

The Official and Complete Scale4x4RC Hardbody Painting Tutorial

By Shodog

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The following is a guide on how to paint hard plastic (styrene) bodies and get great results. For most people painting the hard body is the most stressful part of a build, I am here to tell you that you can do it. I cannot stress enough, **TAKE YOUR TIME!!!** My past experiences shown me that when I rush, I never get the result I am hoping for. The quality of your paint job hinges heavily on how good your prep job is and the amount of patience you have for the process.

The first thing you need to do is trim the parts trees off the body. To do this I use a set of side cutters that are flat on one side. This way you get a crisp cut. The Tamiya molds are pretty good but you still need to trim and sand down the mold flash lines on the body. It's also a good idea to give the entire body a scuffing with a very fine 0000 steel wool. You may need to fill in imperfections. I use Bondo glazing putty but there are several model putties on the market that work just as well. After you are satisfied with the surface of the body you need to thoroughly wash the body in dishwashing liquid to remove any oils and mold release agent that might be left on the body.

Before putting down any color, you need to prime the body. Tamiya also makes a sweet primer goes on really thin and won't gum up the details. The fine surface primer is a bit thinner and the regular surface primer is a bit thicker.



Priming is important so that the paint will stick in the recesses such as the hood crack and door casings. If you don't use a primer, the paint will pull away from those edges and you will end up using an entire can of paint trying to make it stick in those areas.

You need to pick your paints. They need to be paints for hobby model use not Polycarbonate paints. While you can use poly paints, you will hate the dull finish. Some people really like to use automotive paint. For those of you experienced enough to know how to use automotive paint, you probably don't need my guide anyway. I highly recommend Tamiya's line of hobby model spray lacquer paints.



I have found the metallic's to spray very well. The solid colors are a bit thinner and tend to easily run if you spray too heavy of a coat. To paint a body you will need a can of primer, two cans of you main body color, one can for an additional body color and two cans of clear

When spraying you need to make sure you have a controlled environment. If it's too cold or damp the paint takes a long time to dry. Too hot and the paint dries too quickly. I usually like to paint when the temperature is between 65-75 degrees.

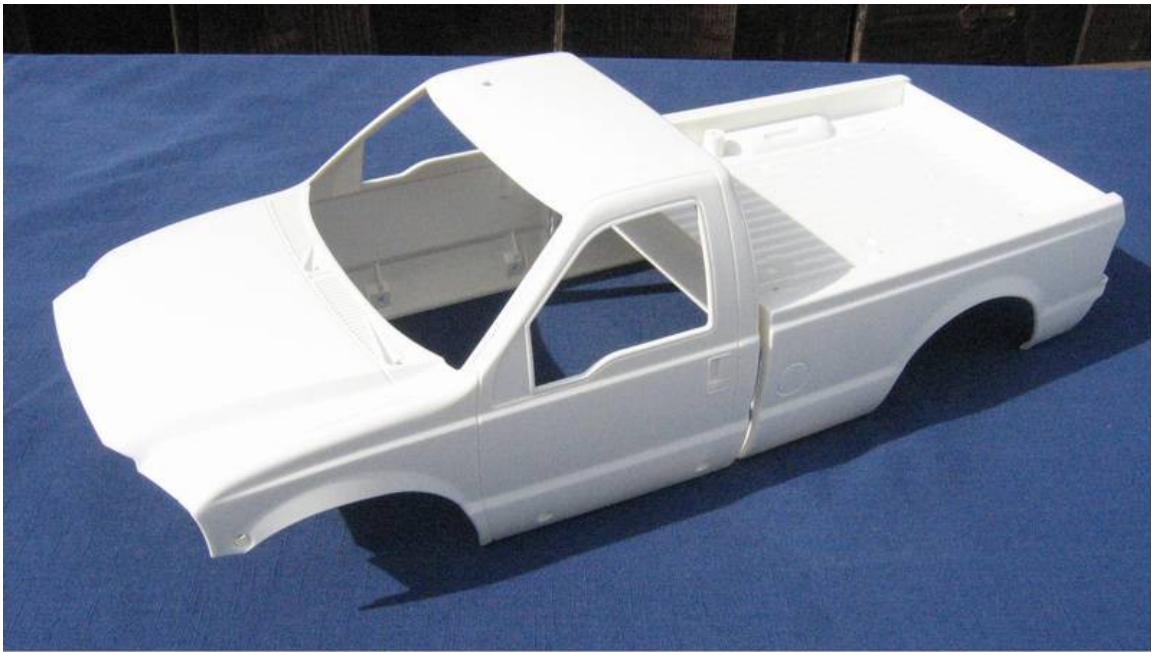
Wipe the body with a lint free tack cloth to remove all of the little dust and hairs an what ever else has been floating around the room. It's helpful to make a stand out of a box so that the body is up off the surface you are painting on. This will allow you to paint the bottom sides of the body that often get overlooked.

I like to warm my cans of spray up so that they spray better. I use a coffee mug filled with hot water and I soak the can until it's warm to the touch. It goes without saying; make sure you shake the can up so that the contents will be thoroughly mixed before spraying.

Make sure and spray light coats. Try to spray within 6-8 inches of the body. If you're getting orange peel then you're spraying too far away and if the paint is running, you're too close.

After you spray the primer coat you may want to lightly sand the body with 600-1000 grit paper just to knock the high spots off of the primer. The smoother you keep the surface during the paint process, the smoother your finished coat will be.

Here is a body that has been trimmed, mold lines sanded and two coats of primer sprayed. Now it's and ready to get its first color coats



Here is the body getting its base coat of TS-75 Champagne gold. A good game plan for spraying paint is to hit all of the hard to reach places first like the wheel wells and recessed areas that are hard to reach during the normal course of painting. Once those have good coverage, go on to the rest of the body. Painting this way will allow you to use a minimum amount of paint so that you don't gum up any of the body details.

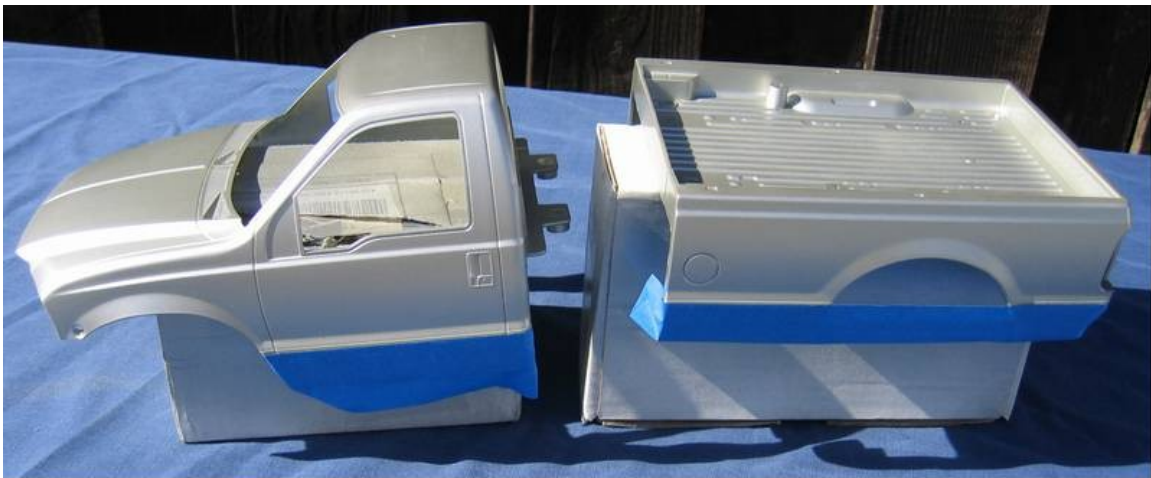


Here is the body with a completed base coat of TS-75 Champagne.



Next you can tape off the main color. The main reason I sprayed the champagne first is that the color coat I chose (Mica Red) is somewhat translucent. I wanted the champagne to shine through on the end result. Before doing any taping, make sure you let your paint cure at least two days and even longer if you applied thick coats of paint.

When taping off your second color coat, use a high quality tape. Using cheap tape will mess up your paint job and cause you to have to start over. I use 3M fine line tape for the cut between the two colors and then 3M blue low tack to cover the rest of the area from paint.





Now you can start to spray the main body color. Take your time and spray light coats keeping in mind to spray at the optimum 6"-8" distance from the body



I spray about 1.5 cans of color coat on the body then I let it cure for about two days. I give the body a nice wet sanding with 1500-2000 grit paper. Wipe off the residue with a tack cloth and then spray one final color coat. Let this one cure for at least a day.



You will notice that the body has a dull appearance. That's where the clear coats come in to save the day. I have found that if you spray the clear on too thick, it can make you color coats run. So go slow on this process. I spray about 3 clear coats and let them cure for about a day before I start to wet sand. Here is the body with one can of clear shot on it and two wet sandings



Now it's time to go onto the grill and bumpers. It's easiest to paint these while still on the tree. To get the best finish means spraying the paint. Brush strokes and lumpy paint isn't going to cut it here. My 3M fine line tape wasn't flexible enough for this job so I used standard tack 3M masking tape. I used a straight edge and a hobby knife to make a fresh clean cut on the tape. You can't trust the edge of the tape to not bleed. First I lay the tape on all the straight lines. Then on the curved lines, I lay the tape down and use a hobby knife to lightly cut off the excess. I then use the 3M low tack to cover the bulk of the areas.



With chrome you need to prime it or the paint is not going to stick. On these pieces I used Tamiya fine line primer.



I used my airbrush to spray on some X-10 gun metal paint but if you don't have an airbrush and since it's all taped up, you can use a normal can to spray the paint. Once again paint the areas that are hard to reach first then once they have good coverage, spray the rest.



Make sure to pull you tape off as soon as you can. That way to can clean up any bleeds before they dry. Tamiya X-paints can be cleaned off with a q-tip dipped in rubbing alcohol. If you ever get any tape residue stuck to your parts, WD-40 works killer to remove it without damaging the paint or chrome.



The final details like the door handles and window trims can be either sprayed or painted by brush. I did mine with a brush held flat to the body that way it only paints the raised surfaces. I did however tape off a lot of the areas so that the cut between paints would be crisp.



As you can see, if you're willing to take your time and go the extra mile on the prep, you can end up with a sweet looking body you would be proud to show off.