

Better with BARE- METAL FOIL



It's not as difficult to use as you think

BY TIM BOYD

One of the challenges modelers have faced for years is to paint realistic metal finishes, particularly chrome. That's where Bare-Metal Foil (BMF) comes in. BMF has been around since the 1970s, and modelers have used it on everything from model airplanes to trim on cars. When used correctly, it provides a beautiful metal finish that can't be beat. Before we get started, make sure you have a new, sharp blade in your hobby knife and plenty of spare blades on hand. Now let's get to it!



1

Don't try to apply foil until you complete painting (including clear coat, if applicable), and polishing the model with sanding pads, sanding sticks, rubbing compounds, and finishing products. I do not recommend applying a clear coat over BMF.



2

Take your time to polish everything you'll foil. For instance, when you polish car bodies, be sure to include all the surfaces that represent plated moldings on the 1:1 car. If you don't, you'll have unsightly, unrealistic texture accentuated by the BMF.



3

To achieve great results with BMF, always start with a new hobby-knife blade. Even a slightly used blade is likely to tear the foil. Foil will dull blades quickly, so be ready to replace them frequently. If you buy knife blades in bulk, you'll never have to compromise with a used blade. A metal straightedge is helpful, too.



4

For areas with metal trim around an opening, such as rear window and many windshields, I cut a large section of foil that will more than cover the entire opening. This lets me do the entire trim application in one operation and avoids the overlapping joints that occur if you individually foil each trim surface.



5

Lift the foil from the backing paper with your knife and loosely place the foil over the opening and avoid wrinkles on the trim surfaces. Check that the foil fully covers all the trim or other area you wish to finish with BMF. You can gently pull up the foil and reposition it if necessary.



6

Gently rub the BMF into the surrounding surfaces with a soft cloth. Carefully work the foil around the edges of the opening. Don't press too much; you'll complete this edge-wrapping step in a few moments.



7
KEY STEP: Use a new knife blade to cut away much of the excess foil in the center of the opening without tearing the remaining foil. This step won't happen the way you think it will if you use a blade that isn't new.



8
Don't throw away the foil that you just cut out of the opening; reapply it to the foil backing paper so you can use it later. Waste not, want not.



9
Carefully cut four diagonal slits that run from the center of the remaining excess foil to the corners of the opening, for instance, the four corners of the window as shown here.



10
Gently rub the edges of the opening with a cloth to finish wrapping the foil around the edges of the trim. Don't try to do it all at once. You'll have more success and avoid tearing the foil if you use light pressure and multiple strokes of the cloth.



11
Turn the model over and apply pressure to the foil to secure it to the surface underneath. A wooden toothpick works for surfaces that you cannot reach with a cloth. Sometimes these inner surfaces are visible on a completed model, so trim the foil neatly.



12
On this model, a 1962 Grand Prix, plated molding covers the joint where the C-pillars meet the rear fenders. I gently pulled up the extra foil in this area, cut a slit in it, and repositioned it to cover the C-pillar molding. In general, the fewer pieces of foil you use, the easier the application and the better your results.



13

Before you cut the outside edges of the foil, run your fingernail or a wooden toothpick along the recessed edge of the moldings to make sure that the foil is secured to the body. This also helps guide the knife blade during the next step.



14

Run a knife blade along the outside edges of the trim or area you want covered by BMF. Rely on the weight of the blade to make the cut rather than applying pressure. Pressure can chip the paint and/or cause the knife blade to jump out of the recessed channel. Go over the edges a second time with no pressure.



15

Carefully turn up the edge of the excess foil with a fingernail or toothpick, and then use your fingers to gently pull it away. Check for any joints that need a little fine-tuning; recut those edges and remove any remaining foil, again using a toothpick or fingernail to separate the excess foil from the body.



16

Before moving to foil the next section on your model, thoroughly polish the remaining foil on the opening's edges with a soft cloth. This helps secure rough edges and increases the reflectivity of the foil. Be on the lookout for excess foil adhesive on the model and polish it away with the same cloth.



17

Remember those scraps you saved? They're perfect for foiling badges, door handles, tie downs, and other small metallic details. With this door handle, I applied an ample scrap of foil, then slowly formed the foil around the door handle with a toothpick, starting with the top and working clockwise, finishing at the door button. Be gentle enough to avoid tearing the foil as work it into the edges. Trim the foil with a knife as before. **FSM**