

# Designing flame graphics that work

*These tips will make your flame jobs sizzle*

**V**ehicle graphic trends come and go. Like any fad, the appeal wears off and we start looking for something new. Flame paint jobs, however, are another story. Though they may ebb and flow in popularity, they are inextricably linked to hot-rod graphics.



Vince Balistreri

We often hear from readers who have questions about flame paint jobs—beginners who need a little guidance through their first flame job, and seasoned pros looking for something new. With this in mind, SignCraft called a handful of vehicle graphic experts. We asked for photos and their thoughts on what makes flames work.

**Vince Balistreri**, Vince Balistreri Signs, Orlando, Florida

I've been painting flames for about twenty years. They were a big part of my business back in the '70s, and I still put them on cars, boats, bikes, trucks, toys—and even a mailbox now and then.

My first striping jobs were laid out by a friend who was a pinstriper. I'd do the masking, spraying and buffing, then he'd come back

and stripe the edges to finish the job. As my own style of flames developed, I was always careful to pay attention to the flow of the flames. I'd refine the layout with grease pencil, wiping off and redrawing until I got it right. Once I was happy with it, I'd tape it off with 1/8-in. masking tape.

The sketch in Figure 1 shows the terms I use for describing the parts of a flame. I think it's important not to let the "Us" go back too far into the base of the flame—avoiding this mistake will give you nice, full-bodied flames. Figure 2 shows a few different styles of flames.

Blending colors is as important as layout when it comes to getting good flames. I've gotten the best results by spraying the base coat, then thinning the colors used for the tips and "Us" a bit more than normal. A slower thinner or reducer will help the paint blend without getting dry spray.

If you're not familiar with all the different aspects of flame paint jobs, try doing one with someone who is. A pinstriper can benefit from working with an auto paint expert, and vice versa.

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Vince Balistreri applied the flames to this '54 Chevrolet.



A customer in Milwaukee shipped Vince Balistreri the tank and fenders off his Harley to be flamed.