

Laptop skin

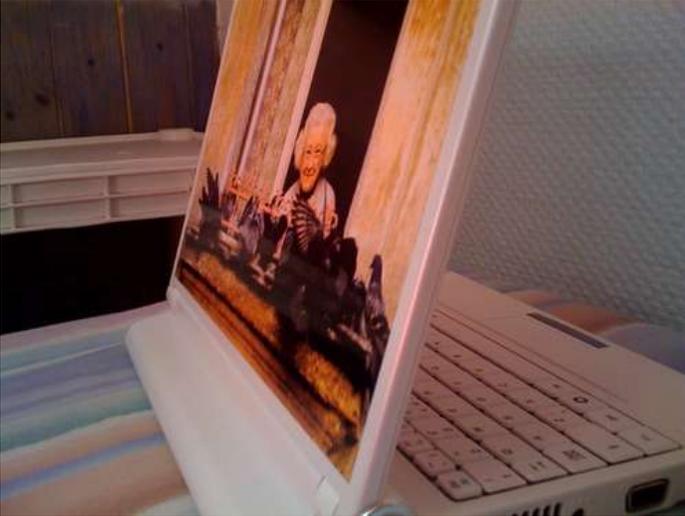
by [sms97](#) on May 18, 2009

Table of Contents

intro: Laptop skin	2
step 1: Set up: choose your image, buy materials	2
step 2: Find the correct image size	3
step 3: Printing and cutting	3
step 4: Test!	4
step 5: Stick your skin on	4
Related Instructables	5
Advertisements	5
Make Magazine Special Offer	5
Comments	5

intro: Laptop skin

Do you want your own high-quality vinyl laptop skin, but don't want to pay \$20? Then read on!



step 1: Set up: choose your image, buy materials

You will need:

1. A laptop
2. A high resolution image (resolution should be at least as high as your laptop screen)
3. A white gloss self adhesive A4 vinyl label suitable for inkjet printers (I ordered mine from eBay <http://www.ebay.co.uk>. Ten sheets cost me 10GBP).
4. Some sticky back plastic. I used the stuff libraries use to cover their books, bought from my local stationers Rymans <http://www.ryman.co.uk/>. A huge roll cost only 2GBP. It is thin, durable and tough.
5. A colour inkjet printer
6. A scanner is useful but not necessary



step 2: Find the correct image size

Optional step:

If you have a scanner, scan your laptop. Using an image manipulation package that supports layering (e.g. gimp <http://www.gimp.org/>) load the scanned image. Add a new layer and in this layer draw a box over the scanned image that marks the intended edges of your laptop skin. Make sure you curve the corners of the box to match the contours of your laptop if you wish to do so. Delete the layer containing the scanned image, so you are left only with the outline of your laptop skin. Now load a new layer with the image you wish to use as a skin. Resize and position the image so that the outline of the skin contains the image correctly. Now merge the layers. You should now have an image with the intended outline of your skin superimposed which will help you when you need to cut the image out.

If you do not have a scanner, you will instead need to resize your image so that when it is printed it will be the correct size for your laptop. Use an appropriate image manipulation package.



step 3: Printing and cutting

1. Print the resized image on the vinyl (make sure you print on the correct side!) using an inkjet printer set to the highest print quality possible
2. When dry, cover the A4 sheet with the sticky back plastic, ensuring there are no air bubbles. This is to stop the ink rubbing off the skin in your bag
3. Cut out the laptop skin, but save a small square of vinyl to test the adhesive on your laptop. I used a guillotine to keep the edges straight. If you don't have one, a roller cutter will do; failing that use scissors



step 4: Test!

This is an important step to check the vinyl adhesive won't damage your laptop.

Take the small piece of vinyl you saved, remove the backing to expose the sticky surface and stick it somewhere discrete on your laptop. Leave it there for some time (I left mine in place for a month). When you feel an appropriate time has passed, remove the vinyl and check that it hasn't caused permanent damage to the laptop casing.

If the laptop is old and you don't care about it you can skip this.



step 5: Stick your skin on

1. Ensure the surface is clean
2. Position the skin on the laptop and hold in place
3. Remove the backing from one corner of the skin and stick it in position
4. Slowly remove the backing and making sure at all times the laptop skin is in the correct position. If it isn't then correct for it now. Be careful not to introduce air bubbles. I found avoiding them impossible, but it is possible to remove small air bubbles later
5. With your thumb nail, slowly work small air bubbles to the edge of the laptop skin smoothing as you go
6. Enjoy your laptop cover!

The finished photos have been taken four months after attaching the skin. During this time my laptop has been thrown into my bag without a case on a daily basis, along with the charger, keys, pens etc. As you can see, it has held up well.



Related Instructables

Subscribe to MAKE and get 5 ISSUES for the PRICE OF 4!
Build, Hack, Play, Make

SPECIAL OFFER FOR INSTRUCTABLES
MAKE Magazine

BONUS ISSUE
» Get a FULL YEAR plus a BONUS ISSUE for only \$29.95



Comments

33 comments [Add Comment](#)



roosta says:

May 21, 2009. 3:10 PM [REPLY](#)

the top of my laptop is made of a different plastic to the bottom of it, and so the only way to test it would be to put it straight on the top. what are the chances that it would actually damage the laptop?
can you also post a link to the seller you bought yours from please? i don't want to leave it to chance.



sms97 says:

May 28, 2009. 2:20 PM [REPLY](#)

Hi Roosta,

Here is a link to the ebay seller's listing: <http://cgi.ebay.co.uk/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=180306580466&ssPageName=ADME:B:EOIBSA:UK:31>.

Obviously I can't guarantee the vinyl stickers he's selling won't damage your laptop, as your machine is probably not made from the same material as mine. However, the vinyl I got from him was high quality and did all I wished it to. The other comments given here have sound advice for removing any residue that may be left if and when you choose to remove the skin.

Good luck!



wupme says:

May 26, 2009. 11:36 PM [REPLY](#)

I think you could take a look, there are printable vinyl stickers out there especially made to be removed later without damaging the surface.

I actually don't remember the exact name, but they are the same like those special price tags used on books and stuff which you can get off without leaving any glue or damaging the book.

And as long as the surface is not a nitro based paint (I doubt it is... who is using that stuff anyway today except on stupid expensive guitars?), it should be no problem to remove it.



Devildad says:

May 28, 2009. 1:34 PM [REPLY](#)

This is interesting. I was thinking of hitting up a local sign maker for a clear vinyl printed with a black pattern to create a two layer sapphire blue camouflage for the lid on my sapphire blue aspire one.



nickyfinn says:

May 24, 2009. 1:45 AM [REPLY](#)

worse case scenario, you peel the sticker off and you have glue stuck to it. careful not to get any inside cracks and such, rub some olive oil on the plastic with a cotton ball. let it soak a while (like 20 minutes) and come back ready to scratch it off with your nail. a solution of vinegar and water with a rag or paper towel will most likely remove the rest. if that doesn't do the trick, repeat same process. if that doesn't do the trick, repeat same process but this time use orange oil instead. if that doesn't do it, go get some goobegone. I would be wary of using goobegone after reading this:
<http://forums.macrumors.com/showthread.php?t=668521>
but hey.. if my first suggestions didn't work I don't know what else would.

...also, there's a way to remove stickers that results in very minimal specs, if any, of glue. however, this process is 'prolly not good for an electric device. what is this wonder I speak of? I speak of soaking your stickered item in SUPER HOT water and slowly peeling the sticker off. or using a hair dryer while slowly peeling off. aside from these two methods burning you, they also, you know.. might KILL your laptop. so I would only do those if you REALLY DGAF about your laptop ;)



jacobtriffo says:

May 25, 2009. 3:57 PM [REPLY](#)

or you could just use lighter fluid and a rag; methylated spirits, or high grade isopropyl (rubbing alcohol) will also work. the key is to use a solvent to dissolve the glue residue.

you can use the equivalent of salad dressing (read: oil and vinegar) to take off the gunk, but really, it's going to take longer, and you risk getting said salad dressing inside of your laptop, which if you like the smell of old vinegar could be a good thing, but I personally find it unpleasant.



wupme says:

May 26, 2009. 11:33 PM [REPLY](#)

I know somebody who did that, but not with isopropyl, no he soaked it in acetone...
It's interesting when the black color comes off but looks so ugly...

Well after that he paid me 30 bucks to spraypaint it (single tone).

I know that's not a useful comment, but still interesting what some people do with their stuff before they start thinking ;)



nickyfinn says:

May 24, 2009. 1:32 AM [REPLY](#)

if you don't have a scanner you can still get the correct dimensions using a ruler and GIMP. download GIMP, (if you don't already have it,) and measure your laptop. go to file, and new. choose inches or millimeters, and give the corresponding numbers for width and height. hooray, not you know the exact resolution you need!



Laserbman says:

May 23, 2009. 9:59 PM [REPLY](#)

<http://www.skinit.com/>

you don't HAVE to do them yourself, just, i wouldn't want to spend 30 bucks for it.



bytehead says:

May 21, 2009. 10:30 AM [REPLY](#)

I'm looking at doing similar with my laptop. I'm using a paper 8.5 x 11 label (which I'll be trimming the margins off) instead, scanning the laptop works only if the laptop is smaller than the scanner (and mine's bigger than the letter or the legal sized scanners I have), and I've fitted everything together (since a letter size doesn't even cover the back) with plain paper for fit. I've cleaned the old bumperstickers/decals off of it with Goo Gone (it was my son's laptop).

The only reason why I haven't completed it yet (this week) is that the fan went kablooeey (too much Iraqi sand), and I had to replace the fan. Which I just did. It's quieter too.

The picture I'm going with is a scene from Babylon 5's pilot, when Kosh's ship arrives. Somebody's recreation of it, NOT a screen grab! :)



metroman58 says:

May 23, 2009. 11:21 AM [REPLY](#)

I'm really surprised you didn't use a picture from South Africa ! I'd amazing where you find people on the web.



bytehead says:

May 23, 2009. 2:26 PM [REPLY](#)

I'm a whimsical kind of guy. :-p And Babylon 5 has a piece of my heart. My other design I thought about was Domokun in a war scene.

Now, if my wife wanted to do a skin/decal, yeah, I can see a South African picture on that, she absolutely loves that country. Then again, she practically lived there all year in 2008.

I should probably upload the skin(s) to my flickr account, just to show off.



msweston says:

May 20, 2009. 1:13 PM [REPLY](#)

I like the idea, except I like the look of the aluminum on my MacBook. I think I am going to do the same thing, but just put a simple design in darker/lighter gray in the corner and leave everything else clear so you can still see the logo and aluminum.

By the way, is the vinyl a matte color or is it glossy, the last picture looks glossy, but I just want to be sure



sms97 says:

May 21, 2009. 9:53 AM [REPLY](#)

I chose a glossy white vinyl, but matte should work well too. I found the ink from the inkjet printer rubbed off easily when I made a test print, which is why I added the sticky back plastic step. Unfortunately for matte lovers this means the finish will always look glossy.

I haven't tried this method on a clear vinyl, which it sounds like you are thinking of doing. I'd love to see the results if you do.



msweston says:

May 23, 2009. 7:18 AM [REPLY](#)

well, I just had a sheet printed out and my dad is bringing it home tomorrow... I wont be able to put it on because I'm not going to be here this weekend though.

This is what the sample looks like too (sorry for the blurry pics, but I was in a hurry):



msweston says:

May 21, 2009. 2:01 PM [REPLY](#)

That's what I had in mind. As for the smudging problem a laser printer should solve that. I was going through my junk drawer and found a roll of notebook laminating stuff that is matte - it doesn't leave any residue, or at least for the past few days it hasn't, and its 24" by 8' so there is plenty for mess ups

 **csmiler** says: May 21, 2009. 8:48 PM [REPLY](#)
I suggest putting a drop of water on the laptop, and just spreading it a bit.....it should help... the air bubbles can be easily squeezed out.And the sticker will be easier to apply and reposition if placed wrong.

 **scris101** says: May 19, 2009. 4:36 AM [REPLY](#)
to bad this is completely over expensive, your normal laptop skin will cost only about 7-10 dollars

 **Jdark88** says: May 21, 2009. 8:20 PM [REPLY](#)
She only spent 10 GBP for ten sheets which is about 1.5 USD per sheet plus 2 GBP for a whole roll of that shiny plastic stuff

 **nodnodwinkwink** says: May 19, 2009. 8:44 AM [REPLY](#)
Where can you get them for that price?

 **ReCreate** says: May 20, 2009. 1:53 PM [REPLY](#)
Say,Ebay?

 **kcchen_00** says: May 21, 2009. 8:24 AM [REPLY](#)
Not sure you're going to find a pre-made skin with a picture of your mom...

 **ReCreate** says: May 21, 2009. 9:50 AM [REPLY](#)
Well,Ebay For Generic Themed skins,But For Your Own Custom Skin Yeah you gotta make it yourself.

 **Booyaka3** says: May 21, 2009. 9:04 AM [REPLY](#)
Lol but very true...

 **hammer9876** says: May 21, 2009. 12:14 PM [REPLY](#)
Nice Instructable. I have always heard about popping an air bubble with a tiny pin prick. It might work on this if you managed to get one in the final steps. Just a thought.

 **jb510** says: May 21, 2009. 8:02 AM [REPLY](#)
Nice. I too like the aluminum skin on my MacBook... Now if some came up with "do it yourself" laser etching that'd be awesome... Going to look for such an instructable now.

 **dhymers** says: May 21, 2009. 5:20 AM [REPLY](#)
Alternative method: make freinds with your local sign shop, print shop, vehicle wrap shop. Superior materials, and you could even wrap your entire laptop (obviously for more money)

 **lonerayven** says: May 21, 2009. 5:13 AM [REPLY](#)
If anyone want's theirs designed or just printed and laminated inexpensively, for a custom one of a kind skin, please feel free to email me lonerayven@gmail.com, I work with a printing company as their designer. :-)

 **Dr.Paj** says: May 18, 2009. 6:06 PM [REPLY](#)
Here is another way to do what you did in this instructable. http://www.instructables.com/id/Durable_Personal_Laptop_Skins/
I personally like his design a little more than the lady with the birds.

 **Eirinn** says: May 19, 2009. 4:10 AM [REPLY](#)
The design depends on the picture you print using the printer...not the method...

 **wupme** says: May 18, 2009. 11:37 AM [REPLY](#)
But what about a new notebook, where i still don't care if it damages the surface?
I mean, afterall... i don't think i'm ever gonna remove the sticker ;)



oldanvilyoungsmith says:

pretty much the only reason to do this is if you care. if you don't care at all then it doesnt matter if it's an old or new laptop.

May 18, 2009. 7:03 PM [REPLY](#)



phant0m_sp00f3ra says:

this is a good idea, i'm gonna do this to my mbp :D

May 18, 2009. 6:00 PM [REPLY](#)
