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Getting Started in Weathering

"How to use chalks and dry brushing for a more realistic finish to your cars."

By Mike Carski

Let's face facts, our world is a very dirty place and things don't stay clean for very long. This is why we use weathering on our models, to make them look more realistic. Weathering is as simple as removing the shine of a new car, to making it show like many years of hard service! Weathering isn't hard to do, and the two methods I am going to discuss are the easiest to start with.

The final finish is what most modelers refer to when talking about weathering, and the different effects they have achieved. The five most common are as follows:

Rust: Can be found on any locomotive or car, anywhere debris can chip paint.

Bare Metal: Can be used two-fold, bare surfaces attract rust, but also, there are areas that move or rub constantly, they can't rust, such as brake cylinder pistons or the inside slope sheets on hopper cars. Also, boxcars with galvanized roofs, won't hold paint and won't rust. The flaking or peeling of paint will be covered in another article.

Dust: Usually light in color, old car, new engine, always has dust.

Soot: A flat-black coating, caused mainly by locomotive exhaust, settles on the tops of everything.

Grime: A shiny black and brown coating that forms from excess lubrication or where moisture collects.

The most important one item to remember about weathering, "Don't over do it." At the point you think one last spray of paint is it, stop, cause that is when you'll go overboard and ruin a classic finish!

There are as many ways to weather railroad cars as there are types of locomotives.

Ground-up acrylic pastel chalks are very good for creating areas of dust, rust, and soot on models. The technique is fool proof, if you don't like the way it looks, just wipe or wash it off and start over. The negative side is you can leave your fingerprints in the chalk as you handle the model.

The fingerprint dilemma can be solved by sealing your chalk after each application with a clear over coat like Testors Dullcoat or Krylon flat sealer. Another slight inconvenience with sealing, sometimes spraying the chalks will make the colors less apparent, they may even disappear, so you will have to build up these colors with repeated applications, and sealing each layer along the way.

Model paints are also a very good medium for applying grime, rust, and soot. These paints can be applied several ways, the most popular are dry brushing and airbrushing. Dry brushing is



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the art of dipping the paintbrush into a color you want to apply, then drying the brush on a paper towel or rag. Then dragging the almost dry brush, with light to moderate pressure over the model.

Example: To simulate rust streaks on a boxcar, use a thin brush, almost dry of orange paint. Lightly whisk the brush downward from the roof sides, in the areas you want streaks, also, any place metal door rub the sides and places water collects.

When using the chinks, scrape the sticks of chalk with a hobby knife blade into piles. Experiment by blending different colors of dust, and use a stiff bristle brush to apply, then lightly seal with dullcoat or similar product.

This should get you started on basic weathering. In future articles I will cover airbrushing, how to simulate flaking and peeling paint on both wood and metal surfaces, and the process of "distressing" or representing damage on your model. Tell then, have fun.