

'QUICK & DIRTY' PAINTING GUIDE

Number 1

QUICK & DIRTY 'TOY' SOLDIERS

These Quick & Dirty Guides are for gamers in a hurry; who want to spend more time using their figures than painting them. They are intended to demonstrate techniques that will get your miniatures painted to a reasonable standard in a reasonable amount of time. They may not win you any beauty contests, but you should get decent looking miniatures and still have the free time to actually use them.



INTRODUCTION

Although there seems to be a little prejudice about using 'toy soldiers' for wargaming, there are a number of compelling reasons for doing so.

- They are cheap (currently costing between £4-5 for a box of 30-40+ figures)
- They are readily available from numerous high street toy and model shops
- 1:72 (approx 23mm) is a great scale for wargaming; anything from skirmish to company level games
- Depending on your system and basing you can often get an entire platoon, or even an infantry company out of one box of figs
- The soft plastic used means you can customise them easily
- There are plenty of models and manufacturers producing figures and kits in this scale, for many different eras
- And did I mention they are cheap? You can experiment with other armies, eras, systems without blowing a hole in your budget

If you are curious to see what is out there and available go to the excellent Plastic Soldier Review website:-

<http://www.plasticsoldierreview.com/Index.htm>

It has loads of information as well as reviews and pictures of numerous sets by many, many manufacturers.

The rest of this document is my Q&D approach to painting 1/72 scale figures. There are many other methods, so hit the web (you will find a number of links at the end of this document). This method happens to work for me, being just the right compromise between time and results – my definition of quick and dirty. The figures used in this example are from Revell's WWII US Infantry set (02503).

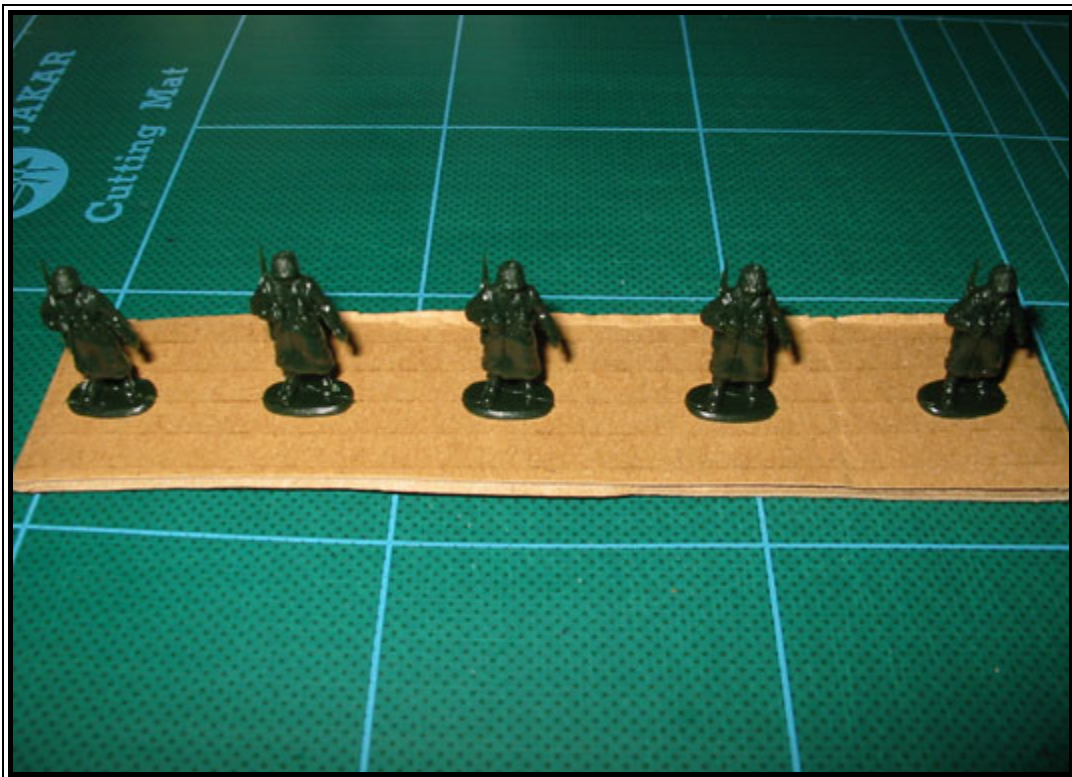
Now, despite all that they have said they have going for them, the soft plastic most companies use to mould their figures in is not the greatest material in the world from a gamer's perspective. Virtually no glue sticks them, they are bendy and paint has a habit of chipping off after a while. There are a number of things you can do however to make sure that your paint job will last longer. So before we begin painting let's prep.

PREPARATION

Clean your figures by letting them soak in warm water with a few drops of washing-up liquid. This will remove any grease and mould residue that can affect how well the paint takes to the figures. Wash them off in warm clean water.

To remove flash you will have to use a sharp craft knife (using a file will not work and you will just end up 'chewing' at the plastic surface of the miniature). If you wish, you can cut them out and clean them up before you wash off the miniatures, it's up to you, but once you have soaked them you should handle the figures a little as possible as they can pick up grease from you fingers. Using a heated pin to melt the flash away can also be used.

Next base them on painting sticks; strips of cardboard, or wood, or anything else that will enable you to easily handle the figures while painting. 6-8" is about right and by basing like figures on the same strip you can paint in batches, which will make things a lot quicker. Just use simple white glue (PVA) to stick the figures down as this makes removing them easier when finished (and is about the only adhesive that works on them).



PRIMING

Before applying paint or even undercoat you need to prepare the surface of the figure to receive the paint. I use a polyurethane varnish (gloss or satin). Paint this onto the bare figure and leave to dry thoroughly. This has two effects. It provides a better surface to paint onto than the bare plastic (it shrinks a little while drying forming a tight skin around the figure) it also helps to stiffen the figure, making it a little less 'bendy'.



An alternative method is to paint undiluted PVA glue on the figures (apply thickly, but not too thick as to lose detail) and leave to dry thoroughly. This serves the same function as the varnish layer so experiment and decide which is best for you.

UNDERCOAT

I undercoat with white spray primer. You can also simply brush on thinned white paint if you wish - I find spray paint is faster and easier (my watchwords). An ordinary can of car primer seems to work fine. Again leave to dry thoroughly before you begin the actual painting.



BASE COAT

Next paint the uniform in whatever colour is appropriate for your figures. I use acrylics. These are mixed thinly (roughly the consistency of milk) though this isn't a hard and fast rule; just do what feels right for you. Having the paint thinner means it's easier to paint quickly as it just flows over the figure. Also the details aren't obscured and the paint naturally pools into all the nocks and crannies, helping to provide shading effects. By using a white undercoat and thinnish paints the colours have a nice bright look to them. These will be toned down considerably at the 'dipping' stage later on.



I generally just mix on the go, adding water or paint to the brush as I'm painting the figure. This works for me but you need to keep an eye the effect of the paint on the figure; whether the paint is too heavy or too thin, consistent with the other figures etc. When I paint the uniform I try to avoid getting the paint where I don't want it to go at this stage. I don't worry too much about this, but if I can keep belts, boots, skin, weapons etc bare it helps.

DETAILING

Next I pick out the detail; painting weapons, boots, webbing etc. Again I try to use thinnish paints for this were appropriate. Like the base coat, using thinner paints means that it will flow into the detail meaning less work for you and hopefully naturally shading the figure further so you can avoid having to drybrush. However some detailing requires thicker paint to make it stand out so use your judgement. Generally reserve the thicker paint for smaller areas of detail (like grenades below).

You don't need to go crazy with the detail, as you can see from the picture below I couldn't be bothered to paint the rifle strap, the dipping will stain any bare white areas brown anyway. Bear this in mind; the dipping can cover up small mistakes like for instance going over the edge of some piece of detail (you are probably the only one who will notice such mistakes anyway).



Lastly I paint the flesh. For this I usually use undiluted paint. I don't worry about detailing facial features and hands too much as hopefully the dipping will bring out these details. However I have found it a good idea to use a thin wash of brown, black or grey on the lower half of the face (mouth, chin). This 'stubble' effect really enhances the look of the figure and gives the face a bit of extra depth (the insets above show a before and after).

'DIPPING'

Once all that is good and dry, the real quick and dirty part comes in... I use a stained varnish (in this case Antique Pine Ronseal polyurethane satin varnish) and paint it onto the figures. Some people actually recommend dipping the whole figure into the varnish and then flicking off the excess. I just use a paintbrush, but don't be afraid to splash it on. I heavily load the brush with the varnish and apply it quite thickly to the figure. I may reload the paintbrush two or three times for each figure so don't be shy about giving it a good thick coating. Just remember to remove any obvious pooling with the brush, but try to resist the urge to scrape off too much varnish. Just leave it to settle naturally.

The varnish will pool into the nooks and crannies and the stain darkens those areas. This works really well with the flat painting technique used for this tutorial and means you don't have to dry brush. The thick coat of varnish also helps protect the paint job and stiffen the figure further.



You can also use normal varnish mixed with some black or brown paint, or even PVA with a little paint added but just buying a tin of stained varnish seems easier to me as there are a number of different coloured stains available. Be careful of the really dark ones however the antique pine I use is easily dark enough for my purposes and is one of the lighter varieties.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Once dry you can give it another coat of varnish in whatever finish you desire. These coats of varnish also (hopefully) keep the paint from chipping off. Below are two figures, one given a coat of satin and the other matt. Although you can't really tell from the picture the satin seems to give a deeper finish to the stain, bringing out the shaded areas better, but ultimately the choice is yours. Knowing that matt may subdue the effects of the stain might be handy to remember if you want to lighten it a bit.

All you need to do know is base the figures as per your rules system and you are ready to go. Cheap, quick wargaming.



NOTES

The nice thing about plastics is that if you mess them up they are cheap enough not to worry about too much and you can experiment without burning a hole in your pocket. If you really want to salvage figures from a bad paint job you can try these methods of paint removal.

Oven cleaner/degreaser seems to work quite well at removing paint without turning the figure into green goo. It tends to be caustic so follow the instruction on packaging, but basically you allow the miniature to soak for a day in the stuff and then wash and scrub the figures to remove the paint. I have tried this with a figure and it does work (certainly the figure was fine and 99% of the paint came off.) For more detailed instructions go here <http://www.miniaturezone.co.uk/> and look under Articles.

Brake fluid also apparently works as well, though I have yet to try this. It might be a simpler and/or quicker than the option above.

LINKS

The following are a few links to online painting guides for plastic soldiers. Many of them are company websites, either manufacturers of figures or rules.

<http://www.hat.com/Tips.html>

<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Ring/8582/index.html>

<http://www.miniatures.de/english.html#Grundlagen%20der%20Bemalung>

<http://www.angelfire.com/id/macp/techniques.html>

<http://www.rapid-fire.uk.com/paintingplasticfigures.htm>

That's it. Hope you enjoyed it.

Cheers

agentofping