

Airbrush 101

Before choosing an airbrush, consider the factors unique to your particular situation. What type of work will the airbrush be used for? What type of materials will be sprayed through the airbrush? What is the scale of the project? What is your level of experience? The list of terms below, the cut-away airbrush diagram, and the reference chart will help you select the best airbrush for your intended application.

INTERNAL MIX indicates that air and paint mix inside the airbrush. Air and paint come together inside the head assembly to produce a thoroughly atomized fine dot spray pattern.

EXTERNAL MIX indicates that air and paint mix outside the airbrush. Air and paint come together outside the head, or fluid assembly. External mix airbrushes produce a larger dot spray pattern than internal mix airbrushes.

DUAL ACTION refers to airbrushes on which the trigger controls both air and color (down for air, back for color). This simple maneuver allows the artist to change the width of the line, the range of value and the opacity of paint without stopping their hand motion.

SINGLE ACTION refers to airbrushes on which the trigger controls only the air flow. When the trigger is depressed, a pre-set amount of fluid is sprayed. The amount of fluid is regulated by turning the needle adjustment screw at the back of the handle, or in case of an external mix air brush by turning the fluid cap on the paint tip at the front of the airbrush.

GRAVITY FEED refers to airbrushes with top-mounted color cups in which gravity draws paint into the airbrush. Less air pressure is required enabling slower hand movement which creates excellent control for fine detail applications.

BOTTOM FEED refers to airbrushes on which paint enters through a siphon tube or color cup attached to the bottom of the airbrush. Removable jars or various size color cups can be connected to and utilized with bottom feed airbrushes. This configuration is generally more versatile and enables the user to change colors quickly.

SIDE FEED refers to airbrushes on which a small color cup fits into the side of the airbrush. The side feed color cup rotates enabling the user to work on either a horizontal or vertical surface. The side feed configuration also permits the user to achieve fine detail without the possible sight obstruction of a top mounted color cup.