



# CLASS GUIDE



## Model Paints and Tools

with Doug Hodgdon

In this class, you'll learn about the assortment of paints, solvents, brushes, and other tools that you can use at your own workbench. You can really get to enjoy experimenting with many different types of products. And, a variety of techniques add a real level of believability to a model railroad scene.



## PAINTS AND STAINS

The session breakdown on paints goes like this: Hardware paints, craft paints, artist paints, and model paints. Each has its own particular use for model building. We will show you a large variety.

For things like scenery, acrylic hardware paints are economical and work fine. You can buy it in the quart size and put a thinned down mixture into small mixing bottles for use.

Craft paints are basically the same as house paints except that they are available in many, many colors and are sold in small applicator bottles.

Artist paints in the tube are more expensive than hardware or craft paints as they are a much better quality of paint. Acrylic paints are the first choice, except for select oil colors that are useful for weathering. The paste consistency is great for certain applications and can be used to include a bit of iridescent white into your clouds.

Model paints are just that, with a fine ground pigment that will provide a smooth, opaque, and most importantly, a thin coat of color that won't cover up the fine details of a model when applied.

Many folks started out custom painting in the days of lacquer model paints with not much thought to ventilation. Now days, the trend is to use acrylic paints which are a lot less toxic, and... the quality of acrylic paints has improved greatly over the years. Don't be afraid to mix compatible paint colors.

Enamel model paints are available in hobby stores, but the choice for railroad colors and sheen is slim. Weathering can be effectively done with enamels, however.

Relatively new on the market are the xylene based paints offered as Scalecoat II. It's a great model paint and has its own solvent, but the recommendation is to use it in a well ventilated area. Tru-Color is an acetone based paint system.

Rattle spray cans don't provide a good spray for critical model work, but they work as primers. The best shades are tan, gray, oxide red, and khaki sprays along with Tester's Dull Coat.



**QUICK TIP: A large washer glued to the bottom of your paint mixing bowl will help prevent accidental tipping.**

Lastly, you should use a mixing bottle and a small pump spray bottle containing a mixture of India ink and alcohol for all sorts of weathering uses.

Believe it or not, hardware stains are great. You can buy them in half-pint cans and the most useful colors are walnut, driftwood, and ebony. You'll see how small quantities thinned with turpentine in, yes, labeled mixing bottles, can be very useful.



**QUICK TIP: Setting up a well ventilated workstation in your workshop can reduce your health risks when using solvents.**

## SOLVENTS

See how you need to keep solvents on hand, but they should always be transferred into small quantities in small, labeled mixing bottles for safety. They range in toxicity from lacquer thinner, then turpentine, alcohol, windex, and wetted water. We will show Scalecoat II thinner as well.

Another product that's included in the solvents session is Scalecoat Wash-Away. That's a paint stripping product that is advertised as safe with plastics and not highly toxic. Great stuff.



## BRUSHES

You will see a wide assortment of brushes in this session. It's productive to keep a large variety of brushes within reach as you work so you can experiment with a variety of techniques. You should have long brushes and short brushes, narrow brushes and wide brushes, soft bristles and stiff bristles. They're all good. You should have both inexpensive hardware or craft brushes for non-essential painting and artist quality brushes for critical work. And, we'll



**QUICK TIP: A Toothbrush works great for applying a splattered paint effect that can simulate many different textures**

explain how to take good care of all your brushes and clean them well after use for extended life.

See how odd items can be used creatively for brushes, such as Q-tips and tooth brushes.

Even magic markers are useful. We'll see Sharpie markers in black, brown, and silver, and the rusty brown hobby marker for coloring rail sides.



**QUICK TIP: When cleaning your brushes always clean in the direction of the hairs and never store them in solvent.**



## AIRBRUSHES

An airbrush is probably one of the most versatile tools you can acquire for modeling use. You'll see an inexpensive model for scenery and weathering work and a quality brush for model painting. Experimentation will provide the correct amount of thinning for the paint that you're using.

Generally speaking, you should use about 25 psi for either airbrush. And remember, be sure to clean out your airbrush well after each use so it will be ready to go the next time you want to use it.

You may want to use a commercial air compressor with an air tank. When spray painting in humid conditions, using an in-line water trap is a good idea for a quality finish. Moreover, you should have a quality respirator, and even better, a spray booth in your work area with a hood and a fan vented to the outside is ideal.



## TOOLS

We cover small hand tools that can be used for cleaning up parts before you paint. They include a cardboard finger nail file, a small flat sharpening stone, and an X-acto knife. A small flush cutting nipper is handy as well.

Other simple items that are good to keep handy are mixing cups and bottles, an eye dropper, pipe cleaners, reversed wooden clothes pins, round tooth picks, small parts trays and don't forget a supply of the large dinner napkins. Mixing bottles can be bought in bulk at a local craft store.

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**Bottom line, the way to go is to have plenty of paint and tool options right at-hand -- and let your creativity flow!**

