

Airbrushing Basics

Materials you will need to start airbrushing Blythe makeup (and more!):

- Airbrush
- Compressor with moisture trap (don't fall for inexpensive canned air or tanks. they run out fast and don't give reliable air pressure)
- **Water based Acrylic** paint designed for airbrushing (We recommend Tamiya Color hobby paints. Avoid oil based paints as they are hard to remove without damaging Blythe plastic)
- Rubbing (Isopropyl) Alcohol to thin paint and clean the airbrush.
- Paper towels
- Cotton Swabs
- Sanding Sponges (Norton 3x are our favorite, although super-fine hobby sanding sponges work. Test on the back of her head to be safe)
- Well-ventilated, dust-free and protected work surface



Clean and ready to paint!

What type of Airbrush?



100% airbrushed makeup

Airbrushes all work on the same principle – rapidly moving air carries paint through a nozzle to make tiny particles of paint in a controlled spray pattern. In a **single action** brush, when you push the button, both air and paint move through the nozzle at a single fixed rate. Imagine if water came out of a faucet at just one speed – fast. You would never be able to just turn the water on slowly to just get a little water out. This is why **many beginners have a hard time with a single-action brush** (myself included), despite the fact that many assume that it would be easier to use a single-action brush. In my opinion, single-action brushes are only good for stenciling, since you don't see the soft edge of the spray pattern, anyway.

A **double-action** brush may sound more complex, but it allows the artist to get a wider variety of makeup effects, and is not all that difficult to learn. Double action brushes allow the artist to vary the mix of air and paint, allowing finer control of the spray as it exits the brush. Push down for air, pull back for paint.

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You get what you pay for...

...but don't overspend. Avoid inexpensive plastic, "nail salon" or "stenciling" airbrushes, as they cannot create fine, precise atomization (the size of the droplets that come out of the nozzle). The key is understanding what you're painting. Airbrushes fill the needs of many different hobbies and specialties, including automotive painting, fingernail decorating, spray tanning, stenciling, T-shirt designing, etc. Blythe makeup is probably most similar to "model painting" in scale and materials. Volume of the reservoir is also important. Blythe makeup requires tiny amounts of paint, so a large reservoir is going to be a hassle to clean out between colors.



One of Paul's airbrushes. Big cup for painting BIG monsters.

I have had the best experience with Iwata double-action airbrushes. I currently have an HP-C Plus and love it. Paul's collection includes an HP-B which has a tiny cup – easy to clean for frequent color changes.

When picking out a compressor, look for a small tabletop compressor with adjustable pressure and an inline moisture trap. A built-in airbrush holder is a handy feature, too. Name brand is not as important as the features. A kit with a good airbrush and capable compressor is a sensible choice for a beginner. That's exactly what I use and it's served me well for 5 years.

Coiled hoses are annoying, but work just fine. If you remember getting tangled up in the telephone cord a lot, you might be more at ease with a braided hose.

I bought everything I need! Can I paint my Blythe now?

Not just yet! If this is your first airbrush, you need to practice, practice, and practice some more! Here are some exercises to try on a white piece of paper:

- Paint dots in sizes from small to large
- Draw targets on the paper and try to paint those targets without missing
- Write your name in a thin line.
- Paint a line that starts thin and gets thicker
- Experiment with different consistencies of paint – does your brush spatter? try thinning the paint. Does the paint run? too thin!
- Practice switching colors, cleaning the brush out in between
- Practice overlapping colors to create gradients

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Basic Maintenance

Hobby paint dries out very quickly. It's important to clean out the brush several times while you work, or any time you need to take a break. I do a "loose" cleaning every time I change colors and a very thorough cleaning when I take a long break or end a session of makeup painting.

Between paint colors:

- Empty unused paint back into glass jar
- Swipe out paint cup with paper towel
- Add rubbing alcohol to paint cup
- Blow half of the alcohol through the brush at full blast onto a paper towel
- Dump out what's left and re-fill with alcohol, blowing it through again onto the paper towel

More thorough cleaning (same as above, plus:)

- Unscrew the needle adjuster/needle cover from the tail end of the brush. Loosen the Needle locknut and carefully pull the needle straight out. Wipe it thoroughly with an alcohol-soaked paper towel. Set aside to dry
- Remove the needle cap and tip/nozzle assembly carefully
- Remove the finger lever, back lever, and spring
- Soak these small parts in a glass container of rubbing alcohol
- Wipe down any visible paint on the body of the airbrush and inside the cup. Run rubbing alcohol through the hollowed-out airbrush body.
- Rinse all parts in clear water (be careful not to lose small parts – close the sink drain!)
- Let all the parts dry and then re-assemble before storing in its original box.

Refer to pictures or videos to learn about thoroughly cleaning your airbrush.

Prepare and Plan ahead.

Make sure your painting area is well lit, and you have your paper towels, alcohol, and swabs close by. Keep a practice board or sheet of paper handy for testing your paint colors.

Take your Blythe apart (refer to appropriate guide).

Airbrushing can be done on a sealed girl, but is much easier on an open head, so you don't have to mask off the eyes, body or hair. It also makes it easier to remove any existing makeup.



Airbrushing lips and cheeks

I find that Airbrushing is easiest and looks best on matted plastic, so matte your Blythe first. Remember that sanding creates dust, so do this step outside of your airbrushing area. Remove any dust from your Blythe's face with a soft cloth, and make sure her skin

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is free of dirt or oils from your hands. Do any airbrush makeup **before** painting her lips by hand.

If you plan to airbrush eyelids, You need to check for any friction points and carefully open the eyeholes as necessary to prevent scratches. I do this step with a flexi-file and a sharp exacto-knife, You only need to remove a tiny bit, this step should make little to no visible difference to the shape of her eyes. Shave off a little bit, and then re-install just the eyelids, rocking them back and forth to check for friction. Of course, if you want to shape her eyes or do any other facial carving, do that before painting too. Sand the eyelids so they will hold paint better.

Paint consistency is key! Hobby paints are rarely the correct consistency for the airbrush. You'd be surprised how thin paint needs to be to come out of the brush without spattering. In a glass jar, add about a teaspoon of your paint color (or mix a few to get the desired color) and then add rubbing alcohol (an eyedropper works wonderfully) until the paint is about the consistency of whole milk. Load the paint in your brush and shoot a test pattern on a sheet of white paper. I keep a piece of foamcore with my airbrush for testing. You should not see any spatter (dots) with the naked eye. If your Blythe is SBL or RBL, you can test your color on the dome. If the spray looks fine, you are ready to paint your Blythe!



Order of operations

Paint the more difficult or multi-step part of your blythe makeup first. If you are planning to do layered eyeshadow in 2 colors, start there. Mistakes are easiest to fix in the beginning. It's heartbreaking to get to the very last stroke of paint and then end up with spatter or a misplaced stroke.

Hold the airbrush slightly away from your Blythe and press down on the trigger. Don't pull back yet. move the brush over one of her eye sockets, aiming slightly up from the center of the socket. slowly pull back the trigger and watch her eyeshadow go on. keep your hand moving in a small circle to cover the arc of her eye. Stop when you have the desired amount of shadow. Remember, you can always add another layer, but you can't

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take just a bit off. start softly and build up. Don't forget to practice hitting a target on paper first!



Mistakes are part of the experience

If you do make a mistake, the easiest way to remove the paint is to let it dry and sand it off with your fine sanding sponge. You can try to remove it with alcohol, but in my experience, this causes the paint to smear and leaves a bit of residue which must be sanded off anyway. If everything is perfect but there are one or two stray dots, you may be able to carefully flick them off with a toothpick or fine dental pick.

That's it!

For display Blythes, there is no need to seal airbrushed makeup. It will hold up much better than pastels. If you are planning to carry your Blythe around and are worried about scratches, a

Matte sealer might be a good idea.

Seal eyelids with Tamiya gloss or matte clear.