

The Phatus guide to making your own gaff cards - Re-Distributable Version

Phatus.com's guide to making your own gaff cards



phatus.com



Welcome to the [Phatus](#) guide to making your own gaff cards. This PDF is an extensive re-distributable guide and compilation of our current DIY gaff projects and other information we have obtained from various sources. [Email us](#) if you would like to build upon the works in this document.

Suggested Materials	Contents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ink jet Printer (possibly a laser printer) ● Scanner ● Clear Tape ● Blank Card ● Photo Editing software ● Rubbing alcohol, acetone, or big pencil eraser (any 1) ● A can of fast-drying polyurethane clear gloss spray ● High grit sandpaper for wet sanding. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Blank a card II. Scan and or Create III. Print it! Twice! IV. Dry It! V. Re-Finish It! VI. Troubleshooting, tips, tricks and links

I - Blank a card

For this first section we will be covering a few different techniques to "blanking" a card.

For all of the following methods, use an ace or small number card. This will make less work for us. I prefer to use the ace of clubs as the black Ink does not stain as bad. The red Ink tends to stain the card pink in the end.

Technique #1 - Gather some tissue or cotton balls and dab some rubbing alcohol on the material. Begin rubbing the alcohol into the inked portions of the card. Don't be a wuss, get on it a little, but not so much that you start to rub the paper off. Keep swapping out tissue/cotton as it becomes too stained. Keep doing this until the card is completely white. Keep in mind to use as little alcohol as possible. I say this because I have had instances where the liquid spills over the side of the card and smears the ink on the back. Also too much too fast will soak through the card and have the same effect. Give the card time to rest and dry out ever so often.

Technique #2 - Same as technique #1 but use nail polish remover (acetone) instead of rubbing alcohol.

Technique #3 - Same as 1 and 2 except use a large pencil eraser and a lot more elbow grease. (**recommended** as you can pinpoint just the spots you would like to erase plus, it leaves a better surface to finish later when we re-finish the card) Some use sandpaper as well.

Technique #4 - (Ideal) Purchase a deck of blank cards. If you are viewing this in Adobe, below are some links for blank cards. These were the best deals we could find. Although aviators and rarely a "choice" card, they have a much better surface to print to than the air cushioned surface of the Bikes.

[Blank Face Bicycle Deck red](#)

[Blank Face Bicycle Deck blue](#)

[Double Blank Bicycle Deck](#)

[Aviator Blank Face red](#)

II - Scan and or create

In this section we will lightly touch the gaff creation process. It will be up to your "skillz" and imagination to create a great gaff. Depending on your artistic capabilities, you may wish to pursue a couple of different options. Here are a few ideas to get you started creating a gaff

- First and foremost you will need some sort of graphic software. The most popular is Adobe Photoshop. A good economical alternative is Jasc Paint Shop Pro. But for those of us that like our stuff Free, try [GIMP](#) which is a free open source graphical editor for use on multiple platforms.

continued...

....continued

- You may want to start by scanning an image into the program to tweak. Any scanner purchased within the last decade that is still in decent condition should do fine for this. Try using grayscale scanning on black cards. Once you have your scan loaded, All of the programs we listed have an extensive array of tools for producing professional quality graphics. Also be sure and see section VI for links to tutorials on the listed programs.

NOTE: To ensure good alignment later on when we print the card, create two gaff images. One of the actual gaff, and the other of the gaff with a nice 3 - 5 pixel border around it where the card will later go.

- Here are some resources for gaff card creating and links to gaff resources.

- <http://magic.phatus.com/>
- [The Bob Lancaster gallery of unusual cards](#)
- [Sweet Joker Collection](#)
- [GIMP - Graphic Freeware](#)
- [Playing card brushes for Photo Shop](#)
- Hoyle playing card font - [PC](#) | [MAC](#)
- [Mini Deck](#) - Mini icons of playing cards
- [Gigposters.com custom decks](#)
- [CustomDeck1](#)
- [CustomDeck2](#)
- [CustomDeck3](#)

III - Print it! Twice!

In this section, we will cover the printing process. It is titled "Print it twice" because we will need to first print a test print before we print our actual gaff. Once you are happy with your design and it is to scale, print a rough draft by selecting the economy mode on your printer. Flag it for black and white only while your at it. Also remember to use the image with the border for the test print. Make it a rule of thumb to mark the bottom left of the test paper with a "BL" before you print your test so we will know how to feed it later. We must now attach the card to the test print. From here we have a few options as well. Lets cover those options.

- If you have an inkjet printer, the easiest way to go is to simply tape the perimeter of the card center to the border you drew earlier. Make sure you only cover about 1/8" of the perimeter of the card as you may cover up a print area. As long as you completely and evenly cover this card, it should feed through. See section VI for troubleshooting and tips should you experience difficulties with this. Try some of the other options.

continued....

...continued

- In the case of a laser printer I would suggest to do something very similar to the previous method for an inkjet however instead of using clear tape (a big no no for a laser printers), Get some "laser labels" and cut them down into half inch strips. Use those strips in place of the clear tape to tape the card to the paper as the labels are made for the heat of the fuser whereas tape will most likely melt in the fuser causing you more than just a jam. Also expect a curl to the card afterwards as heat always tends to curl cards.

Warning - Do this method at your own risk. It is highly unpredictable what running a playing card through a laser printer's fuser will do.

- This last method is just an alternate method to attaching the card to the paper altogether. Although the first two methods can be highly effective, they are still prone to jam as the paper is 4 times thicker in the middle and nowhere else. If you would like to eliminate this factor, I would suggest first finding some cardstock paper that matches the thickness of your playing card. Any office supply store will have this stuff. Print your test page on the card stock and grab your blank card and an exacto knife (a razor knife will suffice). Center your blank card around the border you drew, and trace exactly around the perimeter of the card. Do not worry about cutting through in the first trace. Just cut into the first layer. Once you have traced the card, you should now be able to use your knife to cut out the trace completely without the card. Do this as careful and clean as possible and pop out the middle. You can now essentially embed the blank into the cardstock and use either tape or laser labels to tape the back perimeter. Your card and paper are now one.

Once you have achieved one of the above, reload the paper back into the printer taking note of the "BL" we marked earlier and print the gaff without the border you drew.

If you have a laser printer and you managed to not lose the card somewhere between feeding it in the tray and pulling it out, you can probably skip the drying section. Just peel the card off the paper and flatten it if necessary. You can bend it or leave it in a book for a few days.

If you have an Inkjet printer, you now have a sweet looking, sopping wet gaff card. Do not touch the card anywhere at this point, just leave it on the paper and read the next section on drying the card.

Also check out [this post](#) on how to print multiple gaff cards at once

IV - Dry it

Now we must get that ink dry enough so that we can put a new finish on the card without smearing the ink.

Still leaving the card on the paper, take a hairdryer and wave it back and forth evenly over the card. BE CAREFUL. This can get very hot so be sure to give the card a break here and there to cool. DO NOT HOLD THE CARD OR PAPER. Instead, tape the paper to something inanimate and fire/melt proof (like the concrete slab in the garage). If you see the tape melt, your too close and too hot. Just be patient and do it safely. Unfortunately there is no other real way to check if it is dry than to swipe a tissue over the ink, however this will smear it if it is wet and ruin your gaff. The only way I can suggest to find out if it is dry or not is trial and error. After ruining a few cards, you'll get sick of it and figure out how long and hot you need to go with the dryer. Keep in mind that the card will curl during this process and will require you to bend it back, or possibly some time in a book, later on. Also note that It does not have to be totally dry. It seems this is almost impossible with and inkjet, especially if you used an actual blank card from a purchased pack. We just need it about -90% dry so that we can spray our clear coat on there without smudging the ink. There is however nothing wrong with 100% dry either. "Perfection is adequate" - Jimmy Downs

EXPERIMENTAL V - Re-Finish it

We have now designed, and printed a killer gaff card but it doesn't have that smooth feel to it right? We we can get that back with a little work. We will need some material from the home improvement store though. I'm currently experimenting with a fast-drying Polyurethane clear gloss spray by "MINWAX" although I'm sure there are many substitutes that will work in its place.

Start by going outside to a clear flat surface and lay down some newspaper or cardboard boxes. Lay your card(s) printed side up on the paper, hold the spray can about 2 feet away from the card(s) and give a nice even spray across the card(s). Do not soak it! This stuff goes a long way. You just need a light even coat. But make sure you completely cover the card and don't just blot it everywhere. Now let the poly dry. Again the card may curl, but tend to that once the coat has dried. You may also have some luck using the hair dryer to aid this drying process as well however there does seem to be a self leveling factor to the spray thus you may want to let it sit for a day first before rushing the drying process. Keep in mind that it takes a Long time for this stuff to dry on its own despite the fact it says "fast drying". They mean "fast drying on wood. Keep the card in a well ventilated area while it dries.

Once you feel like the poly is completely dry, you may still wish to smooth that finish off as it may have some texture or blots to it. To do this, take a very fine cotton cloth and quickly and lightly dry buff the card in a circular motion in the middle and side to side around the borders. After some time and some good elbow grease, you should have a brand new shiny finish that will put your garage kept car to shame. Experiment with different amounts. You may wish to add a real light buffing compound to the mix. for ultimate craftsmanship I would even recommend considering wet sanding it first with a very high grit sandpaper, then buff. This will help even the surface of the card. In the end, if you took time and pride in this gaff, it should pass. **Note this is still experimental. Subject to change.**

Troubleshooting | Tips - VI - Tricks | Links

- when buffing and sanding the final finish on your gaff, have another real card there with you to compare to. Try to make the gaffs surface identical to that of its sister cards. If you are too shinny, try going a little dryer (less water) on the wet sanding process. Or perhaps just wet sand and no buffing.

- UPDATE to the re-finish it chapter (v)

I have recently applied a finish to a card as per section v. So far it is promising. Although the finish is not perfect it is still a nice finish and with some fine tuning should be able to pass as a real card. I used the dry buff method with a slightly rough paper towel. I am actually very impressed with the results. You may also want to consider a polycrylic spray as well.

- Click [Here](#) for a page with a template for printing 6 gaffs at once along with instructions.

- To wet sand. Obtain a very high grit (wet sand) sandpaper. Cut out a small square approximately 1 1/2"x1 1/2". Lightly dip the square in water and let it soak into the paper (there should be no standing water on the paper). Once the paper is slightly damp, lightly buff the surface of the cards new finish. The goal is to bring that new finish down to the thinnest layer possible. Careful though, too far and its back to step one. You may also find the wet sanding to be enough and decide that the buffing process will not be necessary. Or if your sandpaper is fine enough, you may wish to start by DRY sanding with it. Use your imagination and "skillz".

