



FINISHING YOUR PLATES: A GUIDE TO GETTING THE BEST RESULTS

This guide is written for those with no previous experience of finishing plates. I have tried to be as thorough as I can but if you have any further questions please don't hesitate to give us a call.

FIRST JOB

Before the plates leave us they will be cleaned with a scouring powder (Vim or Ajax) and scrubbing brush, thoroughly drenched in clean water and dried. It would be a good idea to repeat this process before you make a start. Be particular about the rinsing!

MAKING A START – NAMEPLATES and all plates with a border:

Cut the plates fairly close to the edge, ideally with a band saw or linisher. The closer you get – the less you file! Be brave ... but careful. (For those who are more brave than careful, I am only at the end of a phone.) File to the edge then draw file around all the edges. (The photo below shows this.) Some plates do not have a beading all round, for example LNER A3 and some B17 nameplates. This also applies to any plates without an edge beading such as smokebox number plates. Once you are happy with the finish it's time for the paint but it's important to scrub clean (with scouring powder as above) once again ready for the paint.



PAINTING

We recommend a proprietary car spray. Halford's satin black for all black plates is perfect and 'Nissan 526' gives a good 'railway' red.

- Lay out the plates on a clean sheet of paper on a flat board in as dust-free an environment as you can manage. Immediately before applying the paint gently blow away any dust on the surface. Apply enough paint to give a good cover. 5" gauge and larger nameplates and cabsides would normally get two coats applied about an hour apart. These paints contain extremely good pigments and coat well. Works plates and other small plates may need only one coat.
- Leave to dry for about 48 hours. They are, of course, quite safe to be left sitting around for years in this state as long as they don't get a knock. Make sure they are well packaged.

POLISHING

- Starting with 600 grade 'wet & dry' paper used wet, lay the plate on a flat surface face up and by wrapping the abrasive paper round a small block, rub it to remove the paint from the tops of the lettering and the edges. Progress onto 1200 grade to obtain a good finish. The abrasive at this stage also takes out the last of the filing marks. It is laborious work but worth taking time over.
- Pour a little pool of proprietary brass polish onto a piece of paper on a board. Work the plate round in circular movements to obtain a brilliant polish. Rinse well in water, then, with a good squirt of washing up liquid in the palm of your hands, clean it. Rinse thoroughly in running water ... then rinse again. And once more for luck!

Last of all dry the plates by placing them face down onto a couple of thicknesses of kitchen roll to soak up the moisture. Use a fresh bit to dry the plate then ... stand back and admire your morning's work!

REPLICA CAST IRON PLATES

Cast iron plates were cheaper than brass on the big engines but they involve an extra bit of work for us. Smokebox number plates can be finished to look just right with the application of white enamel paint to the figures once the black paint has been removed as described above. (You will not need to polish them, of course.) Alternatively, and this does require some investment in materials so worthwhile if you are doing quite a few plates, viscous printing ink, available from good art shops, can be applied very sparingly by a nylon roller. (Spread thinly onto a small sheet of glass first.) This takes a little practise but, of course, mistakes can be simply wiped off before the ink dries. This is the best way to apply white to shed plates, BR works plates and some tender plates. Once you are happy with the result leave them to dry for at least two days. They would also benefit from a coat of clear lacquer.

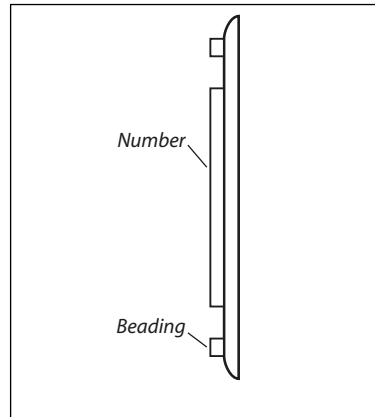
GREAT WESTERN PLATES

1) FORMING THE BEADING ON G.W.R. NAMEPLATES.

Start as above but after painting the plates, use fine files to form the half round beading whilst at the same time removing the paint. Then progress with the abrasive paper technique as described above. The more time spent here the better the result.

2) FORMING THE EDGE OF A G.W.R. CABSIDE NUMBER PLATE.

You will probably be aware that the beading is not at the edge of the plate. The diagram illustrates how the edge should be formed. The edge of the plate will be obvious as you look at the etching.



SMALL SCALE PLATES (i.e. 7mm, 10mm and 16mm : foot)

If you have built the model you will probably be equipped with the fine tools needed to cut the plates from the thin sheet. In general the finishing technique is largely the same as above.

FIXING

The one question we are asked more frequently than any other is "how do you attach the plates?" The answer depends upon how much running the engine will see. Really, for anything other than a glass case display model, all plates must, for safety, be mechanically fixed. Very small countersunk screws or tiny rivets, possibly with the heads turned down for neatness are recommended. There are some exceptions: Southern Railway nameplates come to mind where the prominent bolt heads were characteristic of the plates.

It might be reasonable to glue on tender plates and works plates (providing they are not onto a hot surface, of course). Whatever you do please never ... EVER ... be tempted to use double-sided tape. The adhesive is a liquid that never sets. It is always a liquid and the plates will slide off! But, as previously mentioned, I am only at the end of a phone

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