

Airbrush

Know Your Airbrush Terms

In the realm of airbrushing, there are many words or phrases used that may be unfamiliar to a person who is just learning or investigating the technique. To help you fully understand explanations/instructions, following is a discussion of basic terms:

Single action refers to an airbrush in which the air and paint are turned on simultaneously by just depressing the trigger. A set amount of paint is sprayed.

Dual action (also called double action) refers to an airbrush where the artist first depresses the trigger for air and, while the trigger is depressed, pulls back on it to release paint. This type of triggering provides the most versatility because you can regulate the amount of paint sprayed by manipulating the trigger.

External mix refers to the type of airbrush where the air and paint are mixed together outside the airbrush tip or externally, resulting in a spray that is coarse in appearance.

Internal mix refers to the type of airbrush where paint is mixed with air inside the tip of the airbrush, which results in the appearance of a soft spray.

Gravity feed refers to the type of airbrush where paint is drawn down and flows into the airbrush from a color cup that is mounted on top of the tool.

Side feed refers to the type of airbrush where paint is drawn into it from a color cup that is mounted on the side of the tool.

Bottom feed refers to an airbrush where paint is drawn up into it from a jar or color cup mounted on the bottom of the tool.

Air source is a device or unit capable of producing pressurized air, e.g. compressor, CO2 tank, or propellant can. It is the air provided by the air source that sprays the paint.

Psi or pounds per square inch is a measurement of air pressure. An airbrush is operated at a certain psi depending on the material being sprayed, the viscosity of the material and the manufacturer's directions.

Cfm or cubic feet per minute is the volume of air that an air source is capable of producing. As a rule of thumb, an airbrush usually uses 1/2 cfm at 30 psi to spray properly.

Air Regulator is a device that is attached to an air compressor or other air source that allows the user to regulate the psi flow of air to the airbrush.

Frisket film is a transparent self-adhering stencil material with a peel-off backing that is used to create individual stencils directly on the surface of artwork.

Airbrush templates are usually reusable manufactured stencils of a pre-cut design (not self-adhering) that are used to develop images in airbrush technique.

Overspray is the sprayed paint that drifts above and below the intended area in which the airbrush is directed.

Dagger stroke is a sprayed line used in freehand airbrushing that goes from narrow to wide to narrow in one pass. It is used commonly in lettering, T-shirt design, automotive graphics and freehand portraiture, etc.

Stippling is a technique that is the controlled spraying of large simultaneous dots that results in a textural appearance. This is usually achieved by lowering the pressure on the regulator to 1 or 2 psi, which in turn causes the airbrush to spray larger than normal dots.