

HELLFIRE

Painting

MINIATURE PAINTING BASICS VOL 2

DRYBRUSH



Miniature Painting Basics Volume 2: Drybrush

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Much like the other painting basics volumes, this one will be split into three parts. First is the theory behind the technique, second is tips and tricks and the third part is dedicated to examples. Instead of working on a single model or army, the last part of this book will showcase a lot of different areas where the drybrush technique can be used.

Part 1 - Theory & Technique

Part 2- How to

Part 3- Advanced Uses & Examples



Part 1 – Theory and Technique

Drybrushing has taken a lot of bad press as a technique for all the wrong reasons. Some textures and visual effects are suited for drybrush, some are not. Due to its simplicity, painters began drybrushing everything in an attempt to save time or not learn anything else. Much like any other technique, overdoing it is uninteresting. Models painted with only an airbrush, or simply on a flat basecoat suffer the same end result and same bad press.

When used right and sparingly however, drybrush is a great technique, easy to master and that's just what this book is for!

What is drybrush great at, and why do you need it in your life?

First of all, drybrushing is an excellent beginner technique to learn highlighting and get contrast on your models.

It requires very little brush control, which is one of the hardest thing to master when you start painting.

Because of the simplicity and effectiveness, it's a great technique for large quantity of models, like a full army or a board game with lots of pawns.

Simply put, drybrushing is a great technique to learn and a stepping stone to some more advanced techniques.

What is drybrushing?

It may come to you as a total shock, but drybrushing involves painting with an almost completely dry brush. Mind. Blown.

There is more to it.

What dry means is both in terms of water and paint. In order to properly drybrush, you will have to remove most of the paint from your brush before starting.

Because of the dryness, instead of evenly distributing paint like you would doing a base coat, the paint will only adhere to the raised areas, creating a nice contrast between the deep and the raised parts. Drybrush is the easiest form of highlighting, as it removes the brush skill of picking out the raised edges and areas by letting the brush do the work. Can you imagine painting every single grain of sand or strand of hair on a model. Oh the humanity! This is what makes this technique so valuable, as it's easy to get good results even if you are a beginner.

Because of its simplicity and the rough look that it gives, drybrushing is talked down a lot by painters who claim to be over it and swear only by more complex techniques like wet blending, as if it's some sort of snake oil from the old west. The reality is that drybrush does some things really well and is ill suited for other uses.

Part 2 – How to

Being such an easy technique, the how-to will not be the hardest to grasp. This section will also cover the pitfalls you have to watch for.

So to recap really quickly (because this is not rocket science) :

- 1- Make sure your brush is dry.
- 2- Put on very little paint on your brush
- 3- Wipe most of it away
- 4- Brush over the area you want to highlight.
- 5- Repeat step 2-4 until you are happy with the result.

To showcase these 5 simple steps, we will be 3 colors from The Army Painter range, Angel Green, Greenskin and Goblin Green, on a Games Workshop Space Marine model.



Break down (with tricks and pitfalls)

1- Make sure your brush is dry



This step may seem obvious, but for the sake of being thorough, baby steps.

Not only do you want a brush that's completely dry (not just the tip), you also want to use a beaten up brush. Don't use your super fancy brush, you will destroy it. Like with most other painting techniques, try using the biggest brush you can for the job. This not only goes quicker, it also produces a better finish with a more uniform look.

2- Put on very little paint on your brush

Drybrushing doesn't require much paint, so there is very little use in loading up the brush. Saving paint is one thing, but using less paint here makes step 3 much easier.



3- Wipe most of it away

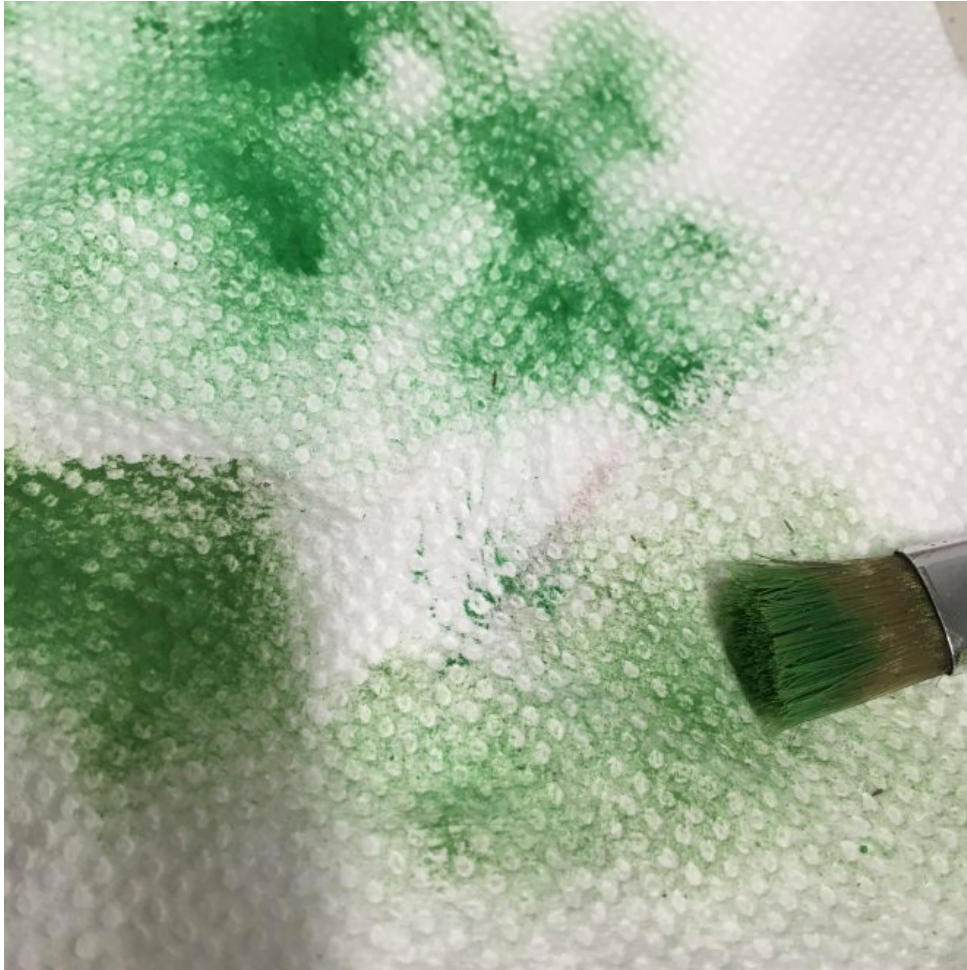


This is the make or break step and the hardest part of this technique. Not that it's hard to learn, this is a beginner-friendly technique after all, but it is where you have the biggest chance to screw up.

How hard can wiping paint away really be, right? And right you are.

It's easy to get carried away here, either because your painting 30 models in a row and want to be done, or simply the classic dude: "Eh, good enough" shrug. Having too much paint on your brush kills the effect we want to achieve instantly, either by going in the recesses or because you end up with a streak of paint where only a few bristles on your brush were not clean enough.

Drybrush works best with multiple too light coats, as a single too heavy coat forces you to start over.



4- Brush over the area you want to highlight.



Again, we are going through this for the sake of thoroughness, as there is very little skill involved here. However here are 2 pro tips for most situation:

Heavy Texture: If you are drybrushing something with a lot of texture, fur being a great example, try painting with strokes that go against the surface, not across. Going up only with your brush in the picture below for example. Because your brush is hitting the raised areas first, it's leaving more paint there and creating a better contrast with only 1 pass.

Light/no Texture: While drybrushing is perfect for heavy textures, sometimes, you just want to get a clean highlight in no time. Terrain, for example, is great to drybrush because it goes fast and produces a good contrast. However, large wall pannels are not the most textured areas. The less texture you have, the less paint you need on your brush. Then work over the surface in a crossing pattern to blend in your drybrush. Couple of strokes left to right, couple of strokes up and down, and voilà.

5- Repeat step 2-4 until you are happy with the result.

As mentioned earlier, you never want to go too heavy with the paint when you are drybrushing. Instead you want to do multiple light coats to build up the color. So repeat as many times as needed to go from a subtle effect to a flashy effect, as the need may be.



Which brings us to the next point, what is drybrush best used for?

As stated in the introduction, drybrush is best use in specific areas and surfaces rather than as a technique for a whole model. Here are a few textures you can make the most drybrushing the crap out of:

Heavy textures

This includes hair and beards, fur and pelts, rocks and sand, feathers... you get the idea. Surfaces that have lots of raised areas and details. Painting every single strand of hair can be a daunting and time consuming task. Not when you drybrush over it.



Metallics

Back in the days, drybrushing a metallic color over black was the only way to paint metals. While this is no longer the only option known to man, it is still a great technique.

The reason this works is that metallic paints are made with metallic colored flakes and mostly transparent medium (what makes paint liquid). You can see these flakes when you clean your brush in a pot of water, they tend to raise to the surface. Because of its transparent nature, when you drybrush it, you can still see the black through the paint, creating a nice contrast.

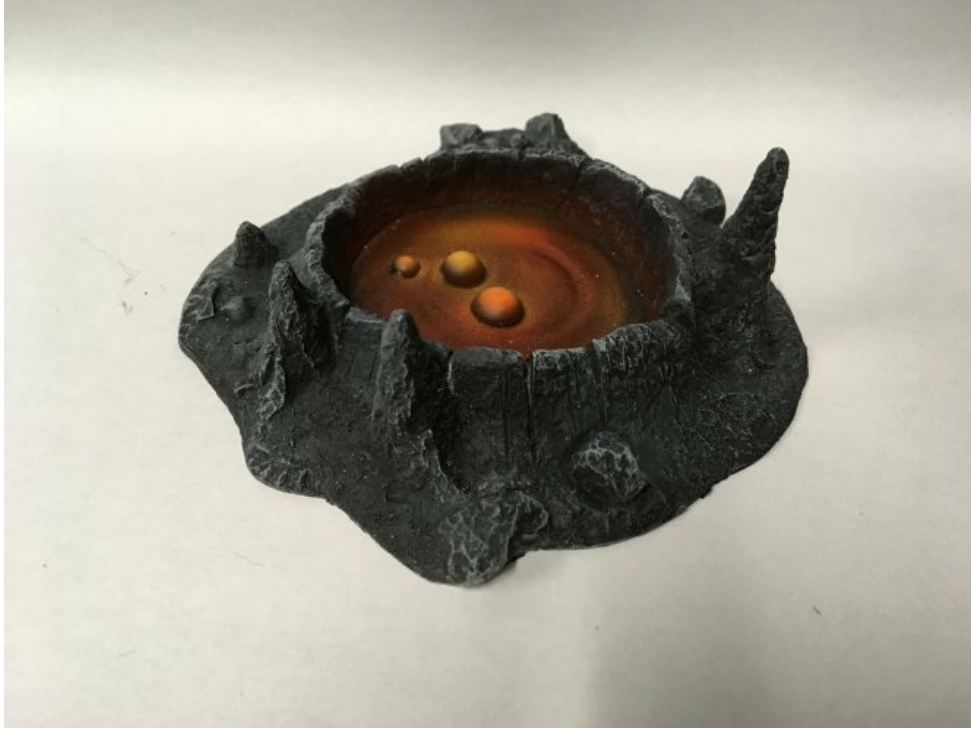


You can see this on the Space Marine painted earlier. The gun on the left was drybrushed silver over a black basecoat, and the gun on the right was simply basecoated with silver.

Chainmail and armor plates are some of the surfaces where drybrushing is great. As seen here.

Terrain

As stated before, terrain is a great place to drybrush because it combines 2 strengths of the technique: Speed and contrast. Because terrain is quite large, picking a technique that goes fast of that can handle large areas is key. The other great thing is that terrain is usually much less detailed than the miniatures, and the idea is to have those details to pop out from further away. You rarely pick up pieces of terrain to look up close like you do with miniatures. Painting terrain is all about efficiency, which is what drybrush is all about.



Terrain can be tricky because there are often pieces with large flat surfaces, walls for example, that are not quite textured. There are 2 simple ways to deal with those:

1- Ignoring them. Sounds like a careless advice? It's not. Most custom terrain comes with intricate details like studs, bolts, figureheads and ledges that you can work the drybrush magic on. So despite your walls being on the flat side, the eye catching details surrounding will pop out.

Of course, if your terrain is 2 flat pieces of wall in a corner angle, you will need to come up with a solution to paint them. Edge highlighting, shades and/or weathering are options in that case.

2- Very light and across. By doing multiple passes in a crossing pattern (left to right and then top to bottom) you will camouflage most of the brush strokes and create a highlight that blends with the basecoat, regardless of the lack of texture on your terrain feature.

Bases

Similar to terrain, most basing techniques will make great use of drybrushing. Whether it's to pick out contrast in sand or rocks, efficiency is once again king, as bases should be detailed enough to look nice but not so much to take away attention from the model. Also, if you are gaming and have to paint 60 of them, a time saving technique like drybrushing is great.



Part 3 - Advanced Techniques and Uses

As mentioned in the introduction, it is not because something is easy to do that it is not suited for more advanced techniques. Here are a few techniques that are derived or use drybrushing to pull off amazing results.

Advanced and alternative uses:

As with almost every other technique, drybrushing works best when combined with something else. Washes are a front runner of what to combine with drybrushing, as it's also a beginner-friendly technique, and complements drybrushing quite nicely. Just as drybrush works by picking out the raised areas to highlight your models, washes are used to shade your models by hitting the recesses.

By using washes, paints usually sold as either shades, glazes or washes, before you drybrush, you can create a bigger contrast on the surface you are working on. On the other hand, applying a wash after a drybrush will smooth out the transition in color and soften up the rough look that drybrush usually creates.

OSL / Glow

OSL stands for Object Source Lighting, and it's a technique used when you want a part of your model to look like it's glowing over other parts of it. This can be done in a subtle way, but a very trendy look right now - and quite easy to achieve - is to have these objects glow different colors. It can be a torch or candle, which would be on the red side, warp/eldritch flames and energy in bright green or turquoise, or things like power weapons, which can be any color. While not the best technique to paint the actual source of the glowing, drybrushing the area around it with some of the light color will make wonders to add to the glowing effect.



You can see this on this Imperial Guardsman by Games Workshop. The gun's reactor was painted with bright green and yellow, with some of the green drybrushed around the gun.

Overbrushing

Somewhat drybrush's weird estranged cousin, overbrushing is used in more advanced ways on heavily textured areas. Overbrushing is much like drybrush because it's used to pick out raised areas, but instead of wiping the paint off your brush and going at it, you are leaving the paint full on and painting very lightly over the model to only graze the raised areas with the bristles. Overbrushing is tricky in terms of both paint quantity and consistency. Not only do you need enough paint to cover decently, you need the paint to be thick enough to hold in place and not run into the deeper recesses of your mini. It is also quite limited in uses, best suited for fur and hair in light tones that you plan on working on after. The result it creates is vibrant but messy.



The hair and beard on this converted Leman Russ model from Forge World is a good example, where different tones of beige and white were over brushed over yellow, before adding glazes.

Dry Pigments



Dry pigments are another type of medium to use on your models. This potent stuff is pigments like the one found in paint, only in it's dry form. While it's not the same as drybrushing, it's uses are, and it hardly gets any drier than this in terms of paint. There are multiple ways to use pigments in order to make the most out of them, but for the sake if this book, we'll cover the simplest one: out from the pot unto your model.



Because of their consistency, pigments are quite easy to blend into other colors, and it's the perfect tool to do simple weathering. Have your models look like they've been slugging in dusty deserts for days, or add soot to gun muzzles and exhaust ports, pigments do it all.

Again because it's not paint, it won't truly dry on your models, so you will need to varnish it, otherwise pigments will rub off as you use your models.

Tinting

This is a weird one, because it's drybrush combined with washes that gives the full effect, but still, it's a great way to get a decent looking army on the table in no time so it's worth covering.

Tinting is a fringe method, or one lost in favor of more popular techniques like Quickshade dipping. The general idea behind tinting is to fade a color into white and bring back it's tint with one or more washes. So instead of having your entire model finished in the tone of your Quickshade, you actually have more vibrant colors if you so desire.

Because Yellow is somewhat a nasty color to paint and that having vibrant yellow models is something quite enjoyable, this is what we'll use for the example.

First, pick a rich basecoat color for your model. For our Games Workshop Space Marine that we want painted in Imperial Fists colors, we'll use a light orange. Paint every part that you want to tint in (regardless of the color) at this stage. For our model, this will be the yellow armor, the face and the pouches in yellow, skin and brown respectively.



Second, Drybrush the entire thing with white, again with multiple light passes. It will look quite rough, but fear not, the next step will bring back some life into it.



Third, using shades and glazes (or Tones from the Army Painter range if you're using those) we will tint the colors back to glory. Yellow, flesh and brown, again, painted on the surfaces we have just drybrushed.



Tinting doesn't really work on metals or black for that matter, so we will paint those now and Voilà, a completed model. The best part of this technique is the time saving.

Because the longest parts of this process is waiting for stuff to dry, working on a full squad, or a full army together saves an incredible amount of time.

Once you do the details, even a simple basecoat on everything, you get a more than decent looking model.



Thank you for purchasing the e-book. If you are new to painting and don't already have it, be sure to check out volume 1 in the Painting for Beginner series called Basecoat.

If you want to stay updated on all news and updates, be sure to follow Hellfire Painting on Facebook. You can also head over to hellfirepainting.blogspot.com for tons of free content, from tutorials to showcases.

Until next time,
No excuses, hobby like a champion!