

FAQ - WHITE VINYL BACKGROUNDS - 'PLASTIC PAPER'

Jon Eaves of Studio Decor answers the most common questions relating to permanent white backgrounds...

With the current fashion of high key shots, the white vinyl background has become one of our most sought after lines, yet remains a mystery to many.

What are the advantages over paper?

With care a white vinyl background will last at least five years and hopefully longer, whilst with paper you are always tearing off dirty sections. Paper is also easily damaged during a shoot, meaning that the shoot has to be disrupted while the paper is re-set - no such problems with the vinyl!

Being waterproof, vinyl counters the problems caused by babies and pets peeing, all spills can easily be wiped up - it can also be used under other sets to avoid damage to carpets etc if necessary.

How do you clean it?

Almost any type of cleaner can be used, and certainly regular cleaning is best for keeping the white at its highest. Everyday grime can easily be washed off with any detergent and water.

We have found a spirit based fabric spot cleaning aerosol particularly successful, as it works by removing any grease which is usually the bonding agent for dirt - the best value for money ones are purchased from professional haberdashers rather than DIY and hardware stores.

As with anything, with care it will last an extremely long time and keep a good white: If you can take steps to keep dirt off it, so much the better.

What does it cost?

A 15 foot length background costs the same as 50m of paper in 2 x 25m rolls, so with any volume of paper useage savings can quickly be made.

The white of the vinyl is not as high as the paper - Does this cause a problem?

No - With good lighting the background will come up easily to a very high clean white. Any light setting at or above the camera setting will produce a clean high white.

Can I use it on my Paper roller system?

The nature of the material and its durability means it is relatively heavy - as a guide, a light blind type full length canvas weighs about 8kg, a heavy duty full length canvas weighs about 13kg and a full length white vinyl weighs about 17kg. Some have used it successfully on a 'triple hook' system, but the system is designed for paper, and therefore we recommend

that either a sturdier system, such as our Standard Chain system or the Colorama RollEasy is put in place to raise and lower the background, or that it is permanently fixed to a wall, probably behind other backgrounds, and the floor section only is rolled up when not in use.

How portable is it?

The background needs to be kept on a solid metal core, so the length of that will determine for each individual how easy it is to transport, but the weight of a full vinyl (3mx6m) is around 17kg, so not for the faintest hearted!

If using it in a portable situation, we recommend using heavy duty stands, and then mounting the background and pole on spigots fitted to these stands. Please ask us for a price for a 'Vinyl To Go' set.

Is a pole included?

No - Because there are many different systems and ways of fixing backgrounds, the background at list price includes only a cardboard carrier tube for transit. 2in diameter aluminium poles are available discounted if purchased with a background, and fitting to the pole is included in the price.

How is the background best fitted to a pole?

For a background working at up to 2.5m above floor level (8'6") usually two widths of double sided tape and a seal of duct tape along the join are adequate.

Please note that the background (as with any background!) should never be completely unwound from the pole – the weight of the background must never be fully exposed to the adhesive.

What sizes are available?

The standard width is 3m (10ft), and as it is manufactured in long rolls, any length can be supplied in this width. Cutting down to a suitable width for your studio is included in the price. The most popular sizes are 3mx5m (10'x15') and 3mx6m (10'x20'), but frequently cut down to 2.7m (9') to match paper systems. 3.7m (12') widths can also be supplied to order, but in a lighter duty fabric.

A small cutting charge may be made for width alterations.

How can I deal with shoe scuff marks?

We are happy to supply at no extra charge offcuts which subjects wearing shoes can stand on. If the actual background becomes marked, an abrasive as strong as fine grained Wet and Dry paper can be very carefully used to remove the majority of any mark down to a degree that anything remaining will be burned out by light control. It is infinitely preferable to shoot subjects without shoes, or with white soles if possible: The black marks are extremely difficult to remove.

How can creases be removed?

If the background becomes creased, either roll it very tightly or leave it hanging, and keep it in a room at a high temperature for a couple of days. The material should become more flexible and the creases will come out.

I am not sure if it is the right thing for me....

Studio Decor are happy to supply sample pieces for studios to try. Please contact us and request a white vinyl sample.

Which side do I shoot on?

The material is smooth and shiny one side, and slightly textured on the other: Subjects should normally be shot on the slightly textured side, however, some have very successfully used the reflective side for added effect.

Surely I will see the texture in my images?

We have seen only one instance of this, where rather than the more common flat lighting regime associated with the high key look, the photographer used a strong hairlight directly above, casting a reasonably strong shadow under the subjects which gave the texture chance to show: Normally the texture aids light dispersion and is not seen in any images.

What is the delivery time?

The 3m width is normally ex stock, and delivery is usually within a working week. The 12' is held at warehouse, and is usually available within seven working days.

BEFORE ORDERING... PLEASE....

- 1) Work out the width and length you require
- 2) Consider how you will handle the background
- 3) Think whether you need it on a pole or not - and what length the pole should be!

Any other questions are not FAQ... please do not hesitate to contact us either by email at office@studiodecor.co.uk or by phone (01308 867100)

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