

# Making Low-Cost, High Quality, Stick On Labels, Version 2.0

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By R. G. Sparber

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*Note: the update to Version 2.0 includes a procedure similar to the one originally presented here but has fewer steps, pieces of equipment, and materials.*

## Why?



As I look around the room at various products, how they are labeled jumps out at me. Many are tagged with stick-on labels. Giving them a fresh eye, I have to admit that those labels make for a professional appearance.



Well, I too make things that need labels and want to get that same professional look. I just do not want to invest in the equipment nor hire a company to make my one label. Here is how to do it for next to nothing if just have a laser printer.

## An Overview



My beloved laser printer turns out great looking artwork on paper. The per page cost is low and there are many programs on my PC that help me create and print this artwork. So the hitch is to get the laser printer to make my stick on labels for next to no cost.

A very common technique is called “toner transfer”. The laser printer deposits toner onto the paper and then heat and pressure is applied. This causes the toner to melt and soak in. The resulting artwork is fixed tightly to that paper. Using a solvent, it is possible to get the toner to let go of the paper and bond to another surface. Effective but messy and smelly. It also takes a bit of skill to get repeatable results.

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The procedure shown in Version 1.0 of this article works just fine. However, after publishing it, I decided to search the web for similar procedures and found one that is superior. I encourage you to watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0-QpAKxf-o>



Another technique is to print to a paper that only gently holds the toner. My favorite is Kitchen Parchment Paper. A roll of 45 square feet will cost under \$3.

However, the parchment is thin and will not feed through the laser printer. To solve this problem, I turn to Elmer's Disappearing Purple Washable School Glue Sticks. This glue will stick the parchment down on regular paper as it runs through the printer. A gentle pull and parchment with toner is in hand.



The trick to making rugged labels is to protect the toner. I do this by using clear tape. For light duty, Scotch Magic Tape is fine. In a more demanding environment, high-quality clear packing tape is great.

The final step is to transfer the toner to our tape. All you need is a smooth, rounded point. By rubbing on the back side of the parchment paper, the toner will be pressed into the adhesive of the tape. The parchment can then be peeled off, leaving the toner.



Flip your new label over and stick it down on your new creation. Professional results every time!



## Equipment

- Laser printer (I used an HP Laserjet Professional P1102w).
- Either a paper cutter or scissors.
- A smooth, rounded point like on a pen.

## Materials

- Plain paper for a laser printer.
- Parchment paper (I used Reynolds Genuine Parchment Paper, 45 square feet for \$3 at Walmart).
- Elmer's Disappearing Purple Washable School Glue Sticks<sup>2</sup> (2 for \$3 at Walmart).
- Clear tape (I use Scotch Magic tape for light duty and high-quality clear packing tape for heavy duty).

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<sup>2</sup> I have tried to use Elmer's white glue but the results were poor.

## The Procedure



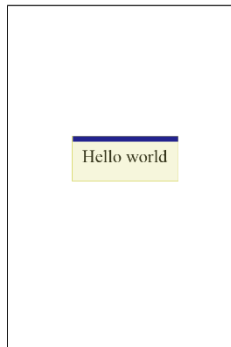
To ensure that my artwork landed on the parchment, I first printed the image on regular paper.

I left the print window open because a second printing will occur in a moment.

Then I cut out a coupon of parchment paper that covered the artwork with about ½ inch of margin all around.



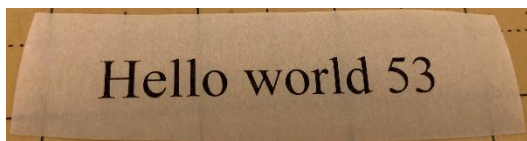
Note that the parchment naturally curls. With the curl down and working on a piece of scrap paper, I



lightly coated the leading 1/8 inch with the Elmer's glue. Then I flipped it over and stuck the coupon down, centered over the print. I used my finger to smooth down the glue on the base paper. Working from one end of the glue to the other, I avoided wrinkles. Then I wiped up an excess glue.

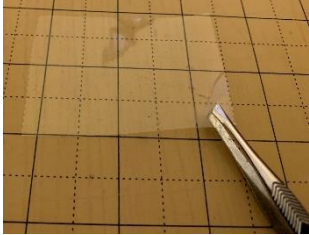
Next I brought this assembly, flat, to the printer with the same orientation of the artwork as when fed into the hopper the first time. The glue strip should be facing into the printer.

Going back to the PC, I printed the artwork again. Toner was deposited onto the parchment within 1/8 inch of the first printing.

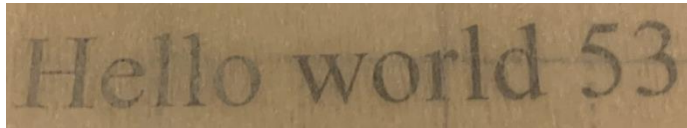


I then peeled off the parchment, taking care not to bend it as this can cause the toner to fall off.

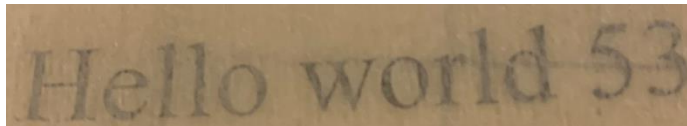
Next, I pull off the need tape and laid it on a clean, flat surface, sticky side up. I avoided getting fingerprints on the adhesive.



Then I placed the coupon, toner side down, on the tape. Using a smooth, round point, I rubbed over the toner through the back side of the coupon.



As I worked, the toner went from fuzzy to more fuzzy. Here you see the word “Hello” has been rubbed down while the rest is still stuck to the parchment.



I stopped when the entire artwork was “more fuzzy”. The toner transfer was then complete.



And finally, I lifted off the parchment and flipped the tape over.



All that was left was to apply my new label.

I welcome your comments and questions.

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Rick Sparber

[Rgsparber.ha@gmail.com](mailto:Rgsparber.ha@gmail.com)

Rick.Sparber.org