

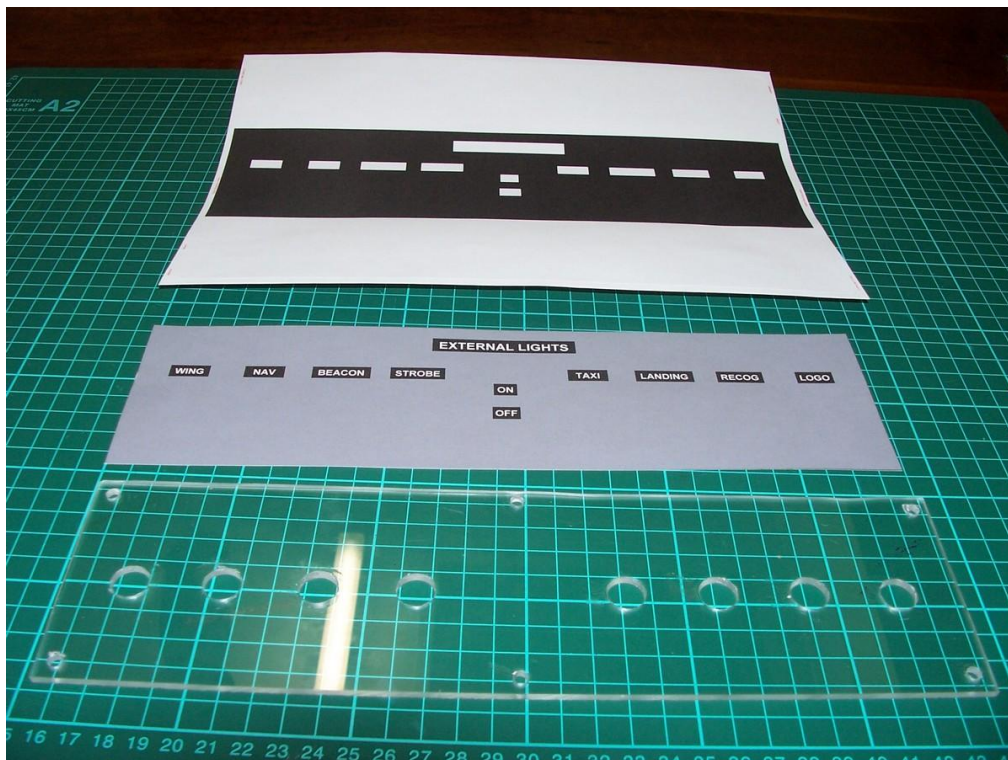
There's nothing really to compare with the expert look of professional laser cut panels, however they are expensive. If you're not cashed up to buy these then there is an easy and cheap alternative. Here I will detail how to produce very acceptable panels that can also be backlit for that extra pro look.

## What you will need:

1. Colour Inkjet Printer
2. A4 Self Adhesive printing labels
3. 3mm (1/8") Acrylic Plexiglass Sheeting
4. Jigsaw or Bandsaw plus a drill and bits.
5. Art knife for fine cutting of holes
6. Your favourite drawing program.

## Here's what to do:

First design the panel using your favourite drawing program. I use MS Publisher but any graphics capable drawing program will do. Print a template version to use as a cutting guide on your acrylic plexiglass. Trace and cut using a jigsaw or preferably a bandsaw and drill all holes required ready for mounting your hardware. Then print your main panel onto self adhesive paper in your desired colour with any labelling in place. Follow that by printing another self adhesive layer in pure black with white where your labelling will be. This layer will act as a mask so backlight will only come through the areas under your labels. Below you can see all three steps. Acrylic plexiglass cut out, top panel layer (gray) with labelling, and black mask layer with white areas that will sit under the main labels.



## Simple Home-Made Panels

Cut out your main label and peel off the backing. Carefully line it up over the black mask label and stick them together. Here you can see the result with the main layer stuck over the black mask.



Now cut out this double layered panel and stick it onto the acrylic plexiglass. Cut out all the switch holes and you're good to go!



Here's an example of the panel with rudimentary backlighting. I'm using LED torches to provide the backlight so properly designed lighting would yield much better results, but you get the idea. As you can see the black mask layer stops the light bleeding through the main panel so only the labelling is lit. If it wasn't for this layer the whole panel would be awash with light ruining the effect.



And a daylight shot and there's still plenty of backlight visible.



Here's the result of a complete panel set using this method. This is the overhead used in my simulator styled on the Pilatus PC12.



And here's the lot with very simple backlighting (600mm household fluoro). Panel edges need sealing but not bad for a home-made job.

