



Using Heat Transfer Vinyl (HTV) with T-shirts

Products Used

Dream Create Inspire Repeat [SVG, DXF] (Sku: CC77608-1)

Steps To Complete

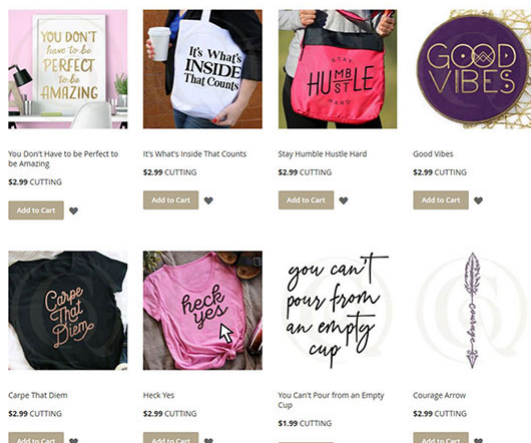


Heat transfer vinyl is a fun and easy way to personalize T-shirts using a Cricut, Silhouette, or other cutting machine. If you are new to HTV this guide will take you through it step-by-step, helping you make custom shirts in no time.

Heat transfer vinyl is called by a couple different names. You may see it referred to as heat transfer vinyl (often shortened to HTV); some brands call it iron-on vinyl. HTV also comes in different finishes. From glossy to glitter to iridescent, all types of HTV will work great on a T-shirt as long as you apply and care for them correctly.



HTV is very versatile and will adhere to almost any T-shirt, athletic shirt, or even a baby garment. Simply pick out the size and color of shirt you would like to customize, and you are ready to go.



To start, pick any SVG or DXF design that fits your style. HTV is very versatile, meaning that you can choose designs that range from simple (using only one or two colors) to complex (using multiple colors and layers). Our website has tons of original [cutting files](#) to choose from. There are sassy sayings, beautiful mandalas, and even designs for Christmas, Thanksgiving, and other holidays, making the process of personalizing your shirts sweet and simple.

Once you've picked your design, you'll want to size it to fit your shirt using cutting software. While the finished size and placement of your chosen design is largely dependent on preference, we find that it is best to measure the front of your shirt by lining up a ruler with where the bottom of the sleeves meet the sides of the shirt.



If your design is square, we've provided some base measurements to be used as guidelines for sizing your design. Keep in mind that your final measurements and placement are dependent on the actual size of your shirt. Always measure for best results.

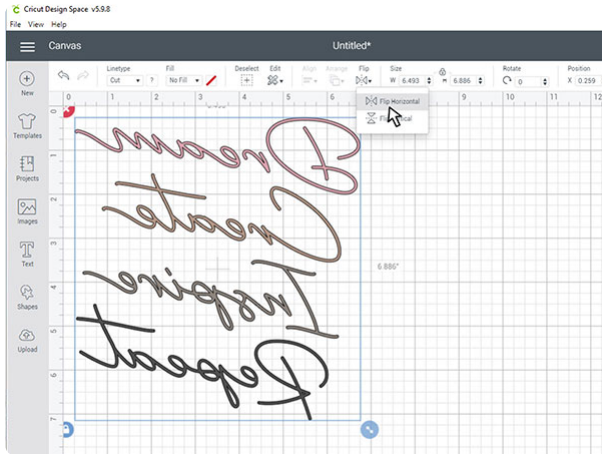
-Infant: 3" x 3" to 4" x 4"

-Toddler: 4" x 4" to 6" x 6"

-Youth: 6" x 6" to 8" x 8"

-Adult: 8" x 8" to 12" x 12"

For designs that are not square, match the longest measurement of your design to the length of the largest square that would fit comfortably on your shirt.



Before cutting the design, mirror (or flip) your design horizontally in your cutting software.

HTV is cut on the mat with the adhesive side facing up. If you do not mirror the design, it will be backward once placed on your shirt.

Every cutting software should have a mirror or flip option. If you are unsure of where to find this in your software, there are many resources on the internet that can show you how to mirror or flip the design in the software you are using.



As mentioned previously, HTV has a front and a back side. The back side is the adhesive that will be activated by heat (using an iron or press).

Until heated, it is not sticky at all. The front side of your HTV is covered by a clear protective film that will keep all of your pieces spaced properly until they are applied to your shirt. If you are having trouble telling apart the front from the back side of your HTV, simply peel back one corner of the protective film.

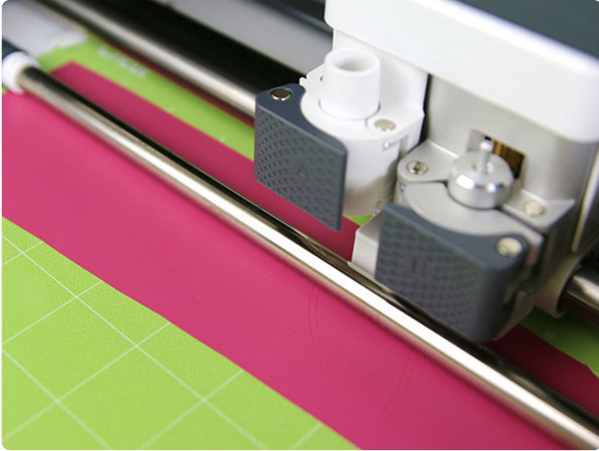
Once you've determined which side of the HTV is the front, smooth your sheet onto a cutting mat with the front side facing down. Use a rub or roll tool across the back of the HTV to smooth out any air bubbles and to prevent shifting while cutting. A Brayer tool is made especially for this, but you can use anything flat and hard to smooth your HTV onto a cutting mat.



Quick tip: To avoid wasting HTV, cut out a piece that is just larger (we recommend about 1" on all sides) than the design you will be cutting. The remainder of the roll can be saved for another project.

Some machines can cut out HTV without an adhesive mat. If using this type of machine, follow the manufacturer's instructions to load your HTV.

Different brands and types of HTV require different settings in cutting software. For best results, use the cut setting recommended by your brand of HTV.



To avoid wasting materials, do a test cut on a scrap piece of HTV before cutting out your whole design. The correct settings will cut through the vinyl cleanly and will leave the clear protective film in tact.

For designs with multiple colors, repeat the steps as described above, cutting out the colors individually.

Once cut, it is time to "weed" the design.

Weeding involves removing pieces of HTV from the plastic film that are not part of the finished design. Using small pointed tools or tweezers can simplify this process.



Quick tip: Hold the HTV up to a window or light box. The light shining through the cuts will help you find any small pieces that might have been missed when weeding.

Now it is time to position the design on your T-shirt! Lay your shirt on a heat-safe surface and place your cut HTV design so that the clear protective film is facing up. If you have multiple pieces, place them together as you want them to appear after your shirt is wearable.

Working down the center of the shirt, use a ruler to measure from the bottom edge of the collar to where you want the top of the design to start. For designs that are more square, we've provided some measurement guidelines that we have found helpful:



- Infant: 1" below the collar
- Toddler: 1" - 2" below the collar
- Youth: 2" - 3" below the collar
- Adult: 3" - 4" below the collar

If your design is wider than it is tall, use this formula to help with placement:

$(\text{width} - \text{height}) / 2 + \text{the appropriate measurement from the reference above.}$

For example: If our design is 8" wide and 3" tall, the difference in height and width is 5". Divided in half, we get 2.5". If putting the design on a small adult shirt, add 2.5" to 3", and place the design 5.5" below the collar.

To adhere the HTV you need two things: heat and pressure. While both a normal iron and a heat press can be used, we recommend a heat press for a couple of reasons:

1. It is easier to achieve an exact temperature with a heat press since the temperature is shown on a display (this is important since different types of HTV have different melting points and require specific temperatures).



2. A heat press has a larger surface area, making the job of pressing your design much quicker. You often do not need to move the heat press to different areas of your HTV as you would with an iron.

3. The heat will be more evenly distributed across your HTV. Traditional irons can have hot and "cold" areas.

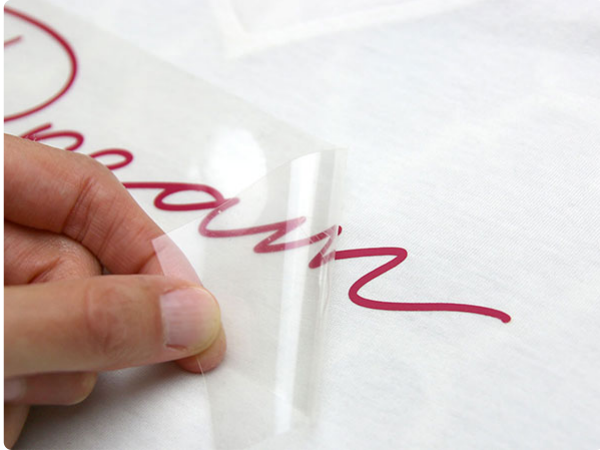
Whether you choose to use an iron or a heat press, we recommend placing a pressing cloth between the heating tool and the HTV. The pressing cloth will prevent the HTV and plastic sheet from overheating and warping. If using a normal iron, also make sure to turn the steam off before pressing your HTV.

Quick tip: Before pressing your design, look up the heating temperature recommended for your specific brand of HTV. These temperatures can range from 270-320 degrees Fahrenheit (135-160 degrees Celsius). Manufacturers will often provide the recommended time and technique needed for pressing as well.



Once your iron or press is fully heated and your design is positioned where desired, place your pressing cloth and set your iron or press onto the design for time specified in your manufacturer's instructions. In some cases, you may need to pre-heat your fabric, and press the back of your fabric for a specific amount of time once the front is complete.

For some types of HTV it is recommended that the HTV remain warm when removing the protective film, while other types require that the vinyl is cool. Again, we recommend checking with your manufacturer's recommendations, since these details can vary significantly.



After pressing, lift one corner of the protective film to see if the vinyl is remaining on your T-shirt and separating from the protective film. In some cases, you can use a small tool to hold the vinyl in place against the shirt as you pull up a corner of the protective film. If it does not come apart easily and/or cleanly, your HTV may need more pressing time. If, however, the vinyl is still not adhering to your shirt, and the protective film is starting to warp, shrink or change colors, we recommend that you stop pressing, and check the temperature of your heat press or iron, as this can be a sign that your vinyl is burning and you may need to begin again after checking your manufacturer's recommendations.



After the plastic sheet has been removed, either turn your shirt inside out, or lay the pressing cloth over the HTV design and press the design a final time. This allows the vinyl to really adhere to the shirt fabric.

If using a smooth vinyl, you will see a slight imprint in the fabric's weave once your HTV is fully adhered.

If your design has multiple layers and colors, repeat the previous steps until all pieces are full adhered. Pay careful attention to placement and piece order during this process.



To make lining up multiple HTV colors as easy as possible, have an image of the finished design available for you to reference.

Multiple color designs can fit together in a variety of ways. Some sit side-by-side, some are made to overlap, and some (with large sections of color overlapping) fit together more like a puzzle. Use your reference and your best judgement to press all the HTV layers into place.

Taking proper care of your HTV customized shirts is easy, and can help them last a very long time. Improper care (including too much heat) can cause the HTV to melt, crack or peel. Here are a few tips we found helpful in prolonging the life of our HTV projects:



1. Let your HTV shirt sit for 24 hours before you wear or wash it. This allows the vinyl to set.
2. When washing, turn the shirt inside out, and wash it in cool or cold water. Use a mild detergent, and do not use bleach or fabric softener.
3. Do not dry clean anything crafted with HTV.
4. When drying, use low heat only. For best results, air dry these projects to extend their life.
5. If you need to iron the shirt, use a pressing cloth or turn your shirt inside out to protect the HTV.

After completing a project or two, we hope that you find the confidence you need to explore all the options that HTV has to offer. Not only can this medium be used on T-shirts as explained above, but it can also be used on totes, pillows, and other fabric crafts.

[Discover our collection of T-shirt ready designs.](#)

Let your creativity run wild! HTV is a great place to start.