EDUCATION

Citadel Miniatures Painting Guide

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Introduction to Painting Citadel Miniatures

Painting Citadel miniatures is one of the most rewarding aspects of the Warhammer hobby. Whether you are building a vast army for the tabletop or crafting a single display piece, a well-painted miniature brings the world of the Mortal Realms and the 41st Millennium to life. This Citadel Miniatures Painting Guide is designed to take you from your first pot of paint to a finished model that you can be proud of, covering everything from the essential tools to advanced techniques. The goal is not just to instruct, but to inspire, helping you develop your own style while mastering the fundamentals. Painting miniatures is a skill that improves with patience and practice, and every brushstroke is a step toward creating something unique. With the right guidance and a steady hand, even a beginner can achieve impressive results. This guide will walk you through each stage of the process, ensuring you understand not just the "how" but the "why" behind each technique. By the end, you will have a clear roadmap for painting your collection with confidence and creativity. The journey of a thousand painted miniatures begins with a single base coat, and this article is your starting point.

Getting Started: Essential Tools and Materials

Before you dip your brush into a pot of Citadel paint, it is important to have the right tools. Investing in quality equipment makes the painting process smoother and the results more satisfying. Here is a list of essentials for any miniature painter.

Citadel Paints and the Colour Range

Citadel paints are formulated specifically for plastic and resin miniatures. They offer excellent coverage and a wide range of colours. The range is divided into several categories, each serving a different purpose. Base paints are thick and opaque, perfect for laying down solid colours. Layer paints are thinner and designed for highlighting and building up transitions. Shade paints, often called washes, are very thin and flow into recesses to create shadow. Dry paints have a chalky texture for the drybrushing technique. Technical paints offer special effects like rust, blood, or textured mud for bases. Understanding this system is the first step in any Citadel Miniatures Painting Guide.

Brushes: Your Primary Tool

You do not need dozens of brushes to start. A good size 1 and size 2 brush with a fine tip will handle most of your work. A smaller brush, like a size 0, is useful for eyes and fine details. It is crucial to take care of your brushes. Always rinse them in clean water, avoid getting paint into the ferrule (the metal part), and reshape the tip before storing them. A brush soap can extend their life significantly. Synthetic brushes are fine for base coating and metallics, while natural hair brushes, like sable, are better for layering and glazing because they hold their tip and retain moisture.

Additional Essentials

1. Water Pot: A simple cup of clean water to rinse your brush between colours.
2. Palette: A wet palette is highly recommended. It keeps your paint workable for hours and helps with thinning. You can buy a dedicated wet palette or make one with a shallow container, a sponge, and baking paper.
3. Primer: Spray primer is the foundation of your paint job. Citadel Colour spray primers like Chaos Black, Corax White, or Grey Seer provide a uniform surface for paint to adhere to.

4. Super Glue or Plastic Glue: To assemble your miniatures before painting.
5. Clippers and a Hobby Knife: For removing parts from the sprue and cleaning up mould lines.

Preparation: Cleaning, Assembly, and Priming

A great paint job starts before any colour is applied. Proper preparation ensures that your paint adheres well and that the final model looks clean and professional. Rushing this stage can lead to paint flaking off or visible imperfections that distract from your work. Take your time here, as a solid foundation makes every subsequent step easier and more effective.

Cleaning Mould Lines

When you remove a miniature from its plastic frame, or sprue, you will notice thin lines of excess plastic, known as mould lines. These occur where the two halves of the mould met during manufacturing. Use the back of your hobby knife to scrape them away gently. Be careful not to gouge the plastic. This step is often overlooked by beginners but is one of the most important for achieving a realistic look. Mould lines catch paint differently and can ruin the illusion of a living creature or a piece of battle-worn armour.

Assembling the Miniature

Some painters prefer to assemble the entire model before painting, while others paint in sub-assemblies, leaving off arms, heads, or weapons to reach difficult areas. For a first model, full assembly is often easier. Use plastic glue for plastic miniatures, as it melts the plastic slightly to create a permanent bond. For resin or metal models, use super glue. Ensure all joints are clean and tight. If there are gaps between parts, you can fill them with a small amount of putty or even a dab of super glue followed by a dusting of baking soda to create a filler.

The Importance of Priming

Priming is the most critical preparation step. Primer provides a rough surface for paint to grip, preventing it from rubbing off. It also establishes your overall lighting. A black primer gives a darker, more moody finish and helps cover up missed spots in recesses. A white or grey primer makes colours brighter and is ideal for yellow, red, and white paints. A popular approach is to use a grey primer, which offers a neutral middle ground. Hold the can about 20-30 cm from the model and spray in short, sweeping bursts. Avoid spraying too much, as this can fill in fine details. Let the primer dry completely, ideally for a few hours or overnight.

Base Coating: Laying the Foundation

With your miniature primed and ready, the next step is base coating. This involves applying the main colours to each area of the model. The goal is to achieve a solid, even layer of colour that covers the primer completely. This stage can feel repetitive, but it is the bedrock of the entire paint job. A clean, opaque base coat makes all subsequent steps like shading and highlighting more effective and vibrant.

Thinning Your Paints

One of the most common mistakes new painters make is using paint straight from the pot. Citadel paints are thick and need to be thinned with a little water. The ideal consistency is often described as "milk-like." If the paint is too thick, it will obscure detail and leave brush marks. If it is too watery, it will run and pool uncontrollably. Dip your brush in water, then mix it into the paint on your palette. You want the paint to flow smoothly off the brush without beading up. Two thin coats are always better than one thick coat. Build up the colour gradually for a smooth, professional finish.

Painting the Base Colours

Start with the largest areas and work down to the smallest. For example, if you are painting a Space Marine, paint the armour panels first, then the gun, then the pouches, and finally the details. Use a size 1 or 2 brush for broad areas. Work carefully, staying within the lines, but do not worry if you make a small mistake. You can always come back to correct it later. It is often easier to paint a colour and then tidy up the edges with the adjacent colour. Focus on getting a smooth, even coverage. If the primer shows through, apply a second thin coat. Patience at this stage pays off immensely.

Shading and Washing: Adding Depth

Once your base coats are dry, the model will look flat. Shading is the technique that brings depth and volume by darkening the recesses. Citadel Shade paints are specially designed for this. They have a low surface tension, which means they flow naturally into the cracks and crevices of the miniature. This is a transformative step in any Citadel Miniatures Painting Guide, as it immediately adds a three-dimensional quality to your work.

Applying the Wash

Load your brush with a Shade paint, such as Agrax Earthshade for warm tones or Nuln Oil for cool tones. Touch the brush to the recessed areas of the model, such as the joints in armour, the folds of cloth, and the deep lines of the face. The paint will flow into these areas by capillary action. Try not to let the wash pool on flat surfaces, as this can create unwanted stains. If it does, quickly rinse your brush and wick away the excess. The wash will dry darker than the base coat, creating natural shadows that give the model depth and realism. Shading is quick to do but has a dramatic impact on the final appearance.

Pin Washing for Precision

For a cleaner result, you can use a technique called pin washing. Instead of covering the whole model, you carefully apply the wash only into the precise recess you want to darken. This is especially useful for panel lines on vehicles or power armour. It requires a steady hand and a fine brush tip, but it avoids darkening the raised surfaces. This method is often used by more experienced painters for a crisp, clean look, though a full wash is perfectly effective and more forgiving for beginners.

Layering and Highlighting: Bringing Back the Light

After shading, the model is dark and moody. Now you need to bring back the highlights to the raised areas. This is done through layering. Layering involves applying progressively lighter colours to the areas where light would naturally hit. This process gradually builds up a smooth transition from the shadowed recesses to the bright edges. It is the technique that gives miniatures their painted, illustrative quality.

The Layering Process

Start by using a Layer paint that is one shade lighter than your base coat. Thin the paint slightly more than your base coat. Using the side of your brush tip, paint along the raised edges of the armour or cloth, leaving the shaded recesses untouched. The brush should not be fully loaded; you want to control the paint precisely. Apply a second, thinner highlight using an even lighter colour, focusing only on the most prominent edges. For example, if you base coated in Kantor Blue, you might layer with Altdorf Guard Blue, then highlight with Hoeth Blue, and finally add a dot of Fenrisian Grey to the sharpest corners. Each layer should cover a smaller area than the last, building up to a bright point.

Practical Tips for Smooth Highlights

- Use a good brush: A brush with a sharp tip is essential for fine highlights.

- Control your paint consistency: The paint should flow smoothly but not be so watery that it floods the area.
- Practice on a few test models: Edge highlighting takes practice. Do not be discouraged if your first lines are shaky. You can always go back with the base colour and tidy them up.
- Consider the light source: Think about where the light is coming from. Typically, highlights go on the top edges of surfaces, like the top of a shoulder pad or the crest of a helmet.

Advanced Techniques: Drybrushing and Glazing

Once you are comfortable with base coating, shading, and layering, you can explore advanced techniques that add texture and atmosphere to your miniatures. Drybrushing is excellent for textured surfaces like fur, bone, and rock, while glazing is perfect for creating smooth colour transitions on smooth surfaces like armour or skin.

Drybrushing for Texture

Drybrushing is a fast and effective way to highlight raised textures. Load your brush with a small amount of paint, then wipe most of it off onto a paper towel until only a faint residue remains. Lightly drag the brush across the surface of the model. The paint will only catch on the raised areas, leaving the recesses dark. This is ideal for painting chainmail, fur, or stone ruins. Use a cheap, flat brush for this technique, as it can be hard on the bristles

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