple matter of just pulling the guides from left to right, and it also allowed me to enlarge it, since it was a little smaller than I wanted it to be.

One other thing to remember, is use your printer's "best" setting, so there is plenty of ink.

Next I pinned the transfer paper in place with push pins. It's very important to make sure it's absolutely smooth.

I also tried leaving the back dry, and taking a washcloth and wetting it some.

The wetness seemed to help a little. By the way, the iron on transfer paper is important.

This won't work with regular paper. I haven't tried with a transparency yet, but that may be another possibility. I've also read where 70% isopropyl alcohol may work even better. I'm not sure but the contact with foam may cause problems.

I just used the standard hair dryer, mine is 1875 watts, on its highest setting.

At first I tried it at a distance of 2 inches, but that didn't seem to be doing much when I peeked.

At that point I wet the back of the paper, then continued. I still wasn't getting much of a result, so I put the hair dryer right on the paper and pressed down somewhat.

I started to notice some transference after a couple of minutes. I was moving the dryer smoothly, but kept it right against the foam. There was no melting at all.

After about five minutes, I stopped and removed the paper.

While not exactly black marks, it did leave an impression on the foam. Perhaps with a little longer period I might have had better transference, but this was definitely usable.

I did not get the top of the "I" very well, so if I do this again, and I probably will, I will certainly do it for a longer period of time and equally to all areas.

One thing I did notice, the surface of the letters had a little texture to them. Not much, but noticeable. One site I found, Cloud Nine Tips and Tricks had other suggestions. But it's our substrate that is the problem, as it's non-porous.

So, after all that, I hauled out the woodburning tool and did a very quick carve around the letters and painted it with a sharpie for contrast.

By no means is this anything more than a demo of the technique, as of course, it hasn't been sanded or carefully done around the letters.

But it does prove that this will work to some extent. Better results may possibly be obtained with a photocopy, which will be another thing I'll be trying. I just don't have one of those handy. And most all of us have an inkjet printer rather than a laser. So I'm happy to say that yes, it does work to some extent, and it's a lot quicker than using an exacto knife to carve through the paper, the foam, and your finger.

So, since I still had plenty of ink on my iron-on transfer paper, I thought I'd haul out an iron and see if it would transfer to wood.

I didn't even bother with a pillowcase or other cloth, which would probably be a good idea. I had a piece of luaun that I'd brought home from work, so used that as my experimental model.

I put the iron setting on high (**DON'T** use steam) and pressed the transfer onto the wood. It didn't take very long, and did an excellent job. It was a little hard to get the paper off at first, but I ran the iron over it again to heat it up a bit and it came right off. So now I know the best way to get

stenciling on wood, anyway. I wish I would have thought about it when I made my sign last year. It sure was a pain cutting out the letters and tracing around them before painting.