

Monthly Demonstration: Airbrush Weathering

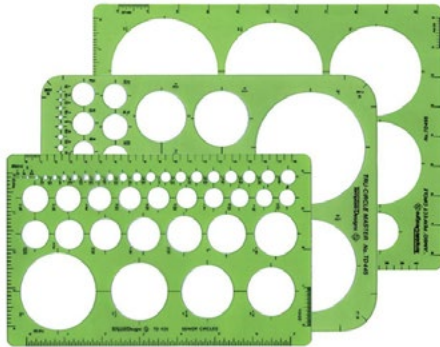
by John Robinson

Your airbrush is a great tool for applying primers, paint and camouflage. But there's more the airbrush can do - it can be the first step in weathering.

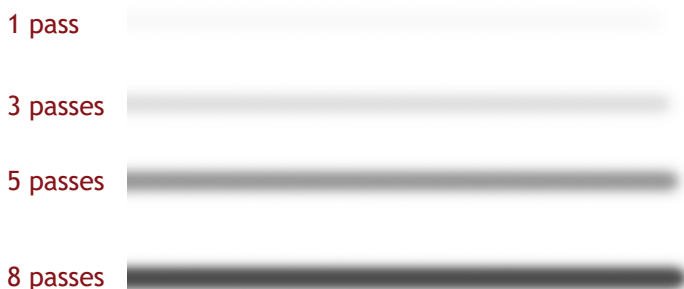
You'll need an airbrush and variable-output compressor that can handle low pressures of 10-15 psi. The airbrush must be clean and literally spotless inside where the paint flows. One tiny speck of dried paint in the airflow will disrupt the nozzle output and cause difficulties putting the paint where you want it and with the consistency you need. While this is an overall good rule to follow, you can still spray a solid base coat with a dirty airbrush so you might not notice it.

Use the paint of your choice that you are experienced with and you trust the results. I use acrylics and do not airbrush enamel paints but either will work. I recommend using the paint manufacturer's thinner. The company formulates the thinner specifically to work with the paint to get good results, so I figure it's worth using. A proper thinner allows the pigments in the paint to remain evenly distributed while being suspended in a fluid that atomizes well inside an airbrush. Alternate thinner hacks likely do not do this. Nowadays we spend \$60 and up for a model, so why not spend a few dollars on a bottle of thinner that you can count on working well with your paint? (Rant over.)

Have tape and paper scraps handy to block off areas from overspray. Draftsman's circle templates are very handy (also for painting wheels), as are rectangle templates. You can find these in craft stores. Some tools are made specifically for modelers, such as scribing templates with rounded corners.



The key to this technique is thin paint in multiple, translucent layers. If you're not used to this, it may take time getting used to. Every paint is different, but you'll need a mix around 25% paint and the rest thinner. Less paint is even better (10%). What you want is tinted thinner. If the paint is the right consistency, one layer will not be visible. After 3-5 passes you should start to see a difference. The good thing about this is if you stray a little bit off target, it won't be noticed.

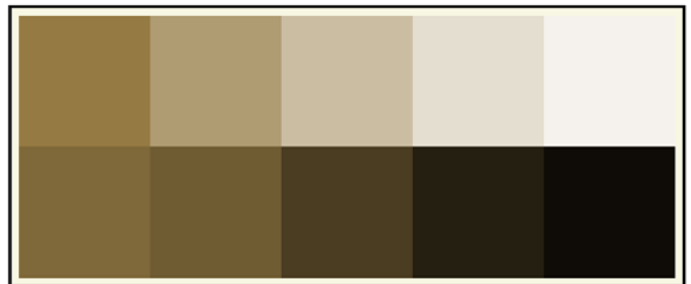


You'll need to dial down the air pressure to 10-15 psi or less, because the paint coming out is very thin and will easily blow about and cause a mess. Experiment on scrap plastic first until you get the hang of it.

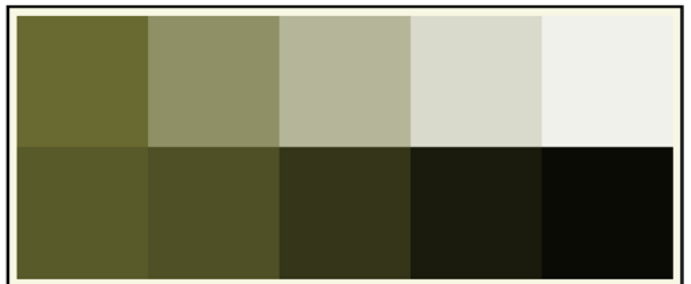
What color to use? You'll want a darker shade of your base color, so start by adding dark grey to your base color. Don't use black, it's too strong. For the demo, my base color was Vallejo Model Air German Dark Yellow and I used Vallejo Model Air Olive Drab to shade. Remember that the weathering color is transparent, so it needs to be harmonious with the base color.

The following illustrate the concept of choosing colors that are tints (lighter) and shades (darker) than the base color.

The first one uses a Khaki or German Dark Yellow:



Next is one using Soviet 4BO (green):



Finally, this one using a German Panzer Grey:



Where to spray? Good areas to start with are hull joints. Their straight lines are easier to follow until you get the hang of it and then you can start circling around hatches or compound curves. Your next consideration is any surface on the model that will be in shadow due to structure above it, such as underneath the fenders/sponsons and the lower hull behind the wheels. Additional areas are underneath the gun barrel and turret mantlet. See the next page for examples.

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