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Model Master Spray Paints

By Lew Zervas – September 9, 2018

Military Specification paint colors are available on the shelves in many hobby stores or online – just look for the “Model Master” 3 ounce spray cans.

First – a disclaimer – this is not an endorsement paid or otherwise of all Model Master paints, made by Testor's Corporation. It is simply personal experience in using some of these products.

How this was Discovered

Upon receiving an RC 1/16 scale M1A2 Abrams main battle tank (made by a popular manufacturer), I made a number of 3D printed parts to add details to this model. I could not find the right paint match so I did some research and found that the tank was not the correct “Desert Sand” color, not even close. (Color photos of the real tanks varied a lot due to lighting and other conditions that even some of the original colors in the photo were far from being correct.)

My search for the right color brought me to Model Master “Custom Spray Enamel” number FS33722 “Modern Desert Sand (Testor's 1963). That took me to the Testor Corporation web site where I found “Professional quality enamels formulated to match corresponding U.S. Government Federal Standard (FS) Military colors.” and “The most complete offering of authentic military paints, with over 20 3 oz. spray colors available.”

Next step was in verifying the “Federal Standard”. That can be found at <http://www.federalstandardcolor.com/> where the colors chips are shown in addition to the numbers. (Note that Model Master is available in a limited selection of colors, but some of the more common colors for models can be found.)

After re-painting the Abrams tank it looks like most of the photos online plus the parts all match. Following the federal standard means uniformity. Unfortunately not all model paint manufacturers follow this standard. In fact there is a difference between manufacturers, varying from minor to significant.

Helpful Tip

In trying to make some decals (using “white background” decals) to get white numerals on an Olive Drab background, I needed to get the right shade of green background to avoid having to cutout around each small character when applying the decals to the olive drab vehicle. For a custom color in my Paint Shop Pro program I needed to enter the red, blue, green ratios as well as the hue, saturation, and lightness. Kind of a lot to do, but this can all be combined into one set of characters called Hexadecimal. For U.S. Military “Olive Drab” this number is 34087. Using the site <http://www.fed-std-595.com/FS-595-Paint-Spec.html> and search down the color panel for the color number 34087 the hexadecimal number is 3C3421. By inputting that number in my “paint” program I got the olive drab color.

This same concept can be used to create a background, graphic, text, etc. color if you need a “Military Spec” color on a computer. The HTML supports hexadecimal numbers.

Conclusion

Although this article is about applying to armored tanks, it is also applicable for other modeling as well. Aircraft gray and battleship gray are only a few examples. I hope this makes it easier to correctly model with the right Federal Standard colors.

The Suncoast Scale Model Boat Club is located in the Tampa Bay area of Florida between Clearwater and St. Petersburg. We meet year-round on the first and third Sundays of each month. Visit our web site at <http://ssmbc-fl.org> for more information as well as tons of photos.

