

# Not All Wall Decals Are The Same

*Take a look at the pros and cons of the top decal choices.*

Wall Decals are one of the hottest decorating trends, and with celebrity designers on television using decals in their projects, they are here to stay. But how do you know that you're getting a decal that looks like the one the designer used on her show? Are there any reasons to buy one over another, and why does it matter where I get them? Follow along as we answer your questions about Wall Decals.

## WHERE TO SHOP: BIG BOX STORES VS. ONLINE VENDORS.

### *Decals from Big Box Stores*

**Pros:** Instant Gratification—See it, love it, buy it, and best of all, walk out of the store with your coveted purchase. This is often the least expensive option for wall decals.

**Cons:** Lack of Quality & Selection—Choices are limited to, and there are no choices for different sizes, colors, or layout options. Personalization such as a monogram design is also not an option. Quality may be an issue since the shelf life for decals is less than 6 months. After a few months, the decal is

difficult to work with. The customer has no way of telling how long the decal has been sitting on the shelf. Other quality issues stem from overseas manufacturing materials and consistency. Issues such as too strong or weak adhesive may cause problems, and the vinyl itself may not have consistent color or thickness.

### *Decals from an online vendor*

**Pros:** Selection & Quality: Choose from a variety of designs, size, and color options. Get a personalized or custom design that is tailored to your tastes and needs. Quality is generally higher, especially for the decals manufactured in the US since the company you're buying from is also the manufacturer. Most e-tailers also include practice designs and installation tools, which let you test your surface before applying the decal(s).

**Cons:** No Instant Gratification - You order and wait a couple of days. It may be difficult to trust an online store simply based on the website. Returns are through the mail rather than back to a store. Guarantees vary widely, and you often have to pay for ship-



ping. **Hint: check Facebook or other social media sites to see how many fans the company has out there. More fans generally means higher customer satisfaction and engagement.**

*"We get calls at least once a week from a customer that is unhappy with a big box store decal. We try to talk them through their issue, and then offer them a discount to try one of our decals. We get a lot of converted customers that way, ones that tell us that our quality is the #1 reason they will continue to shop with us."*

*Morgan Battisti of Trading Phrases*

## TYPES OF DECALS: PRINTED VS. CUT

**Print:** Printed decals are designs that are printed on a large plotter and then the design is cut from that print.

**Pros:** Variety of colors and designs. Anything that can be printed can be turned into a decal.

**Cons:** Color is on the surface only and the design can be scratched or get scuffed. The print quality itself may be variable depen-

*Sabrina Soto, HGTV Celebrity Designer on Wall Decals in a recent interview: "Having one object like that is kind of cool, especially if you have a space in a room that you just don't know what to do with. It's kind of the same thing as wallpapering an accent wall. This is just a lot easier."*

ding on the manufacturer, and poor print quality will look sub-par on a wall. Designs from photos that are enlarged beyond their limits can look 'pixelated' up close. Some printing processes, especially ones with small complex cut out areas tend to have curling at the edges. Some manufacturers get around that by including a white or clear border around the design, which may work in a kid's room, but doesn't have the same classy effect customers strive for in a living room. Again, product consistency is one variable since there is no industry standard for printed material.

**Cut Vinyl:** Cut decals are computer cut from a solid roll of vinyl material and have consistent color through the entire design.

**Pros:** Scratches, scuff marks, and general wear and tear do not show up on the cut vinyl as easily as printed material. There is

no variation in color and there is no additional border around the design. Edge curling is not an issue since the vinyl never has to go through the printing/heating process to achieve the design. The majority of US manufacturers use an industry standard vinyl, meaning that you'll get consistency across manufacturers and materials, even when shopping with different vendors (again, not big box stores).

**Cons:** Less selection due to the lack of printing ability. The image is contained entirely in the cut image itself rather than as a "canvas" for printing.

If you fall in love with the decal in the store, then give it a try. It is a cheap and easy introduction to decorating with wall decals. You should pay careful attention to the size and color, because you won't have any control over either of those. If you're worried about

whether your decal will work on your wall, stick with an online vendor that is willing to send you a free practice decal before you commit to buy—but don't expect the sample to represent store-based decals. If you don't have a good experience, or you're looking for more selection or personalization options, your best bet is to buy online—there really is a difference in quality and selection. As always, be sure you understand the store or retailer's return policy, and use it if you get a product that doesn't meet your expectations. **Hint: ask your manufacturer what vinyl they use. If the answer anything other than Oracal, walk away.**

Wall decals are an inexpensive and fun way to add personality, color, and style to a wall or smooth surface. Arming yourself with some knowledge will help you get the most out of your new addition to your decor.

*Photos Courtesy of Trading Phrases*

