

HOW TO DRESS UP YOUR PLANE WITH AN INSTRUMENT PANEL

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A 90 inch Great Planes Cub I inherited just looked kind of bare and sparse and it need some dressing up. I decided it needed an Instrument Panel and a pilot perhaps.

Well, instrumental panels I have made before and while I was working on it, I thought that perhaps some of you might like to do the same thing. But where do you start?

If you can see the photos the rest in words should make it easy for you. If you think you are unsure or need further advice, then by all means call me. As well, making a pilot is not much more difficult if you have some material and a needle and thread and a proper size doll of sorts. Use your imagination.

Many years ago I bought a sheet of dials in Toledo and made a photocopy of it so I could use it again. If you do not have access to anything as displayed or can't buy it, just call me and I will send you a scan of mine or print one for you. Cut out which ever ones you think you need from the sheet taking care to not cut too close. You need room to glue it down and move around your top front. My front plate is made of some veneer which I sprayed with clear varnish before assembly. Gave it a nice wood finish.

Get an exact cardboard cut out of the front of the plane where the panel will go.

Take a piece of thin balsa (remember we want to keep it light) and now cut out the shape from your template. Use the same template to make the front panel. Decide where and which dials you need and then cut out the holes for the dials to show through on your front panel. These holes should be cut with the same kind of auger in the photo. Does not rip or damage the wood front. I used a 7/16 inch socket to squeeze into the plastic film from a leftover piece of cut-off from a canopy or buy a new sheet of film.

I augered a piece of wood about ½ inch down using a two sizes larger -3/4 inch so that when the plastic is heated carefully it will soften and you can squeeze the socket on top of the plastic into the hole in the wood and still leave room for the thickness of the plastic to go down about 1/4 inch.

At this point you have to cut out the Bezel and trim it around carefully and trial fit it into the front panel so it sticks out a little. See photo.

Place the front over top of the base balsa and make circles on the balsa so you will know where to glue the dials (use a glue stick). If everything fits and the dials show through, then carefully place a small bead of CA on the BACK edges of the bezel to hold it in place.

Now carefully glue the front panel onto the back panel with the dials showing through.

Use some clamps to hold it all together (Dollarama sells a set of small plastic clamps that work just fine). You are done.

Find a little face, or doll of some sort and use your imagination. In a photo is a Barbie doll that I used and a witch from Halloween and Mrs Santa Claus whose hair I coloured with a brown marker. I made little leather jackets and a hat or whatever taken from some old things my wife had hanging around. You get the idea.

Call me and we can discuss it. Put some art into your craft.

If you are going to build scale or want to dress up your plane, with a little effort you can create a joystick, a seat, knobs, handles, etc. and stick them on a floor in your craft.

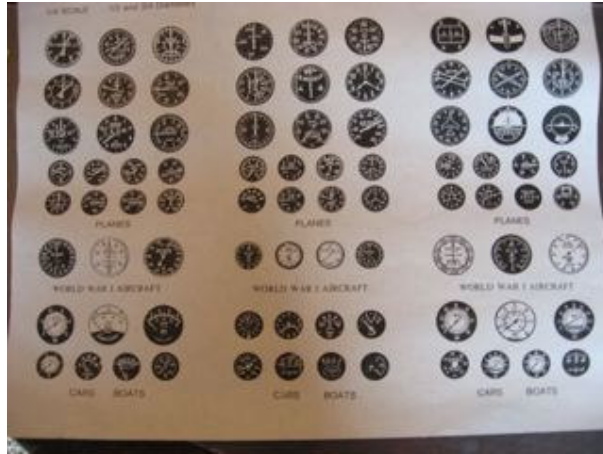
Happy Flying.



Completed project



Front View
Showing Face plate and dials underneath



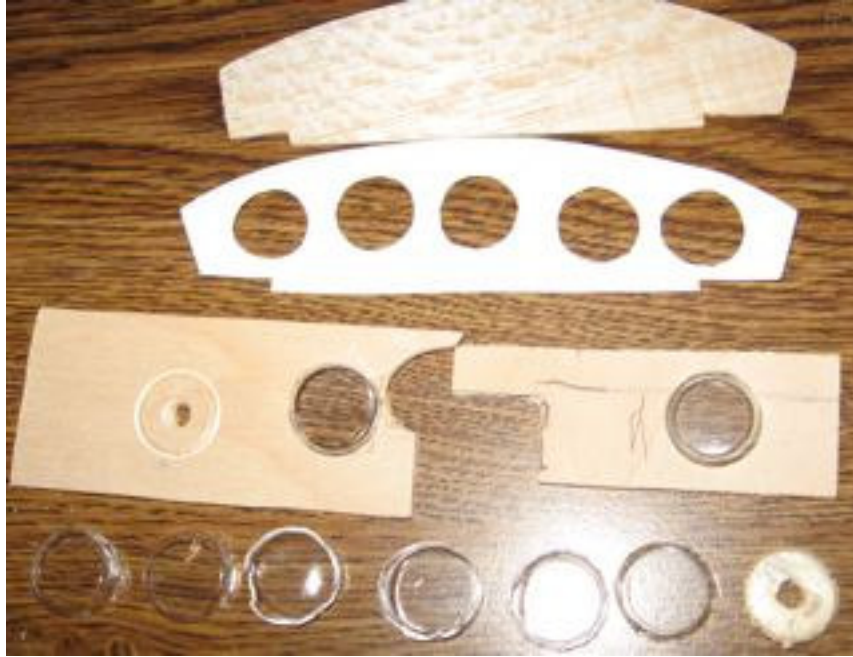
Sheet of dials - can send you a copy



Typical earlier projects



3 characters and one you can buy



Beginnings



Tools - heat gun not shown



Piece of plastic, clamps, socket, wood block