

How to Apply Composition Ornaments

Compo ornaments can be finished either before they are applied or after.

You can use glue or steam to apply them.

Glue

Ornaments can be glued with standard adhesives and held in place with removable tape or set with small nails. This method works fine if you don't need the ornaments to bend or conform to the surface where



Steam

Gently steaming composition ornaments brings out their best features. The warmth of the steam softens the ornament and the moisture of the steam activates powerful, water-based glue within the ornament. When steamed, compo will conform to and stick to any hard, smooth, and clean surface such as unfinished wood, painted wood, plaster, drywall, metal, and glass or mat board.

Steaming sounds a bit daunting but it's actually very easy and time efficient. Try it. You'll be surprised how easy it is.

Tools You'll Need for Steaming:

1. Pan: A 12-inches or larger rectangle for holding water.
2. Steaming screen: Stretch cotton cloth (like an old sheet) over a wood frame and staple it to the frame or stretched the cloth over the pan and clip it to the edges. The steaming screen needs to match the size of your pan.
3. Dull knife and spatula to pick up the heated ornaments.
4. X-Acto or sharp knife to cut the heated ornaments.
5. Portable electric burner, electric skillet or a burner on a stove.
6. Paint brush, disposable chip brushes work great.



Steaming Instructions:

1. Fill the pan about half full with water. Cover the top of the pan with your steaming screen and heat on LOW until it begins to gently steam. Do not boil the water.
2. Before steaming the ornaments, determine exactly where the compo will be placed. Make sure that the surface is free of dust, grease and dirt.



3. As the water starts to steam, your steaming screen will get wet. A damp steaming screen is important because the hot moisture is what activates the glue. As needed, brush the steaming screen with water to add moisture. When you have a gentle steam, place one piece of compo at a time, flat side down, on top of the damp steaming screen.
4. Leave the compo on the screen for approximately 30 seconds to two minutes depending on the thickness and age of the piece. Test the underneath side. If the bottom is wet and slick and the piece is pliable, it's ready. If the compo is not ready, leave it on the steaming screen a little longer. The best way to learn when compo is ready is just by trying it. Watch it closely, use the knife or spatula to lift it and don't burn yourself, steam can be very hot.

5. When the compo is ready, lift it gently off the screen. Properly warmed compo is sturdy enough to pick up but also flexible enough to bend without breaking or cracking. Lay it carefully where you want it and simply press it firmly but gently into place. Be sure to check all the edges to make sure they are all pressed down and bonded to the surface. Any compo residue around the edges can be brushed away with a paint brush and water.



6. IF YOU OVER STEAM THE COMPO and it becomes too soft to handle, remove it from the steam as best you can and lay it design side down, slick side up to dry and harden. When it's firm again, re-steam and start over.



7. Compo is very flexible and easy to cut with a knife. Use a very short, strong bladed knife. Compo can be cut apart, combined with other designs and laid out in different arrangements.

8. All tools and compo residue can be washed away with warm water and soap.

9. Compo sets very quickly. If necessary, within 10 minutes of application, an ornament can be removed with a putty knife. Clean the surface where it was applied with water. The ornament that was removed can be re-steamed and used again.



10. When the compo has cooled and is dry, you can paint your project with your favorite finish. Once finished, compo endures for many decades. If you are applying compo to a finished piece or you want the ornament to have a different finish, you can finish the ornament before steaming it and then apply it.



11. CAUTION: When steamed, compo becomes quite pliable and can be stretched. Take care when applying the ornaments not to stretch them beyond their original size, which could cause slight variations in the layout of your design.

