

Common Markings for Royal Air Force, Fleet Air Arm, and other Commonwealth air arm aircraft in service just before, during, and after the Second World War.

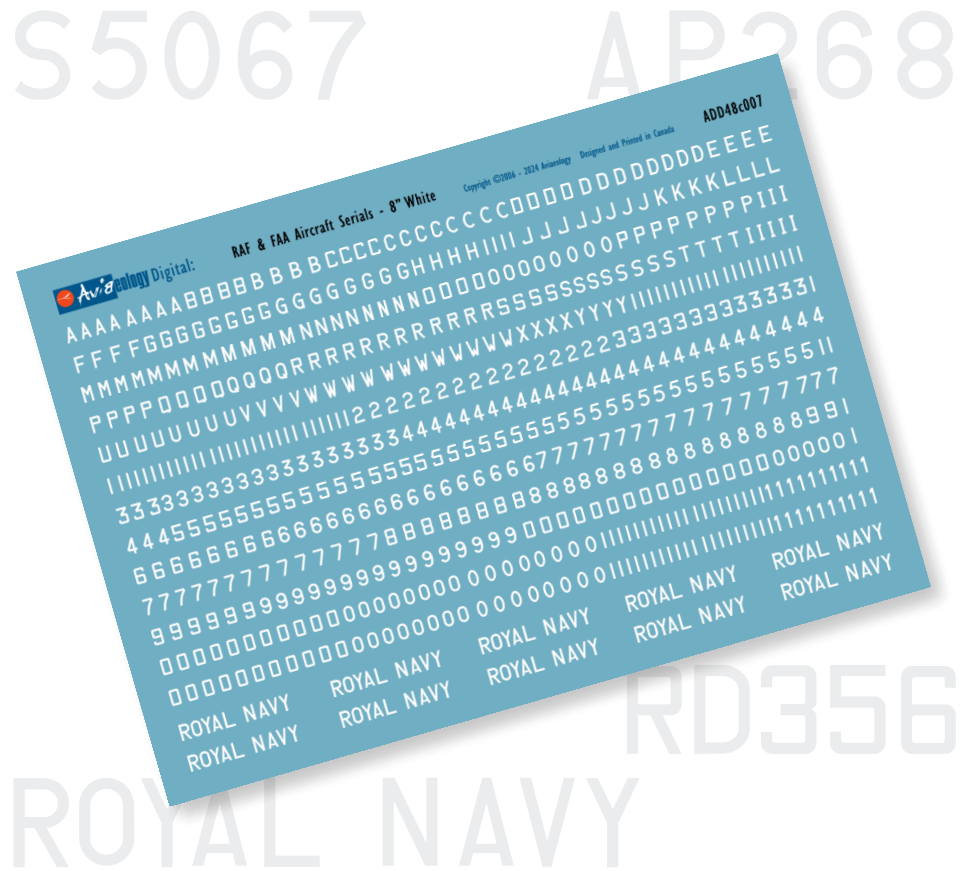
Within our Colours & Codes series we offer a growing range of common markings featured on a large number of aircraft types serving in most Allied air arms. These include national markings (typically roundel and fin flash combinations sized to type), squadron/unit code lettering, and serial/registration lettering.

With the advent of our new Singles and Special Editions (S&S) sets which concentrate on individual aircraft, the associated national markings sets have begun to expand in both types and scales covered. The selection offered will be updated incrementally on our website here...

https://www.aviaeology.com/store/c13/Colours-and-Codes_model_markings
...as more and more types are covered in the new S&S series.

Like the national markings sets, the code and serial lettering sets are also based on both official sources, including drawings, and many reference photos showing both factory and field-applied variations. Most of the currently available (2025) lettering sets have been in print (some in their 4th or 5th reprint) since 2006, are now being expanded upon in both 1/72 and 1/48 scales. We are also considering producing some select sets among these in other scales. The link to the general category page in our web shop (shown above) is the best place to stay up to date on new additions to all subsets within the series.

RAF & FAA Aircraft Serials — 8 inch White



This set provides at least 4 of each alphabet character and at least 6 of each number character with field-applied and factory variations of some characters and additional select items. Each glyph was initially hand-drawn before being manually traced using a digital stylus, in an effort to capture as closely as possible the manually produced original outlines. Five sets of Royal Navy titles are also included.

A 1/72 scale version of this set is also available as ADD72c007.

Similar character sets are available in Black and Dull Red.

Preparation & Application Guidelines

1. Make sure the model surface is glass smooth for best results. The glossier the prepared surface, the better. Before applying decals, it is especially helpful to overcoat flat paint finishes with a gloss coat that hardens completely. The timing to achieve a high quality surface can vary due to factors such as humidity, temperature, or how thoroughly the underlying paint has dried. There are specialty model-hobby products out there, but clear gloss acrylics designed for artwork or some acrylic floor finishes can also give good results.
2. If the model surfaces have gritty or “pebbly” areas remaining after gloss application, buff it out with fine grit (600 or better) wet/dry sandpaper. After thoroughly washing away the sanding residue, let the area dry thoroughly before recoating.
3. Prepare a shallow dish with lukewarm, preferably distilled water. Adding a small droplet of dish soap promotes soaking, which eases decal/paper separation.
4. Cut out the desired individual decal element and place it in the water, design-side UP. Most modelers develop a sixth sense for when the decal will loosen just enough, but 30-60 usually does it. As the backing paper becomes thoroughly soaked, the decal begins to separate from it and the adhesive layer becomes active. Some decal papers, such as that in current use for our digital production, will darken noticeably when fully saturated.
5. As the decal loosens from the backing paper, remove it from the water, handling just the paper while trying to avoid mechanical contact with the design or its clear carrier film edges (for our digital decals, also see the best practice “tips” elsewhere in this package).*
6. Set the model so that the surface receiving the decal is facing upwards, approximately horizontal. Use a brush or pipette to put a droplet of softened water on the area where the decal will be placed. Instead of water, a mild decal solution (such as Micro Set) can also be used. Or if using our digital decals, a stronger solution (such as Solvaset) may be used in place of water or Micro Set to help the decal snuggle down over more prominent details.
7. Bring the soaked decal paper close to this little puddle and slide the decal element off of the paper onto the puddle. A flat paintbrush, second pair of tweezers, or fingertip, may help in coaxing it from the paper.
8. Gently manoeuvre the decal into its final position without pressing it too tightly to the model surface. The idea being that the liquid between the decal and the model serves as a buffer, delaying the activation of the decal’s adhesive until positioned correctly.
9. Once positioned, pad the decal with a flat brush or cotton bud. The goal here is to squeeze out the water puddle from under the decal while keeping it in position. Be aware that the decal adhesive will start to take hold after you begin this step. Working out from the centre is the best practice – especially for larger decals – since it also pushes out air or liquid that may otherwise remain trapped under the decal film when dry.
10. As it dries, the decal adhesive will snuggle the decal down more tightly onto the surface. If you see any trapped voids, puncture them with a hobby knife tip, sewing needle, or similar sharp instrument, and pad as needed. If desired, stronger decal setting/softening solutions such as Micro Sol or Solvaset can also now be applied to tighten the decal more firmly to the surface of the model.
11. After the decals are completely set, any adhesive residue visible near them can be gently wiped away with a dampened cotton bud. If any of the adjacent clear-coat has “fogged” a little during application, such milkiness will often disappear under additional clear coating.
12. Give all decals ample time to really snuggle into the paintwork and then apply 1 or 2 overall gloss coats prior to final finish application or weathering steps.

* If this set is one of our digitally printed series (catalogue number is prefixed with “ADD”), please consult the additional “Tips for using decals printed on continuous carrier film” which describes a simple process to easily minimize the amount of carrier film transferred to the model.

Prep & App Guide, revision 4, January 2025 • © Aviaeology 2006-2025

Tips for using decals printed on continuous carrier film

Best practices for our ADD (or any other) digital decals printed in this way.

During application to the model, our digitally printed decals perform easily as well as our screen-printed decals. Both are produced using very thin carrier films on specially-designed waterslide transfer papers featuring state-of-the-art water-activated release agents and latent adhesives. The most noticeable difference is that these digital editions have the colours printed on top of a continuous (coated across the entire paper sheet) clear carrier film where, in screen-printing, the clear is applied only in register with each decal element plus a little around its perimeter. A potential problem inherent in either system is that any part of the carrier film that remains clear after transfer may be subject to “silvering” – a visual artefact wherein room light can make visible any voids trapping liquid or air between the surface finish of the model and the clear carrier film.

As a rule of thumb, the more clear film remaining, the higher the likelihood of silvering. Model finishing techniques have been developed to completely and consistently eliminate silvering. As recommended in our own guidelines, these usually start with the application of a high-gloss clear finish prior to decal application and at least one additional gloss coat prior to any final clear-coat finish (whether flat, satin, or gloss) application or weathering action. The quality of the initial gloss coat is particularly important for consistent success.

If you do encounter silvering on a regular or even random basis, then trimming the decal as close as possible to the actual colour elements will help minimize its visibility. This is especially true of decals printed on a continuous clear carrier film.

One problem that can occur when using this “trim as close as possible” technique is that rough cuts – such as those made with dull scissors or knives used either too firmly or at the wrong angle to the paper – can distort the cut edges of the clear film, which can, in turn, affect finish coat smoothness at these edges.

To help avoid this possibility, begin by first cutting individual decal elements roughly from the sheet with as much as possible of the surrounding clear area intact. Then, on a flat surface using a fresh #11 (or similar pointed-tip blade), score through the carrier film all the way around the decal element, keeping the score line as close to the coloured element as possible. Practice being very gentle with the scoring action, gliding the knife tip along just hard enough to penetrate the clear film while at the same time not pushing too much of a “ridged valley” into the underlying paper. The advantage here is that the force needed to separate the decal element from the surrounding film is minimized.

After the usual soaking step, this “freed” clear film can be removed separately from the paper and discarded, with minimal film remaining to slide onto the model surface.

This method gives more light-handed control in making those detailed closer-to-the-image perimeter cuts, while at the same time resulting in less physical distortion of the delicate edges of the carrier film that will be applied to the model.

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