

## Airbrush Newbies—Do's and Don'ts – Part II

To continue this month, let's look at the parts of the airbrush and see how they apply to its proper performance. All internal mix airbrushes have a needle that runs through the body and controls the flow of paint. It has a very sharp tip and, if bent, the airbrush will not spray properly. The harder the material of which the needle is made, the more difficult it is to bend, and the most durable needles are made of spring steel. When the needle is removed for cleaning and then replaced, it can be accidentally pressed in against the internal metal parts and bent, causing a "hook" at the very tip. This can sometimes be straightened by rolling the needle against a flat metal object. Be aware that if this is done too many times, the tip will become weak and break off. However, airbrush needles are readily available at your local art supplies store.

The two parts located on the front of the airbrush covering the tip of the needle are called the air cap and the head assembly. These control the atomization of the spray. If these become dented the airbrush will not operate properly, so try to avoid this happening. If the air cap is dented, it must be replaced and is also readily available at art supply stores.

On all internal mix airbrushes the needle is removed for cleaning. But the trigger can fall out because the needle runs through a slot in the trigger that holds it in place. Behind the trigger is the back lever, which is spring loaded and pushes the trigger forward to a shutoff position when you release your finger from the trigger. It can also fall out when the needle is removed, which is an annoyance that all airbrushers have encountered. But, with practice, most people learn to easily replace these parts.

You must be cautious that you do not cross-thread any of the parts on the airbrush, such as the hose or where the head assembly screws onto the body of the brush. Cross-threading can result in an air leak that will affect the spray.

All in all, the airbrush is actually quite durable. It's a precision instrument that if properly cared for and maintained will last you a lifetime.