



A galaxy of decals, some complex curves, and a covering of flat paint could have spelled doom for Aaron's Polar Lights Klingon D7 battlecruiser. But no worries: A coat of Pledge Future floor polish, applied with an airbrush, produced a perfect bed for the markings.

# USING FUTURE for decaling



Clearing the way for better marks • BY AARON SKINNER

**T**he decals went down perfectly over a gloss coat of Pledge Future floor polish.

How often have you read this statement in the pages of *FSM*?

By now, most of us know what Future is, and its myriad uses in modeling. I want to take a step-by-step approach to the thing I like it best for – preparing models for decals. A smooth, glossy surface helps decals stick and prevents silvering.

In addition to airbrushing Future, I'll touch on a couple of other techniques.



1

Most model paints, especially military colors, have a flat (or matte) finish appropriate for the vehicle being modeled. Flat finishes get their appearance from a rough texture that disperses light. Unfortunately, the rough surface prevents decals from sticking well, causing silvering.



2

Future goes on smoother over a smooth surface. I always lightly sand the surface of the paint to remove any roughness. Fine sandpaper, such as 1,000- or 1,500-grit, is ideal, but even cloth can be used. You don't need to work hard, just enough so that the surface feels smooth.



3

After sanding, the surface will likely be covered with a light powdery residue you don't want trapped by the Future. Lightly wipe the model with a tack cloth to remove any residue. You don't need to press hard; the stickiness of the cloth should be enough to remove any dust.



**4** Future is usually sold in 27-ounce bottles with a squeeze-style lid. I suggest unscrewing the lid rather than using the pop-up nozzle. Future will dry in the lid and particles can flake off and either jam the airbrush or get blown onto your model.



**5** Future can be airbrushed straight from the bottle with great results. I pour as much as I need into my airbrush's reservoir. Try not to shake or stir the container too much to avoid creating bubbles and froth that can interrupt the smooth flow of Future from the nozzle.



**6** A word about air pressure: FSM Editor Matt Usher and author Matt Swann, in writing about airbrushing Future, say they prefer a regulator setting of about 15psi (left). This works, but I've had better luck with 30psi. Play with the pressure until you are comfortable with the results.



**7** I start by spraying the entire model with a couple of light coats. Hold the brush about 4" from the surface, start and finish spraying off the model, and keep the brush moving. Use good lighting in the spray booth to better observe progress. Right now, you want to cover the entire model but not create the final finish. You only need to wait a few minutes between coats.



**8** For the final shine, I move the brush slower across the surface (do not stop!) in overlapping strokes. When an area I have just passed over still appears wet and glossy, it's enough. *Be careful!* There's a fine line between the right amount and too much. If you make a mistake – like a fingerprint – leave it. Any attempt to fix it while the Future is wet will make it worse.



**9** Set the finished model under a dust-free cover and let it sit for 48 hours. You may be tempted to continue work before then, because the Future will seem dry to the touch in a few hours. But it remains tacky for a long time and, without realizing it, you can add a big fingerprint. Before it's completely cured, Future will react badly to water or decal solutions. So, wait two days.



**10** Perhaps Future's greatest benefit as a clear coat is its slow setting time and leveling characteristic. After leaving the model covered for a day, I checked it to find a very smooth gloss coat that has not obscured details. Remember the fingerprint from earlier? It was almost invisible after the Future leveled and dried.



**11** You have a model with few markings and you don't want to gloss the entire thing. You could airbrush a spot for the decal. The other option is to *paint* Future onto the area using a soft brush or cotton swab. The leveling aspect of Future makes brush strokes disappear. I've used cotton balls to apply Future to a 1/144 scale airliner.



**12** Future can help decals stick, too. If you think a decal may not go on perfectly, try this: While the decal is soaking, paint Future onto the area (left). Then, float the decal into place in the Future and brush more Future over it (right). Sop up excess with a cotton swab. When dry, the decal should seamlessly meld into the model's surface. **FSM**

## Cleanup

**DON'T LET** Future sit in an airbrush for too long or it will gum up the works. Ammonia is the best thing for cleaning up Future, but work quickly; ammonia can etch brass. I run a window cleaner with ammonia through my brush, then flush it with water. A blast of lacquer thinner removes any residue before I pull the airbrush apart and clean it.

## After the Future

**NOW YOU** have a glossy model with decals. What next?

This is the perfect time to apply a wash to the model. The glossy surface enables washes to run freely along panel lines. In addition, cured Future is largely immune to other substances, so you can use whatever you like for the wash without worrying about it reacting with the underlying surface. This is great if you use enamel paints but prefer artist's-oil washes.

It also means you can use whatever clear flat you want over the top to return the model's finish to the desired sheen. Some modelers even mix Future with Tamiya flat base to create a clear, flat top coat.