



INSTARTM



Cheat Book for Painting

Links

Alpha Paints



<https://shop.instartpaint.com/product-category/alpha>

Provectus Products



<https://shop.instartpaint.com/product-category/provectus>

Spectrum Paints



<https://shop.instartpaint.com/product-category/spectrum>

Colour Recipes



<https://shop.instartpaint.com/paint-mixing-recipes>



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A simple guide.....

Colour is a wonderful thing, it can change the way you feel, make something seem brighter and full of life and is everywhere we look.

But sometimes we take this for granted and don't really pay too much attention to how nature itself makes our world come to life!

This isn't a guide on how to do things, but more a set of pointers and ideas to give you not only a better understanding of colour, but how best to apply it to your miniatures.

And above all, remember the golden rule...

HAVE FUN!

The three elements

Things are much easier to understand when you break them down into bitesize components. In the case of painting, there are three elements to it and they are listed here in order of importance

Value



How light or dark your paint is. Paints closer to the white side of the scale will be lighter, whereas paints closer to the black side of the scale will be darker.

Saturation



How rich or intense the colour is. The more saturated a colour is, the more transparency it will have but it will have a more brilliant colour. The more desaturated a colour is, the less transparent it will be with a subsequent loss in colour.

Hue



Refers to the location on the colour wheel.



Paint Jargon

It's all well and good using fancy language to describe painting, but with more people streaming, recording tutorials and painting in general, what do all the different terms mean?

Tint - A colour plus white, usually used with highlighting terms.

Shade - A colour plus black, refers to shadows usually.

Tone - A broad description to describe different mixtures of colours. You sometimes hear painters use the phrase "Toned down," when describing the desaturation of a colour by adding an opposite colour or grey.

Vividness, Chroma, Richness, Purity - All the same terms when referring to the saturation of a colour.

High Key - Refers to a range of colours in the high value range (7-10).

Mid Key - Refers to a range of colours in the middle value range (4-6).

Low Key - Refers to a range of colours in the low value range (0-3).

Temperature - Used to describe how warm or cool a colour is. It's not a "Physical" temperature but more of an "Implied" temperature. Warm colours on a colour wheel go from Red to Green. Cool colours go from Blue to Magenta.

Contrast - A complex term used to describe the difference between two colours when painted next to each other. Ties in with colours going from a low key to a high key.



More Paint Jargon

The first page was not enough...

Zenithal Prime - A technique to highlight areas of shadow and highlights on a miniature prior to painting.

Glaze/Filter - Both the same thing. Thinned down paint used to blend two areas together by adjusting the hue of the underlying colour.

Wash/Pin Wash - Again both the same thing, just different techniques. A wash is thinned down paint used to create definition in recesses. A pin wash does the same, but is only applied in the recesses and nowhere else.

TMM - True Metallic Metal. Painted using either real metal pigments or mica based pigments. Will reflect light from any angle.

NMM - Non-Metallic Metal. A technique where the effect of metal is recreated using standard paint. Only works in one direction.

OSL - Object Source Lighting. Painting using an object on the miniature as the light source, creates depth to the model by being brighter closer to the object source, darker where the light wouldn't reach.

Grimdark - John Blanches style of painting that became very popular. Uses lots of desaturated colours to give a muddled, grimy style.

Heavy Body Paint - These have a thick consistency similar to oil paints and are designed to facilitate blending, they do however leave brushstrokes easily.

Matte Medium - Unpigmented paint used to thin other paints, introduces more transparent acrylic particles into the paint.

Colour Schemes (Part 1)

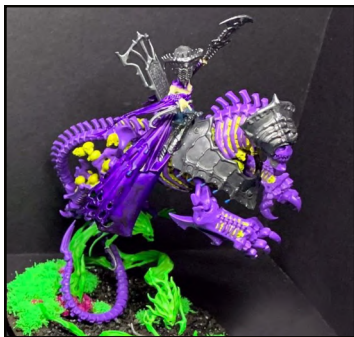
How do you make colours work well together?

There are six styles that can be used alone or combined.

Complementary

Colours that are opposite each other on a colour wheel, creates a high contrast, vibrant look.

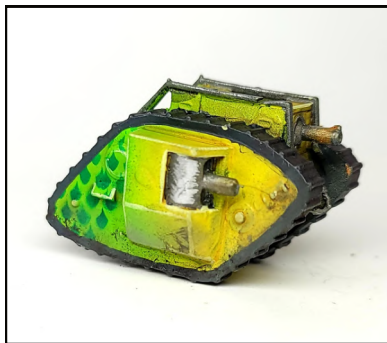
Difficult to use alone but works well for making something stand out.



Analogous/Harmonious

Colours that are next to each other on the wheel. Ensure you have enough contrast when choosing this style.

Choose one dominant colour, with a second to support, while the third is used to highlight



Colour Schemes (Part 2)

How do you make colours work well together?

There are six styles that can be used alone or combined.

Triad

Uses colours that are evenly spaced around the wheel. Triadic styles tend to be quite vibrant even if you use pale versions of your colours.

To use this style effectively, choose one colour to dominate.



Split Complementary

A good starting choice for beginners, it's very difficult to go wrong with this style.

A variation on the complementary style but with less contrast. Like the triad style, choose one colour to dominate.



Colour Schemes (Part 3)

How do you make colours work well together?

There are six styles that can be used alone or combined.

Rectangle/Tetrad

Uses four colours arranged into two complementary pairs.

A rich style that works best with one colour being dominant, paying close attention to the balance between the cool and warm colours.



Square/Tetrad

Similar to the previous style, but with the colours evenly spaced out.

Again, it's best to let one colour be dominant, paying attention to the balance between the cool and warm colours.



Colour Schemes (Part 4)

There is one final style that tends to be used alone, this style is known as Monochromatic.

It uses one dominant colour with various shades and tints.

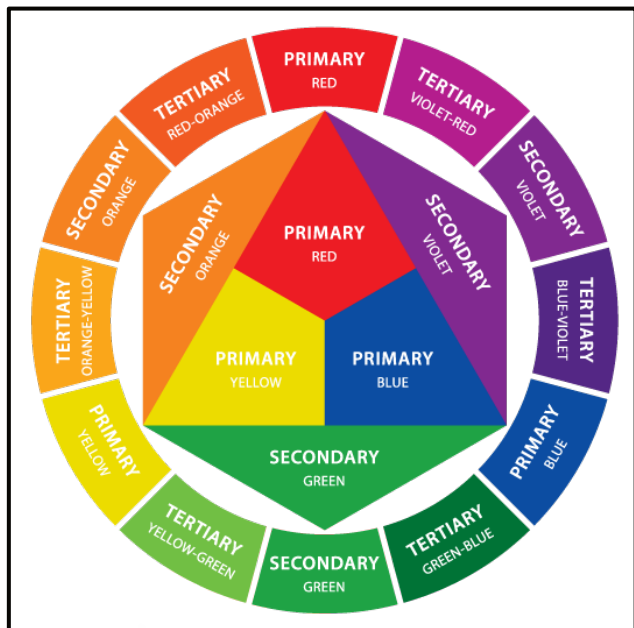
If any other colours are used, they tend to have the same value as the dominant colour being used so they blend in seamlessly, unless it's a part that needs to stand out.



The Colour Wheel (Part 1)

The humble colour wheel has gone through many evolutions over the years. We've given it the next one by creating colour wheels that are pigment specific. You can find it at the website under "Mixing Recipes".

For simplicity though, we'll use this one to show the relationships between colours. Secondary colours are made by mixing the two primary colours either side of it. A tertiary colour is made by mixing a secondary colour with a primary colour



Colour Mixing

You can mix almost any colour you can think of using just the primary colours, black and white.

It's a great system to use. If you are a beginner, it forces you to create your own colours rather than rely on pre mixed colours. The advantages to this are:

You have more control over the **Value** of your colour.

You have more control over the **Saturation** of your colour.

You have more control over the **Hue** of your colour.

Here are some simple tips for mixing colours:

Mixing any two primary colours will create the colour between them.

If you mix Red and Blue, you will get purple. To adjust it around the colour wheel you need to choose if you want to make it warmer, by adding colours clockwise. In the case of Purple, more Red. Or cooler by going anti clockwise; more Blue for Purple.

You can reduce the saturation of a colour easily by mixing it with a colour on the opposite side of the colour wheel. These are known as complementary colours. For example you can reduce the saturation of a Red by mixing it with Green.

To Darken a colour, you can add Blue, Black, Brown or a combination of them.

To Lighten a colour, you can add Yellow or White. Be careful using White though as it can desaturate a colour. Using Yellow in some cases can retain the saturation of a colour while lightening it.

To mix a Natural Black, use Oxide Black or combine Blue with Brown.



Things to watch out for

Some people may call colours bland or boring, but colour is just colour. How it's perceived is entirely up to the observer and is completely subjective.

Some people will class grey colours as being completely lifeless, but this isn't really true. Without dull colours in the colour scheme, it's not possible to make more vibrant colours pop. But it's not just dull colours, it could be the use of more low key colour values to allow other parts of the miniature to pop, by using high key colours.

Colour itself doesn't have any meaning, it's what surrounds it that does. Look at the big picture of what you're painting and try to make all the colours have an important role in what you're trying to communicate.

Use paint scheme recipes as an exception rather than the rule, though they are great starting points. The painters who did them have their own style and way of showing colour harmony. Life isn't so predictable that you can just use the same colours and get the same looking model. While colours themselves can be simplified into a standard mixing recipe, the way they are applied cannot.

Instead of searching for guides on how to paint something, try asking yourself these questions instead. What colour segment does the colour I want belong to? Is the area blending into another hue? (i.e Blue into Green). What's the value of the colour(s) I want? (Light or Dark). What is the saturation of the colour(s)? (Dull or Vivid).

People do not naturally have a talent for painting. Some artists you see will have honed their skills over many years and may even do it as a full time job. But even then they are always learning themselves.

Some simple lessons:

Learning colour and painting is a slow and steady improvement on proven fundamentals.

Practice and make mistakes. Without making mistakes, you'll never improve.

Analyze and learn from those mistakes. Good mistakes are the ones you learn from.



Psychology of Colour

While it can vary from painter to painter and observer to observer, colour can have an influence over the way we perceive the final piece.

Here are some colours and the expressions associated with them.



Passion, Love,
Anger, Danger



Nature, Health,
Wealth



Vitality, Creativity,
Activity



Trust, Security,
Spiritual



Energy, Light,
Hope



Royalty, Creativity,
Wealth

But it's not always about the colour. The value of the colours you paint with can also change the way the piece is viewed. As Bob Ross once said;

"If you paint with dark colours, you'll paint an unhappy scene, if you paint with bright colours, you'll paint a happy scene"



Zenithal Priming

Unlike standard, mono colour priming, Zenithal priming is used to create contrast with areas on a model creating natural shadows and highlights.

Starting off with a black base colour, a grey colour would then be applied from one direction and one direction only. Then a final white colour would be used in a quick blast to place the highlights from the same direction.



While it looks impressive there does need to be a measure of what you are trying to achieve from this style of priming.

To gain the benefits of a zenithal prime, you would need to paint in transparent colours only, as all the hard work of shadows and highlights has already been done. The only thing you, the painter, needs to do is apply the colour.

However, if you plan to paint as normal with thinned paint and create opaque layers, then this technique is largely a waste of time as you will remove any benefits that the technique provides.

The important thing to take away from this is to plan ahead.

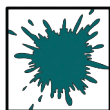
To Airbrush or not to Airbrush (p1)

Do you really need one?

Well, that depends on what it is you want to do and how much time you want to spend learning a whole new technique.

One of the main reasons for getting an airbrush, is to place down an ultra smooth layer of primer/paint before continuing with a brush. This is achievable and effective. On the flip side of that, the learning curve is much steeper with an airbrush, as well as much more maintenance and higher initial cost. Simply changing from a brush to an airbrush is not a straightforward move.

PAINTING AND CHANGING COLOURS USING BRUSHES FOR MINIATURES



Put Paint on Palette



Thin Paint (Optional with INSTAR Alpha)



Paint Mini

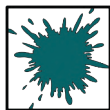


Rinse and Dry Brush



Change Colour

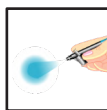
PAINTING AND CHANGING COLOURS USING AIRBRUSH FOR MINIATURES



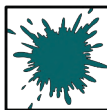
Put Paint in Mixing Pot (INSTAR Alpha can be put straight into airbrush cup)



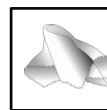
Thin Paint until Fluid and mix (not needed with Alpha)



Paint Mini adjusting trigger pressure as needed



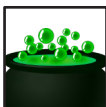
Empty Airbrush Cup and Spray Out Any Paint



Wipe Airbrush Cup Clean



Rinse Airbrush Cup



Create backflow to clear any blocks



Empty Airbrush Cup and Purge



Dip tip and blow air through



Change colour



To Airbrush or not to Airbrush (p2)

Do you really need one?

This isn't to say that an airbrush doesn't have a place in your toolkit. It's more a question of what you want to achieve and if it's worth the investment.

If it's to have the ability to prime miniatures, without the use of a spray can, or brushing, and it's something you would be doing on a regular basis, then an airbrush may well be a worthwhile purchase. You won't be changing the colour too often, you'll end up knowing exactly how much to thin your paint and the learning curve won't be as steep.

If however, you want to take the plunge and paint entire miniatures with an airbrush, you will need to be prepared to go back to square one. Brush painting and airbrush painting require completely different approaches.

Unlike brush painting, where you can 'feel' the pressure of the brush on the miniature, allowing you to adjust it on the fly, you won't get this same feeling when using an airbrush. It's disconnected from the miniature so a lot of your focus will be visual, seeing how much paint is dispensed as well as how much pressure you're applying on the trigger.

However, when done right, you can get some really fantastic blends using an airbrush, much quicker than you could using a brush alone. You also get much more even coverage compared to traditional miniature paints. An exception to this is our Alpha range can get very close to airbrush like smoothness just by brushing alone.

Take time to research before taking the plunge....



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Don't sweat the small stuff!

Ever seen those amazing looking minis on social media and wished you could replicate that?

You probably don't have to, unless you're just solely photographing miniatures. Most of the time you'll be painting miniatures to use on the tabletop so it may get you down that your model isn't like what you see online. Be mindful though, that these models may never see the table, yours will so take a step back and look at your models from a distance, about arms length.

This isn't to say that you shouldn't push yourself to improve. But equally you shouldn't get so caught up in details that people are likely never going to see if you're just doing tabletop painting.



Photo Scale



Resized to
5mm, the usual
size of a head
on a mini



Photo Scale



Resized to
5mm, the usual
size of a head
on a mini

As you can see from both examples, the first one has really seamless blends and plenty of detail, even in the eyes. But once it's shrunk down to the size you would normally see it at on the tabletop, all that fine detail is lost, you can still see the blends but they're not as defined.

In contrast to the first, the second image is more stark and much bolder in the use of shadows and highlights and in a photo, doesn't look as clean as the first. But when shrunk down the strong tones blend together nicely to make it more pleasing.



Do your own thing! (Part 1)

One of the things we started to realise after painting for many years was that we were just painting the same things as everyone else was, our Space Marine army looked the same as all the other armies that we saw on Social Media.

And that got us thinking, ***why were we doing that?***

It's easy when you first start to grab hold of a painting guide, get the paints out and start painting. Very quickly though you can find yourself relying more and more on them and only choosing colours that the guides say you "have" to use, which limits your creativity, it's not something ***you*** have painted, you've just ***replicated*** someone else's scheme.

Painting guides that tell you what colours to use should be viewed as an exception rather than the rule. The colours don't always need to be exact. You might even find that you create or use a colour that you think is better than the one used in the guide. The important thing here is that it gives your models ***personality***, it becomes something that ***you*** have created, that ***you*** painted using colours ***you*** wanted to use.

If you are going to find information on painting, look for videos and PDF's on painting techniques rather than how to paint except for inspiration. Sonic Sledgehammers channel on YouTube is a great example of this philosophy being aptly titled "***How I Paint Things***", it's not a channel where it says how you should paint your models, but rather give you some ideas on how you could paint your next set of miniatures.

Painting is much more satisfying when you do it in your own style and much more rewarding.



Do your own thing! (Part 2)

To cement this point, we'll take a look at this image...



This miniature by David Basilisk doesn't tell you anything about how he painted this, no exact colours, no techniques

nothing..

But it is his own style and he does provide a loose guide as to what hues were used. It serves as an inspiration piece to help you paint your next miniature, rather than tell you how to do it.



Seven things to remember... (P1)

1. Painting miniatures is an art, not an exact science

Following a step by step plan (As highlighted in "Do it your way", pages 18 & 19) is only going to leave you frustrated, your miniature is not going to look the same as the guide you're copying. This covers both individual miniatures, bust and regiment painters. There is a lot of trial and error that goes into painting that these guides don't cover, it is largely something you learn along the way and does take hard work.

2. Lower your expectations

You likely have a large pile of unpainted plastic sitting in your hobby area and we're not going to tell you that you should stop buying it, but is it ever going to get painted? As humans, we have a bad habit of telling ourselves that we can get that entire box of minis painted because we see a painted army, not grey plastic figures. Only to find later on and three figures later that it's more of a hard slog painting entire armies and it takes an awful long time. Be realistic in what you can accomplish and achieve, build your armies slowly and start small.

3. Find a routine and stick to it as best you can

Losing motivation is one of the biggest problems in miniature painting and most of the time it's because we burn ourselves out. Painting should be a hobby that provides you with fun, it shouldn't be seen as a chore. You don't really need to spend hours of your day painting if you don't have that time available. Life is unpredictable and you will find that you can't always spend hours and hours painting. Instead give yourself 30 minutes to an hour each day or when you can, at a certain time, such as during lunch. Not only will you find painting more satisfying, but you'll get more done and improve faster.



Seven things to remember... (P2)

4. The best tools do not make you better...

Brushes, wet palettes etc, all the things that the "Pros" tell you that you need to make yourself a much better painter are things you may not actually need. They will always require you to learn how to use them properly, nothing's ever ready "Out of the box".

Brushes are a great example of this, how many threads have you seen begin with "What's the best brush to get?". The answer is all of them and none of them, you can get equally great results with a £50, gold plated, rare sable brush as you can with a £1 synthetic, it just depends on your painting style.

5. Stop saying "I can't do <insert skill here>"

No one is born with a brush in their hand, all the skills you see have to be learnt and **they can be learnt**. You might need a helping hand, but all of us can learn a new skill in art. Colour mixing for example is something we highly encourage people to learn and we specifically built a system to help people learn this valuable skill.

It's not a case of "***I can't***", it's a case of being willing to open yourself up to learning something new and tear down that barrier.

6. You get better every time you paint something

Painted something and you don't like it, that's perfectly normal!

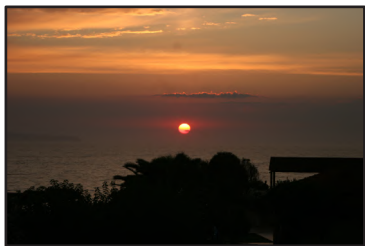
Every time you paint a miniature, you improve a little bit at a time and start to see what you can achieve. The more you do, the more you start to define your own style and then start to build around that core. Don't strip minis that you first painted years ago, use them as your motivation and a visual guide to see where you've come from, learn from your mistakes!



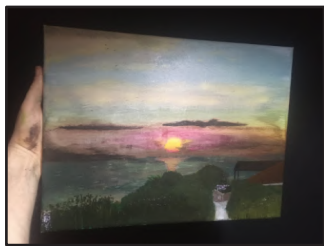
Seven things to remember... (P3)

7. Paint more and worry less about the end results

Have an idea of what you want to achieve at the end, but don't sweat it if it doesn't quite turn out how you wanted it to be.



What I wanted



What I painted

While it may be an example using a canvas painting, the principle remains the same for miniature painting, I was still really happy with the end result even though it was a far cry from what I actually wanted, but more importantly I took away some lessons in how to achieve better colour depth for next time.

You will only ever learn and improve painting by actually doing it. It doesn't matter how many books you buy, how many videos you watch, how many times you talk about it in forums and threads, it's only going to happen if you actually put paint on the brush and paint something.

So get your brushes, paints and miniatures out, enjoy the process and make mistakes, mix colours, try wildly different colour schemes, do everything because....

Nothing you do when painting is wrong. Don't ever think it is and don't let anyone convince you otherwise.





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