

**Title:**

Designing and Preparing the Vehicle for Wrapping

**Word Count:**

902

**Summary:**

Design work for vehicle wrapping is much different than design work for flat graphics or banners or any other vinyl application, according to experts, and preparing vehicles for installation is critical to the appearance and life of the wrap.

**Keywords:**

vehicle graphics,vinyl wraps,custom graphics, custom decals, vinyl wrapping,car wrapping,van wraps,truck wraps

**Article Body:**

**Knowing the vehicle**

Knowing the shape and size of the vehicle and all its nuances is a critical part of the design process; therefore, taking measurements before you do any design work is a must. You really have to have a good handle on templates, templates are so key because positioning is critical. If you have to do a lot of reprints, then that could break your business. Experts also recommend an auto library that contains vector images of cars, trucks and buses and a digital camera with which to take pictures. The goal is to know every inch of the vehicle. If you don't take time to do this up front, then you could end up with text over a door handle. Even though you are wrapping a 2003 Dodge Caravan, for example, measurements are still important because there are slight differences that could cause major problems during installation. You can get this library at the end of this article.

**Designing for wraps**

Designing for wraps is completely different than other types of design work, It's like any new media, you have to learn the media and you have to learn what is going to capture the attention of the people. It's more than just putting graphics on a car. Avoid using too much text or colours. Many people are using rainbows on cars and that causes the intended viewer to miss the message. In fact, making a bold statement is one of the biggest challenges in designing for wraps. You have to keep it simple. You need a strong message. You only have a

few seconds to get the message across as the car passes by, It's a branding media; it's not a message media. You just show the brand for recognition more than to run a brochure.

**Keeping it simple**

One of the biggest mistakes with wrap designs is going overboard with flashy graphics or trying to put a one-dimensional design on a three-dimensional vehicle. Normally where your hood and your front bumper transition to the side of the car is challenging. You are basically laying down a flat design on the hood and a flat design on the side of the vehicles and if you have a wacky design, then they don't transition well on either side of the hood and on either side of the trunk on the back. One key to success boils down to common sense: work closely with the client throughout the design process. In fact, you could even outsource the design work, the printing and the installation and basically act as a sales rep. If the customer wants to deal with you and the price is fine, then go for it.

**Preparing the vehicle for installation**

Once the design work is complete, the next step is preparing the vehicle for installation. Proper cleaning and preparation of the substrate prior to application is critical to the success of the wrap, because if the vehicle is not thoroughly cleaned immediately prior to application, then the result could be adhesion loss. You want to make sure to get all the dirt out of any contours and grooves, any dirt can effect how any of the film adheres to the substrate. Most vinyl manufacturers recommend cleaning the vehicle with a commercial detergent and water. If grease, oil, wax or any other grime is present, then the substrate must be scrubbed with a solvent and wiped with a soft, lint-free cloth before it dries. Isophoryl alcohol is strong enough to clean away any left over impurities that could hinder the adhesive, but not so strong that it will damage the paint. Still, experts recommend testing the cleaning solvent on an inconspicuous area of the application surface first to check for potential damage.

**Allowing the vehicle to dry**

Experts say a common mistake during the preparation process is not allowing the vehicle to dry fully. It can take up to 24 hours for a vehicle to dry completely, especially in humid or cold atmospheres. Emphasize on the importance of surface preparation, one common mistake that is easy to understand but often overlooked is having the vehicle at the proper temperature for installation. Sign shops in the north are at somewhat of a disadvantage because vinyl films

are typically more susceptible to failure in cold environments. Even if the vehicle seems like it's dry, if it's cold and there's moisture in the air, then it sticks to the surface of the vehicle and creates barriers to the performance of the film.

**<b>Considering paint and glass</b>**

If you are applying film to a newly painted surface, Avery recommends following all drying and curing instructions provided by the paint manufacturer prior to surface preparation and film application. Avery also recommends the use of high quality exterior grade paints and OEM systems. You also need to prepare the glass if you are going to apply perforated vinyl to these areas. Like the vehicle itself, the glass should be perfectly clean. Avery recommends removing any stickers, paint or over-spray using a single razor blade scraper. Then spray the glass with cleaning solution, squeegee it dry using a soft rubber window squeegee and wipe the edges using lint-free paper towels.

Once the vehicle is thoroughly cleaned and dried, then you can proceed with installing the wrap.