

How to make great panel labels, cheap!

When it comes time to put labels on your instrument panel, you want something that looks clean and professional. While you could have an art supply shop make you a silk screen or other custom labels, the time, expense and mess of those methods can be avoided by using this simple method. The fact that you can make these labels for very little money is an added bonus.

What you need

The materials you need are all readily available:

- A package of transparent printer sheets from your local office store.
- A bottle of spray hair gel, note that it must say “gel”.
- Can of matte clear spray paint, preferably UV resistant
- An inkjet printer capable of printing in mirror image and a computer

Preparing the sheet for the printer

Take a transparent printer sheet and spray it evenly with the hair gel. Lay it flat and allow to dry completely. You might take this opportunity to prepare several sheets in case you make a mistake or have a problem with the labels from the first sheet.



Artwork

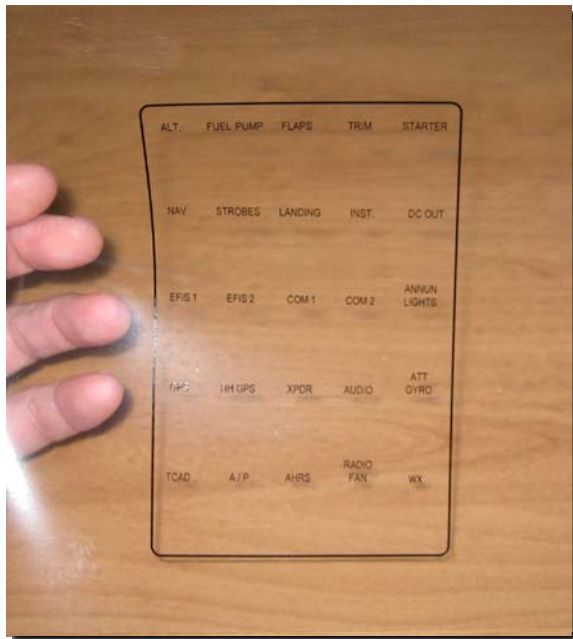
You can use many computer programs to make your labels. Any drawing or painting program, Word, even AutoCad will work. Basically any program that lets you make lettering that can be printed out in full size (1:1) is what you will need. It is helpful to know the spacing required for your lettering such as the center to center distance of your switches, circuit breakers,

etc. That way you can make a string of labels that can all be applied at the same time rather than individually labeling each item on the panel.

Printing

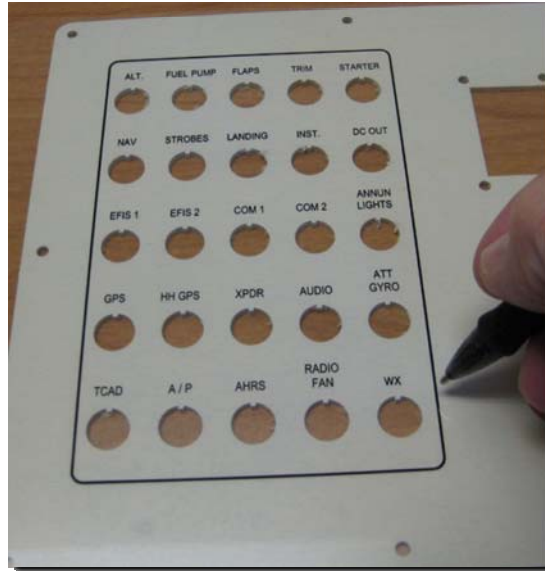
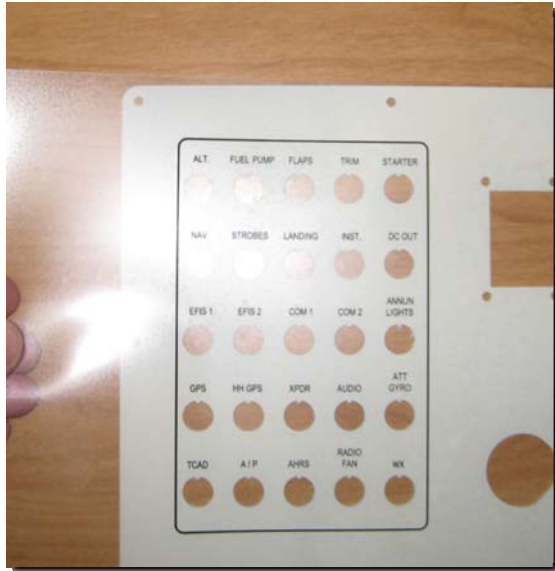
Place the dried transparent sheet into the printer so the ink will be applied to the side with the hair gel. Go to your printer properties and select transparency as the paper type, and mirror image for printing. Mirror image printing is critical, most printers can do this but if yours does not you will need to find someone who's printer can.

Print your label artwork onto the transparency. When the sheet comes out of the printer, handle carefully, set it aside and let it dry.

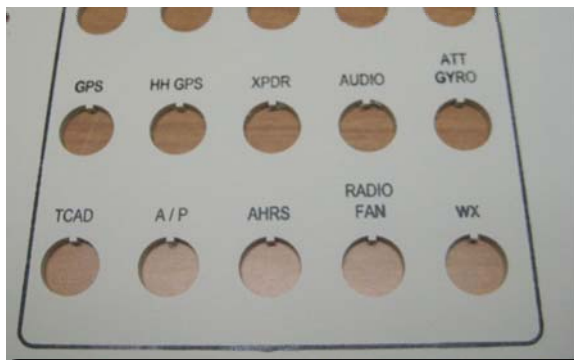


Application

Place your painted instrument panel on a flat surface and lay the label sheet, ink side down where you want to apply the label. Gently rub the back of the sheet over the inked area with a pen or pencil, then gently lift off the sheet. To not touch the labels on the panel, they will wipe right off at this point.



Carefully apply all of the labels on the panel. It is helpful to cover already labeled areas of the panel with wax or parchment paper so they are not damaged. If you do smear a label, it can easily be removed with a soft damp cloth, then reapplied with one of the backup sheets you made.



When all the labels have been applied, spray the panel with several coats of matte clear paint. Even after spraying the clear, you can still continue to apply new labels as long as you spray clear over them.

That's all there is to making great looking labels, cheap!