

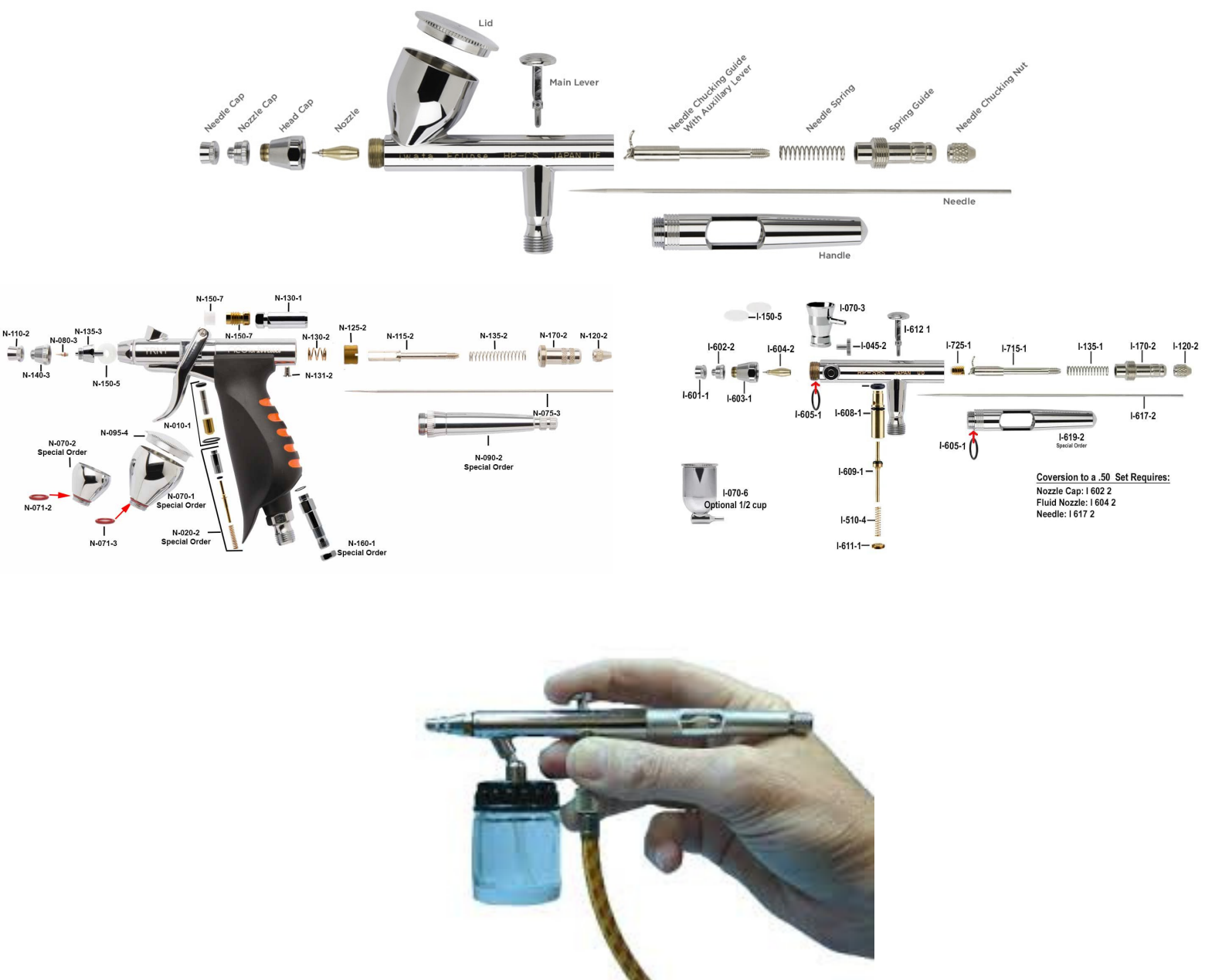
# The Fundamentals of Airbrushing

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FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING MINIS

# The Fundamentals of Airbrushing

To begin, let see what the airbrushes look like. There are many different brands and types but they are all basically the same.



As you can see, the parts are generally the same, and how they function are generally the same as well.

When looking at an airbrush you can see that there can be quite a price difference, and why is that?

Well, the quality of the materials used to make the airbrush and the precision with the trigger. With higher quality materials the brush will break down less often and it will not clog as often. And for the precision with the trigger, it will give you more control over where you want the paint to go and a more comfortable and responsive pull on the trigger.

# The Parts and What They Do

Now we are going to take a closer look at a gravity fed airbrush, like this one from Iwata; The **Iwata Eclipse**



The gravity fed Iwata Eclipse needs very little paint to function because it allows the paint to be pulled down from the cup, through the nozzle and out the needle cap.

The cup is where you add your paint.

The trigger, or main lever, is what you press down upon and pull back allowing the needle to move in and out.

The needle is held in place by the needle chucking guide, spring, spring guide and the needle chucking nut. It is important to have the needle chucking nut at an appropriate tightness to grab the needle when the trigger is pulling down and out.

# Cleaning Your Airbrush

I always recommend reading the manual when it comes to cleaning out the airbrush, but, we are going to go over a few of the basics.

You will be able to rinse your airbrush without disassembling it, but it is not a deep clean. You need to rinse your airbrush in between colours, if you are not blending it out.

You can use isopropyl alcohol to clean off the parts during a deep clean or Medea Airbrush Cleaner.

Pipe cleaners or soft dental cleaners can be used to push and pull the paint out of the caps and nozzle.

Using a squirt bottle or any bottle with a pointed tip can help add water a bit at a time for cleaning and diluting paint.

Airbrush thinner can be used in combination with water to help the paint dissolve and move through the airbrush.

Cotton swabs are also useful in removing paint in the cup of the airbrush.

I also recommend you be very gentle and not use abrasive cleaners or scratching tools. You need to be careful in not damaging the finish on the airbrush.

# Priming with an Airbrush

## Thin the primer.

Yes, we know. The bottle says that it doesn't need to be thinned, but I think it is best practice to add some flow improver or thinner to a primer. It is such a thick and sticky medium that it can, and will, easily clog your airbrush.

That way the primer goes on smooth and silky, and with short bursts it will cover quickly and dry really fast.

I would recommend a deep clean after using primer, before you use paint.

# How to Clean Out Your Airbrush

## The Bubble Technique

With this technique you can mix paint and clean out the paint from your cup. For cleaning, I recommend dumping out the extra paint first, using your squirt bottle to add some water to swish around then dump out again. Use a handy paper towel or rag to remove the any remaining paint then add the airbrush cleaner and water.

Next, closing the tip of the model with a soft item, pull down and back on the trigger. This will cause the air to go into the cup and make bubbles. Rinse and repeat as many times necessary until you see clear water. You can also remove the needle and wipe that down, and then repeat the bubble technique. This is a quick and easy way to clean the airbrush in between colours.

# Types of Paints to Use

## Inks

Daler and Rowney FW  
Liqitex



## Airbrush Paint Brands

Vallejo  
Army Painter

## Contrast Paints

Citadel  
Army Painter



## Thinned Down Acrylic Paint

### Special Effect

Green Stuff World



1656  
SPIDER SERUM



# Base Coating with an Airbrush

Thin paint

There are many types of airbrushing paints that you can buy, specifically for the airbrush. You can use acrylic paint as well with thinner or water added to it. The consistency that you are looking for is that of skim milk, something that will run down the side of the paint cup easily.

You can mix the paint and thinner in another vessel before adding it to the paint cup on the airbrush or you can use the Bubble Technique to mix the paint and thinner in the cup.

If you find that you are spraying and it is coming out in speckles or splatter, your paint is likely too thick. You can add some thinner and mix it around in the cup.

Best practice is to test out on paper or something else before you apply on the model.

You are also working in short bursts that move smoothly across the model.

be aware of the colour of primer you used (thinner paints take longer to show up on black primer)

# Painting with an Airbrush

The technique to paint with the airbrush is to rotate the model while keeping your hand as steady as possible. That way, the paint does not spill out of the cup.

Short bursts will keep the paint from drying on the tip of the brush, and will help your paint be applied in a thin even coat.

Obviously, airbrushing and brush painting go hand in hand. Using a brush to apply layers and then blending it out with an airbrush is a great way to establish values on your model quickly.

You can tint your model, or glaze on colours with an airbrush.

Learning to work with the air compressor, trigger and paint flow to make different effects like Object Source Lighting, is a fun way to make use of your airbrush. You can use inks or contrast paints, or even just really thinned down paint.

If you are working on a project that require many colours, you can always use a medium like plastic wrap, tape or putty to mask off the areas you do not want painted. Just be careful enough that the medium used does not pull up the paint when removed.

# Blending with an Airbrush

While the main base paint is still in your cup, you can add your lighter colour to the cup and bubble mix it to make the next shade higher. Is that best practice? Maybe, maybe not. In my opinion, you can work your layers through the same cup but just be aware of the drying of the paint and how thin your mixture is.

Another way I like to blend out is by working with really thin layers of paint and before they dry, adding then next colour to blend it out. This has to happen extremely quickly, because the thin layers do dry fast.

Working with inks at this stage, I find, is the easiest way to blend the model out. They are so highly pigmented that a little goes a long way and the water you can add to them elongates the drying time just enough to make a blend.

# Some Tricks

When you are further away from your figure, and using a skim milk consistency of paint, you will cover more area in a lighter coverage.

When you are closer, you need to be more accurate and are working in a smaller area. Lower the PSI and thin your paints.

For base coating you can use a thicker paint, higher pressure and a farther distance from your model.

There is a wide spectrum to this and you will have to test out all these to find your balance.

# Air Compressors and PSI

There are a variety of hoses and compressors that are great for airbrushing. A small unit will suffice for miniature painting.

Generally, painters will use a PSI level of 15-24 depending on what you are trying to achieve. I normally base coat at a 24 PSI.

The thinner the paint, the lower PSI you can use. The thicker the paint, the higher PSI, like 30 or more.

Lower the PSI when working closer and more detailed on your model.

# Some Notes

Some acrylic paints that have a matte finish, can be more difficult to airbrush with.

Wear a mask- an N95 will suffice.

## **Trouble shooting**

**The Needle Dribble:** when you are shooting paint and air out at the same time this can cause a dribble of paint to form on the end of your brush. Best practice is shooting air through first, then pull back the trigger allowing the paint to flow, easing up on the trigger and ending with just a shot of air.

**Stuck Needle:** this happens when you don't clean out your airbrush well enough and the paint dries. You can add some water and thinner to the cup, work the needle by using the trigger and release it back with the nut. If you can pull it out, do so, clean it off and then reinsert.

# Practice Sheet

