

Differences Between Vinyl Cutters and Vinyl Plotters



Cutting Plotter Blades

Both vinyl cutters and vinyl plotters are machines used to cut vinyl. However, there is a key difference between the two: vinyl cutters only cut, while vinyl plotters also print. On printing jobs, such as decals, banners, or car wraps, a vinyl plotter is first used to print the design onto vinyl.

Once the design is printed, the vinyl is then loaded into the vinyl cutter, which cuts out the design. While all vinyl cutters are plotters, not all plotters are cutters, and these cutters have various distinctions.

Difference #1: The Knife

The hardware is the first significant distinction between these two machines. A vinyl cutter uses a sharp blade to cut through vinyl. The pressure and depth of the blade are adjustable, and different blades can be used for various projects. For instance, you might use a 45-degree blade for intricate designs and a 60-degree blade for larger, bolder projects, including elaborate calligraphy or script.

On the other hand, a vinyl plotter uses pens instead of blades to print designs. When the vinyl plotter is printing, the pens draw the design onto the vinyl. These pens are also available in different widths and colors.

Difference #2: Printing Capabilities

As we mentioned, vinyl plotters can print as well as cut. This printing capability provides more design options for your project. You can either print the entire design and then cut it or have the vinyl plotter perform both steps simultaneously.

On the other hand, vinyl cutters can only cut—not print. If you want to include a design on your project, you'll need to print it

separately and then load the vinyl into the cutter.

Difference #3: Overlay Mask

Another key difference between these two machines is the overlay mask. An overlay mask is a clear piece of vinyl that is placed over the design. This mask protects the design while being cut.

Vinyl cutters don't use an overlay mask. Instead, they have a built-in mat that holds the vinyl in place during the cutting process. This mat has gridlines to help you align your design.

In Vinyl plotters, the mask is placed over the design before it's printed. Once the design is printed, the vinyl plotter will then cut the design—including the mask. The mask protects the design while it's being printed and cut.

Difference #4: Cutting Area

Vinyl cutters and vinyl plotters also differ in terms of the cutting area. Vinyl cutters typically have a smaller cutting area than vinyl plotters.

Vinyl cutters are designed for smaller, more intricate projects—such as car decals, stickers, and labels. And vinyl plotters are designed for larger projects—such as banners, signs, and vehicle wraps.



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