

Which airbrush and compressor should I use for my type of work?

The most common question a new user has about airbrushing is "which airbrush is best for me"? Though very common this is a very good question since many different factors may contribute to the final decision. Using the wrong airbrush for the wrong application can lead in frustration, especially if you are a first-time user. Below are suggestions for airbrushes and compressors for different applications. Product combinations are based on typical techniques associated and basic assumptions are made for type of paints being sprayed and at typical operating air pressures for each of the applications. For your convenience links to specific product pages are active within each paragraph for quick reference on that particular product.

NOTE: This is just a starting point and may not indicate the personal preference of certain users or professionals in different areas of expertise.

ILLUSTRATION – Illustrations are typically commercial and designed for a client to eventually be reproduced. These artistic renderings are often done on illustration board, paper or similar substrates and often using thin paint, inks or dyes. An illustrator like Michael Cacy may use the CM-B or CM-SB for the finest detail work since they work great at very low air pressures. The CM-C, HP-B and HP-SB can be used for detail and general rendering purposes and the HP-C is good for some detail and background coverage. These models are all good for working on very small to medium sized work, which is typical for illustration. Professional Illustrators often rely on powerful, yet silent compressors with air-storage tanks for consistent and uninterrupted airflow like the Power Jet, Mako Shark, Tiger Shark. Illustrators may choose the Hammerhead Shark and Great White Shark for setting up multiple stations in a studio.

ACRYLIC PAINTING – Using acrylic paints in an airbrush is actually very common in the arts and crafts fields. Noted artist, author and airbrush instructor, Robert Pashcal uses the HP-C coupled with a Power Jet compressor for creating illusions of shadows, adding highlights and special effects in his paintings. Since acrylic paints are heavy bodied by nature, they need to be thinned a bit before spraying, and typically require an airbrush with larger tip/needle combinations and larger. When working on small areas the Eclipse gravity feed (HP-CS, HP-BS), and side feed (HP-SBS) are great for details while the bottom feed HP-BC, HP-BE, and Eclipse HP-BCS are great when doing background work and larger volumes of paint are required.

WATERCOLOR PAINTING – Watercolors are one of the most natural mediums for use with an airbrush because it is a transparent media and airbrushes apply colors in a transparent fashion. Says respected artist, lecturer Kirk Lybecker. "Airbrushes are often used to enhance places where watercolors are weak like in washes" Lybecker who often does work with watercolors prefers the CM-SB and CM-B because of their phenomenal control and are powered by a Shark (Mako or Tiger) compressor because of their silent nature. Lybecker sometimes uses an CM-C for slightly larger areas and an RG-3 mini spray gun for blocking in larger background areas. Casual airbrush users painting with watercolors may prefer the HP-C, HP-B which are gravity feed, allowing for spraying at low air pressures thus maximizing the coverage while minimizing over-spray. Both of these airbrushes work extremely well with the Smart Jet or Power Jet compressors.

T-SHIRT/TEXTILE PAINTING – Textile colors, like Medea Textile colors, used for painting t-shirts are made with heavier bodied pigments similar to acrylics and require larger tip\needle combinations as well as powerful air compressors. Mark “the Shark” Rush, designer of the Great White Shark compressor and Textile Painting guru, prefers his “fleet of 15 Iwata Eclipse” HP-BCS and his own Great White Shark compressor. The Eclipse HP-CS is a good choice for spot details and highlights. World-renowned artist and instructor, Jurek is an avid HP-BC user when painting textiles. The only other compressor we would recommend for textiles is the Hammerhead Shark, while others may do some light duty, at home t-shirt painting, they will burn out if subjected to long hours at higher air pressures.

AUTO & MOTORCYCLE GRAPHICS –Individualism and creative expression adore the vehicles of today and cycle tanks and custom auto painting are now more popular than ever before. Artist, author and instructor, Craig Fraser of Kal Concepts is leading the forefront of this type of artist movement. The HP-C is the workhorse of his studio while the CM-C allows for the greatest details. The new side-feed Eclipse HP-SBS Autographics version is quickly becoming a mainstay in the field because of its 1oz. side mounted cup. This allows for greater vision of the work since you can see directly over the nozzle. The Power Jet, Mako Shark and Tiger Shark compressors lend themselves well to casual workloads and the Hammerhead Shark and Great White Shark are designed for a serious working professional. Of course Iwata’s arsenal of various Spray Guns round out the offerings for this type of work nicely. Fraser is also the designer of the haunting Skull Master’s and Son of Skull Master’s airbrush templates from Artool!

SIGN MAKING – Because of people like Julian “Mr. J” Braet, Bob Bond, Butch Anton, David Shaw and Jay Landsberg using an airbrush in sign making has become a popular tool for creative solutions. The Eclipse HP-BCS and the Power Jet compressor are the preferred choice of most sign making professionals. Special effects on vinyl signs like fades and color blends are easily achieved with an airbrush. Sign makers also like the HP-C and Eclipse HP-CS for highlights and quick special effects and for touching up plotted images. Both of these airbrushes run well with the Smart Jet compressor for light applications, but serious “power users” prefer the Mako Shark and Tiger Shark while larger shops may use the Hammerhead Shark and Great White Shark.

MODEL & HOBBY’S – The resurgence of plastic model kit and resin kit building have created a need for new advances in airbrush technology. No more slapping on paint with a brush, reality is the goal and an airbrushed finish is the answer. Tom Grossman is an avid resin kit builder and a contributing writer to many hobby magazines. The Revolution CR is an airbrush he uses frequently, coupled with a Smart Jet air compressor. The gravity feed Eclipse allows for great detail with modestly heavy pigments and yet also allows for large background coverage. Novice users and children would be well suited with a single action Revolution HP-SAR and a Sprint Jet or Smart Jet compressor. Master model makers and model train enthusiasts find that they prefer the finest details and often use the CM-C and even the HP-SB in their work. Subtle shading and weathering are common uses for these two airbrushes especially when powered by the Sprint Jet, Smart Jet or Power Jet. Advanced users want the flexibility of a Mako Shark in their studios.

REVOLUTION SERIES - Iwata now has two new airbrushes made exclusively for the new user and part time airbrusher, the REVOLUTION SERIES! The new Revolution airbrushes include all of the quality and performance that made Iwata famous and now at tremendous value pricing! Quality, Performance and Value in both Gravity and Siphon feed models. Hobby users and model

builders will appreciate the fabulous finish achieved with these new models. [Check out the new HP-BCR and HP-CR models here.](#)

TAXIDERMISTRY & WOODCARVING – Taxidermists alike use airbrushes for all different types of works from patterns on fish to subtle shading. Typically taxidermists prefer the HP-BCS and HP-CS because of their versatility. They also use the HP-C and HP-B for subtle details, and users with a preference for single-action select the Eclipse HP-SA. Because of the style of work more control of the air compressor is usually required. The powerful and reliable Power Jet is great for casual taxidermy uses and the high-powered Shark series (Mako, Tiger, Hammerhead and Great White) are popular choices for larger busy shops. Professional Woodcarvers often compete for tremendous cash prizes. They require the ultimate in precision and fine-tuned control. The Custom Micron series (CM-B, CM-SB and CM-C) airbrushes are the best choice for these users. These airbrushes are easily powered by any of the inexpensive Iwata Studio Series Compressors (Sprint Jet, Smart Jet, Power Jet) and of course with a Mako or Tiger Shark.

STENCILING & DECORATIVE PAINTING – Sponges were the only choice for quite sometime when it came to stenciling and decorative painters stuck with their bristle brushes. When artist and instructor Sharri Hoeger (the infamous Mad Stencilist) began using an HP-C airbrush and Craft guru Lindy Brown grew passionate about her Eclipse HP-BCS and gravity feed HP-BS the airbrush has since become a tool for modern times. Lindy powers her airbrush with an Iwata Studio Series Smart Jet air compressor. Craft makers, stencilers and decorative painters will also appreciate the virtues of the Eclipse HP-CS and HP-SA for spraying heavier paints and compressors like the Sprint Jet make airbrushing affordable. Professionals with studios or shops might prefer a Power Jet, Mako Shark or Tiger Shark also.

FINGERNAIL ARTS – While most fingernail artists prefer the easy use of the HP-A, award winning fingernail artist, writer and educator Laura Morgan prefers the HP-B since she likes to mix her own colors. Artool Nail Master paints flow through both the HP-A and HP-B with ease. Laura, like many other nail technicians is using the new Smart Jet air compressor. Larger salons and studios will prefer the 2-station Power Jet or one of the silent Shark series compressors (Mako, Tiger, Hammerhead). Artool also makes a handful of great nail art stencils to go with its colors.

BODY ART PAINTING – The newest craze to hit the art scene and the professional beauty care industry is Body Art. While Artool Temporary Tattoo's are fun and easy, dynamic and multifaceted artist, author and instructor Pamela Shanteau is running the gamut in her creativity with airbrushed Body Art. Using a combination of airbrushes including the Eclipse HP-CS, the HP-BS and HP-BCS and powered by a Power Jet compressor, she rides the cutting edge in her body art designs. Artool Body-of-Art airbrush colors are made with FDA approved ingredients and are safe to use on the skin. Pamela also maintains a Hammerhead Shark in her studio.

OTHER USES - Every day we discover new and unique uses for airbrushes from our customers. Here are a few other suggestions: **MURAL** painting is typically done with airbrushes that have larger fluid capacities and of course with spray guns. Designer, mural painter and artist A.D. Cook often prefers the RG-3 and W-100 spray guns and uses a variety of other airbrushes including HP-C's Custom Micron's like

the CM-SB, and powers his wares with a Great White Shark air compressor. **CAKE** decorators like the infamous Cake Lady and founder of the Cake museum, Francis Kuyper uses the HP-B and HP-C for decorating various cakes.