

Painting "Good enough" Miniatures



It's miniature time again. As promised, here is how to paint miniatures (or toys) just good enough to get them on the table. Because let's face it. Taking weeks to paint up a few miniatures is a huge commitment of time to use them for only a few hours on the weekend. But they do look a little cooler so let's see how we can speed that up by just painting them good enough.

I also want to show you that you don't need to spend a lot to paint your miniatures. Really nice brushes cost money, really good miniature paints cost a lot now too.

So let's see how good we can do with dollar store brushes and paints, and some tips on how to pick em and use em.

First grab some miniatures



But first we'll need some minis, above are the two groups I'm going to do today. The top guys got a lot of skin to cover and the bottom guys are pretty much clothed head to toe, so we'll learn how to do both.

Gang them up!



First we're gonna need this bad boy here, a glue gun, and some popsicle sticks. Hot glue the minis to the popsicle sticks so that you can easily handle them.



Just like this, Usually I'll do up big batches of minis with about 20 of these sticks at a time, they really don't take long to paint this way.

Basecoat



Now that they're on the sticks we can paint them. But first we'll need to put on a "base coat", or "primer coat". See if you just stick regular old craft paint on a plastic miniature or toy, it'll likely rub right off. So we use a primer. One of the better ways is to use a good spray primer available from a hardware store, but they can sometimes be grainy, thick, or melt the plastic. If I'm spraying I usually use Krylon quick drying acrylic spray. It's pretty cheap and lasts a long time.

Today though I don't feel like spraying. So I'm using this here "undercoat black" paint. It's a "for real" miniature paint and sticks real good. A good base or primer is the only thing I haven't found a dollar store equivalent for, sorry. If all you have to hand is some plain black craft paint then go ahead and use it. Use it and be damned. A little rubbed off paint never hurt nobody.

So use what you got and paint em all black.



There we go, all done. Let em dry real good now, shouldn't take more than a few minutes.

Pick some paints



Next we'll need to pick some colours. Every colour has it's own physical properties. With these craft paints some colours are thicker, some give better coverage, some mix well, and some don't.

You'll get to know which will and won't work well for you, every brand is a little different.

For colour choice I've got a red and a green for the fabrics. I never mention it in the articles or in the books but in the Winterlands they have no blue dyes, so everything is brown, red, green, or yellow. Colours like blue and purple are magical, mysterious and otherworldly in the Winterlands.

I have a "tan", which works well enough for "flesh tones". It makes a good base and you can mix in other colours to get darker, or lighter skin tones. The tan is also important for other things which we'll see later.

I also have a brown colour, for mixing with the others and for painting leather, hair, and wood.

The last one is a "gold". Since steel is so rare in the winterlands, I use the gold paint to represent brass or copper for the metal items.

Brushes

Now lets talk brushes.



This is a standard, plastic handled, crap brush from the dollar store. But it does have hair bristles. Don't bother with the plastic bristles, most dollar stores will carry at least adequate "hair" brushes. Check for the "Chinese art brushes" that have a gold bristle with darker ends.

Take any of the usual round brushes, one of the smaller ones, and cut the bristles off flat like the above picture. This little brush is going to do 90% of the work.

Painting skin

I usually start with painting in the skin tones.

For these minis I'll just use the tan paint straight.



First load up the brush with a blob of paint. Not too thick, not too thin. Usually you won't have to thin the paint but if it is just way too thick, thin it with a bit of water.



Next, wipe off most of the paint on a paper towel. Just wipe off the paint that comes off easily, you want there to be enough on there to work with. We aren't drybrushing here, we're just taking off all the excess paint.

Now just wipe that thing anywhere you see skin! Brush lightly, you are meant to be just painting the main part of the skin while still leaving all the cracks and crevices black. Brush lightly at first till you get a feel for it, you can always do a second coat if you don't get enough on there.

Also depending on your brand of paint the colour may be too transparent and show through too much black. If this is the case just do another coat when the paint is dry. Adding a bit of cream or white paint (just a little bit) will increase a paint's opacity allowing it to cover the black better without lightening the colour too much.



See how the paint makes a big mess, especially around the faces and hands? Don't worry about it. All the places you are accidentally painting over now will all be covered with another colour later.



Pay attention to where the paint is layed on, leave the cracks and crevices black just painting the main part of the skin.



These guys are pretty easy, just a quck flick across the face and hands with the paint.

Painting fabric



Alright, let's start painting clothes. You can lay a lot less paint down when painting clothes. It's okay to leave lots of black in the folds and crevices, it makes it look a tiny bit more real but a heck of a lot more awesome.

This red paint that I'm using is pretty typical of red paint for most brands, pretty transparent, and often hardly showing up on black at all. I just mix in a little tan paint to the red to increase the opacity and, if needed, use a second coat. Above you can see I did one coat in red and the other guy has red pants.

If you want to paint a lot of minis quick then do them in stages. Do all the flesh tones, then paint all the red clothes, then all the green, and so on.



More red samples



Here's some red on the mostly naked guys



Pay special attention to the black crevices here. The trick is to decide which way you are going to drag the brush. On this guy above I brush from the left side to the middle for the left part and reverse it on the right hand side.



Now do the exact same thing with the green, the green may also need some tan paint to give good coverage. Sometimes you can only find a bright neon kind of green paint at the dollar store. Bring the colour back down to a reasonable shade using a little bit of brown paint.

What's that? you want some samples?





Don't worry about getting messy. if you look above you'll see a splatter alot of paint on the shields here, don't worry about it as you haven't painted them yet so you'll be covering up all of that later. The only place to be careful is splattering on spots you've already painted. But even if you do get messy in a bad spot, it's just paint, grab a little of the other colour and fix it up.



Detail Painting

Now the easy parts are done, the flesh and the fabrics are all the big areas and the miniature is already half done, not to just "fill in the details" as they say.



Here's the right guy for the job, it's just a dollar store brush but it's got a point. It's one of those "Chinese art brushes". They actually work okay.

Metal

The first thing I usually do is all the metal. I mis a little of the tan paint with the gold so that it'll cover and just paint it anywhere that's metal, shields, swords, helmets, that kind of thing. Dont' get too fussy you rely just need to get the tops of these things. You don't need to paint right to the edge of the sword or shield. In fact it's best if you don't so that you get that black crevice again which will be a "shadow"



Shields and swords all painted.



Look closely at thge shields, See how I hardly even tought the parts close to the mini's body", That gives the "illusion of depth" and the very real, too lazy to paint carefully.



Just the spear tips for these guys.

Wood leather and hair (all the brown stuff)

Almost done! Now just paint everything else brown. Anything left at this point is either wood or leather and they're both brown.



Here we see, bow, spear, helmets, and straps are all brown now.



More straps and belts all painted.

And that's it. Paint the bases whatever colour you want. Or put some glue on the base and dip them in plain old beach sand. Done! You can paint the sand green if you want it to look like grass, or grey to look like stone.

Remember, Lair is about having fun playing the game not endlessly fussing with miniatures or feeling bad because you can't paint as good as the next guy. Who cares! Just slap some paint on and you're done. Chances are you'll be using pretty cheap plastic mini's for lair so no matter how good a paint job you put on it, it's still going to be a crappy cheap plastic mini.

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