

Preparing Your Miniature for Painting

You'll Need:

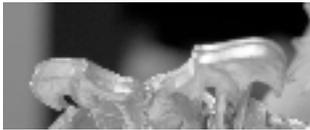
- Small, fine-toothed file(s)
- Sandpaper
- Cyanoacrylic adhesive (super or crazy glue) or epoxy putty (for multi-part miniatures only, see "Assembly")
- Spray primer (we recommend white)
- Cleanable, well-lit workspace; well-vented area for spray painting

Cleaning:

Miniatures are cast pewter, and almost always have some minor defects remaining from the casting process. Because miniature paints are thin and designed to show minor details of the sculpture, defects in the miniature will often be visible after the miniature is painted, unless they are removed early. The two most common defects are flash, excess pewter sticking out from the miniature, and molding lines, where the two halves of the pewter mold met, resulting in a raised line around the miniature. In both cases, you'll want to file off any significant excess material, and sand minor irregularities down to match the surrounding miniature.

Flash is usually easy to find, and is most commonly found on the bottoms of miniatures with pewter bases or attached to projecting corners. (Sword tips, dragon scales, etc.) Often, flash takes the form of long strings which can be twisted off by hand, leaving only a small defect to sand down.

Molding lines are often invisible from some angles, and blindingly obvious from others. You'll want to take the time to thoroughly look for these while in the cleaning stage, or your paint job may end up accidentally highlighting them. The best sculptors can hide the casting lines almost entirely in the miniature's texture, but usually rotating the miniature through enough angles in good light will show the lines.



Molding lines on the top of a miniature.

Once you've finished cleaning the molding defects, you may wish to rinse the miniature off to remove the pewter dust and make sure that glue and primer stick directly to the miniature. Make sure the miniature is thoroughly dry before proceeding.

Assembly:

Some miniatures come in multiple pieces, due to the limitations of the casting process. Usually, you'll want to assemble the miniature in this stage. When shouldn't you? When assembling the pieces of the miniature will result in some part of the miniature being impossible to reach with a paintbrush-- usually, this will only happen with shields and some wings. Such

miniatures should be assembled after painting.

Fit the pieces of the miniature together until you're satisfied with the way they look. Use glue or epoxy putty to attach the pieces, bracing them at an appropriate angle until dry. Sometimes, you'll need to do this in stages, if your miniature comes in many pieces, in order to get the correct angle.

In general, glue is easier for most people to find and more familiar to use; however, it's also brittle, especially to pressure at odd angles. To work best glue needs more than two flat surfaces to connect, or it can shear apart. If your miniature is well-designed, the pieces to be connected will have a tab and slot construction, which makes glue much more effective. If not, you can effectively create your own: using a very small hand drill, drill matching holes in the two pieces to be connected, then insert a segment of paperclip or other small metal stick to connect the two.

Epoxy putty designed for sculpting and miniature use ("Green Stuff" or "Brown Stuff") can also be used to connect pieces. (Epoxy putty designed for plumbing will not work!) Although it takes a long time to dry, epoxy putty forms a sturdy connection between surfaces, is easy to remove before it's dry if you make a mistake, and can be used as a filler and sculpting material; if the connection between two pieces is very loose, epoxy putty gives you more ability to fill that gap without ending up with an obvious lump of glue.

The assembly stage is also when you should make any desired changes to your miniature, such as adding or removing details, changing weapons, or building Frankensteinian creations out of parts. This process is called *conversion*, and you can find information about it online. We'll be offering a class on basic conversions in January.

Priming:

Once your miniature is cleaned and assembled, you're ready to prime it. Primer, unlike normal paint, is formulated to stick to the raw surface of the metal, giving you something useful to paint on. Primer is available both in spray forms and in paint-on variants; spray paint is by far the easiest to use, and we recommend reserving paint-on primer for touch ups. Primer can be found in white, black, and grey; different painters prefer different colors, but I recommend white as the easiest to paint light colors directly on.

Place your miniature on a surface you don't care about-- a piece of cardboard works great-- and go somewhere with good ventilation and reasonably good light. Following the directions on the spray can, spray light coats of primer onto the miniature from a wide variety of angles. It's best to do several very light coats instead of one very heavy coat, letting the primer dry between coats-- heavy primer can obscure details on the miniature, and produce an unpleasant grainy surface texture. Make sure to look at the miniature from as many angles as possible before determining whether it's finished, as most miniatures have texture that can prevent primer from getting into crevices except from very particular angles. Your miniature is primed when it looks faintly grey (assuming white primer) and does not shine in direct light; very small points or deep crevices may require touch-ups with paint-on primer.

The primed miniature should be left to dry for at least an hour after the final coat, and ideally overnight; wet primer can flake off when painted, leaving bare metal that the paint won't stick to.

Now, you're ready to paint!