

Airbrush Newbies—Do's and Don'ts – Part 1

At this time of year post-holidays, many individuals who have received an airbrush as a gift are eager to get started. But there are a few things you should be aware of during your first airbrush experience.

To begin, it is absolutely essential that you read the manufacturer's literature from beginning to end to familiarize yourself with the operation, maintenance and parts of the airbrush. Each new airbrush also comes with a warranty card that you should immediately complete and send to the manufacturer in case the brush is defective in some respect or it requires repair in the future.

Do not under any circumstances disassemble the airbrush prior to spraying with it. If you do, you will not know exactly what to expect from it in the way of performance. All new airbrushes arrive from the manufacturer at their optimum spray capability. The airbrush has been pre-set and tested to insure that it sprays properly. If you disassemble it before use, you may never know if you have reassembled it correctly or if it is working properly.

After you read the literature and familiarize yourself with the airbrush, hook it up to your air source and spray water through it to discover how it works. Test it first with a low volume of spray (just a little water coming out) and then follow with a large volume (with a lot of water being sprayed). The use of water won't clog the airbrush and the spray achieved is the same you should expect in the future when spraying paint.

Two things greatly affect the performance of an airbrush: keeping it clean and damage to its parts from mishandling. Keeping the airbrush clean is pretty straightforward. Spray the appropriate cleaning agent through the airbrush between color changes. Use a stiff brush to clean paint residue from the air cap at the front tip. Remove and clean the needle that runs through the airbrush periodically. Always be aware that when using paint, it will dry inside the air cap and on the needle tip. When paint builds up on the tip or needle, you will notice a change in the shape of the paint sprayed—what should be round spray becomes flat. This is a good indication that the airbrush requires cleaning.

Another aspect of maintaining the airbrush deals with proper handling and care to prevent damage. This can occur if the airbrush is dropped, loaned out, mishandled during disassembly and reassembly, etc.