A Complete Guide to PDAA Certification

PDAA

Professional Decal Application Alliance

Introduction

Please review the detailed description for each test. Make an honest evaluation of your abilities. To save you time and money, please do not take the tests until you are certain you are ready. Novice and advanced training are available to help you develop your skills, as you work towards Master Certification. More information on training options is available at www.robivers.com.

Rob Ivers, Authorized Certification and Training Provider

General Information

Testing procedures were created by the PDAA Certification Director Rob Ivers, with input from several PDAA graphic installation professionals. They were reviewed by technical representatives of vinyl manufacturers and checked for relevance, accuracy, and comprehensiveness. The result is an unbiased, proficiency-based certification that is fair, accurate, relevant, and comprehensive in regard to assessing the knowledge and expertise of today's graphic installation professional.

PDAA has two levels of Certification; Basic and Master. Basic Certification accommodates companies that have absolutely no interest in doing vehicle wraps with complex curves, but would like to be certified for all types of flat and simple curve installations (signs, glass, walls, and flat with rivet box trucks and trailers). Master Certification includes all of the Basic Certification tests as well as three additional vehicle wrap tests.

To become a PDAA Basic Certified or Master Certified Member Company, at least one full time employee (not sub-contractor) must pass the PDAA Certification Written Exam with a passing score of 80% or higher and pass the corresponding PDAA Certification Installation Tests.

Master Certification testing is administered in a one-day session that starts usually at 8:00 a.m. and generally finishes between 5-6:00 p.m.

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Requirements for ALL PDAA Members

Those persons, firms, partnerships, or corporations, who upon requesting membership in the Professional Decal Application Alliance have met the following requirements,

a) *Provided a completed membership application.*

b) *Agreed in writing to read and follow the procedures set forth in the **PDAA Vinyl Installation Proficiency Guide** and to abide by the **PDAA Rules of Conduct & Policies** set forth by the PDAA Steering Committee.*

General Members

In addition to the requirements listed above for all PDAA Members, General Members have met the following requirements:

a) *Paid annual dues of $200.00.*

Basic Certified Members

In addition to the requirements listed above for all PDAA Members, Basic Certified Members have met the following requirements:

b) *Have at least one full time employee that passed the PDAA VIP Basic Certification Proficiency exams.*

c) *Agreed in writing to employ at all times at least one individual who has passed the PDAA VIP Basic Certification Proficiency exams.*

d) *Paid annual dues of $400.00.*

Master Certified Members

In addition to the requirements listed above for all PDAA Members, Master Certified Members have met the following requirements:

e) *The PDAA received positive feedback from two additional provided references: one from a PDAA Master Certified Member in good standing, and one from a film manufacturer or graphic manufacturer.*

f) *Provided a certificate of insurance for workmen's compensation on all employees as required by the state or states that the Master Certified Member services.*

g) *Provided a Certificate of Liability Insurance with a minimum of $1,000,000 coverage.*

h) *Have at least one full time employee that passed the PDAA VIP Master Certification Proficiency exams.*

i) *Agreed in writing to employ at all times at least one individual who has passed the PDAA VIP Master Certification Proficiency exams.*

j) *Paid annual dues of $600.00.*

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PDAA Certification Written Exam

The written exam has fifty multiple-choice questions. All questions are pertinent to vinyl graphics, installation, methods, techniques, and procedures. All of the information that will be covered on the written test is included in the PDAA Guide, provided to all PDAA members. Carefully review and study the guide and you should be able to pass the written test with a very high, if not perfect score. Your ability to pass the Installation Tests will of course depend on your installation skills. Following is a description of each test:

Basic Certification Installation Tests

Cleaning Test

Purpose

The purpose of the Cleaning Test is to demonstrate your understanding of PDAA Approved cleaning methods and techniques, which include selecting the appropriate cleaning solutions and using them properly.

Substrate

A passenger vehicle, glass, acrylic, and Flat aluminum with rivets (trailer and box truck surfaces).

Instructions

From a variety of cleaning supplies furnished, choose the right combination, and thoroughly and properly clean the surfaces assigned to you by the test administrator.

Procedure

Use PDAA approved cleaning solutions and techniques:

- *For all solutions, pour some of the solution into a bucket. Immerse a small rag in the solution and wring out the excess. Do not just "wash" the surface but also get it clean, this may involve some dwell time and / or some scrubbing. While the surface is still wet, use a clean, dry, terrycloth towel to remove the solution (with the contaminants dissolved in the solution)* ***before it evaporates*** *(spreading the contaminants evenly across the surface).*
- *Clean vehicle surfaces with detergent and water if dirt and mud are present. Dry surface.*
- *Solvent wipe all vehicle surfaces. Dry properly.*
- *Always use Isopropyl 70% Rubbing Alcohol as a final rinse to remove any residues that you may have missed. Dry properly.*

Requirements to pass

Choose the approved solutions and supplies, properly clean, and dry the surfaces assigned to you by the test administrator.

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Control of Depth Cut Test

Purpose

The purpose of the Control of Depth Cut Test is to demonstrate your ability to trim and cut applied graphics to the proper depth, precisely, without damaging the substrate.

Substrate

Aluminum with a baked enamel finish.

Graphic

The vinyl used to create the graphic may vary, but will always be of a type commonly encountered in our industry. The graphic will already be applied to the substrate. The test administrator will provide you the exact specifications of the applied graphic.

Instructions

Carefully trim off ¼ "of vinyl from the right edge of the graphic. Remove the trimmed portion. Carefully trim off another ¼ "of vinyl from the right edge of the graphic. Examine the area of your first cut and inspect for damage. Repeat the process until you make three perfect cuts in succession.

Procedure

Trim the graphic in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques, which include:

- *Using an Olfa knife with a stainless steel blade*
- *Start each trim with a new, unused blade (snap off segments)*
- *Use little to no inward pressure, simply draw the blade across the vinyl*
- *The actual amount of pressure required depends on graphic thickness*
- *For 2 mil vinyl, with a brand new, razor sharp Olfa blade, NO inward pressure is required to make a perfect cut*
- *For 2 mil vinyl with a 2 mil vinyl laminate, a very slight amount of inward pressure is required to make a perfect cut*
- *Err on the side of using too little pressure, not too much*
- *Do try this at home - in other words practice on something other than your customer's vehicle / job*
- *If you are unsure you can make the trim without damaging the substrate - don't trim on the substrate*

Requirements to pass

Make three perfect trims in succession.

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Acrylic Test

Purpose

The purpose of the Acrylic Test is to demonstrate your ability to handle any type of flat surface installations.

Substrate

All testing is scheduled to be conducted indoors to avoid cancellation due to weather. Many real world installations do occur outdoors in hot weather. Acrylic (Plexiglas) was chosen for this test because it is difficult, even at room temperature; it has a high-energy surface causing vinyl to adhere to it aggressively. ***Note:*** *Although most vinyl manufacturers publish a minimum (40-50°F) to maximum (100°F) temperature range in product and instructional bulletins for most of their vinyl products,* ***the PDAA recommends a surface and ambient air temperature range of 60°- 80°F for all vinyl installations.***

Graphic

Regular vinyl (cast or calendered), no air egress, computer cut, one color, 42" x 94". The graphic is a solid vinyl rectangle with text weeded out, with premask.

Instructions

Apply the graphic centered on the acrylic.

Procedure

Apply the graphic in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques, which include:

- *Cleaning the surface properly with Isopropyl 70% Rubbing Alcohol*
- *Applying the graphic in the correct location*
- *Remove the premask*
- *Remove bubbles / wrinkles*
- *Re-squeegee the entire graphic*

Requirements to pass

The graphic was applied in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques listed. The graphic must also be free of wrinkles, bubbles and in the correct position within a tolerance of one-eighth inch.

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Trailer Test - Flat with rivets

Purpose

The purpose of the Trailer Test - Flat with rivets is to demonstrate your ability to apply vinyl graphics to a flat surface with rivets.

Substrate

Flat aluminum with rivets (trailer and box truck surfaces).

Graphic

Two panel digital print, 2 mil vinyl with air egress, with cast vinyl laminate, no premask, approximate finished size of 4' x 8'.

Instructions

Apply the two graphic panels, properly aligned to each other, positioned per specs you will be given at the time by the test administrator, taking into account proper wind seam overlap, and seal the rivets.

Procedure

Apply the graphic in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques, which include:

- *Cleaning the surface properly (Solvent wipe with Xylol or Naptha)*
- *Final cleaning with Isopropyl Alcohol*
- *Applying the graphic*
- *Cutting and tucking the seams*
- *Sealing the rivets*
- *Re-squeegee the graphic*

Requirements to pass

The graphics were applied in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques listed. The finished graphics must be free of wrinkles and bubbles and the two panels aligned properly with respect to each other, and in the correct position within a tolerance of one-eighth inch. The vinyl must be tight around the rivets, with all of the air removed using a rivet brush and adequate heat to prevent future lifting. All seams, edges, and overlaps were re-squeegeed.

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Master Certification Installation Tests

Vehicle Wrap Side Test

Purpose

The purpose of the Vehicle Wrap Side Test is to demonstrate your ability to apply graphics on vehicle wraps that include doors, door handles, keyholes, complex curves, and mirrors properly.

Substrate

A passenger vehicle, usually a late model Ford van or similar.

Graphics

Digitally printed with a solvent inkjet printer. Printed on a two mil vinyl with air egress, with a cast vinyl laminate, no premask, and multiple panels, tiled vertically with a one inch overlap (approximate).

Instructions

Properly apply the graphic panels, positioned per specs you will be given at the time by the test administrator.

Procedure

Apply the graphics in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques, which include:

- *Proper surface preparation*
- *Apply the graphics with absolute minimum stretching*
- *Apply the graphics in the proper position on the vehicle*
- *Apply the graphic panels properly aligned to each other*
- *Take into account the proper wind seam overlap direction*
- *Properly remove all bubbles*

Requirements to pass

The graphics were applied in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques listed. The finished graphics must be free of wrinkles and bubbles on the exterior of the vehicle, panels aligned properly with respect to each other, and in the specified position on the vehicle.

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Vehicle Wrap Trimming and Finishing Test

Purpose

The purpose of the *Vehicle Wrap Trimming and Finishing Test is* to demonstrate your ability to properly trim and finish graphics on vehicle wraps.

Instructions

Properly trim and finish the graphics just applied in the Vehicle Wrap Side Test.

Procedure

Trim and finish the graphics in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques, which include:

- *Precisely trim, tuck, and wrap the graphics in the correct manner and locations*
- *Make sure all seams and edges are properly finished*
- *Post heat all complex curve areas*
- *Wipe off the graphics to remove fingerprints, smudges, and any marks you may have made*

Requirements to pass

The graphics were trimmed and finished in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques listed. The graphic installation and finishing is complete and of the quality expected from a PDAA Master Certified Installer.

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Vehicle Wrap Rear Test

Purpose

The purpose of the Vehicle Wrap Rear Test is to demonstrate your ability to apply graphics on vehicle wraps that include hinges, license plates, windows, and perforated window graphics properly.

Substrate

A passenger vehicle, usually a late model Ford van or similar.

Graphics

Digitally printed with a solvent inkjet printer. Printed on a two mil vinyl with air egress, with a cast vinyl laminate, no premask, and multiple panels, tiled vertically with a one inch overlap (approximate). Includes vinyl and perforated window graphics.

Instructions

Properly apply the graphic panels, positioned per specs you will be given at the time by the test administrator.

Procedure

Apply the graphics in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques, which include:

- *Proper surface preparation*
- *Apply the graphics with absolute minimum stretching*
- *Apply the graphics in the proper position on the vehicle*
- *Apply the graphic panels properly aligned to each other*
- *Properly remove all bubbles*
- *Precisely trim, tuck, and wrap the graphics in the correct manner and locations*
- *Make sure all seams and edges are properly finished*
- *Post heat all complex curve areas*
- *Wipe off the graphics to remove fingerprints, smudges, and any marks you may have made*

Requirements to pass

The graphics were applied in a confident manner using PDAA approved techniques listed. The finished graphics must be free of wrinkles and bubbles on the exterior of the vehicle, panels aligned properly with respect to each other, and in the specified position on the vehicle. The graphics were trimmed and finished properly. The graphic installation and finishing is complete and of the quality expected from a PDAA Master Certified Installer.

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