

Painting Figures with the Citadel Colour System

By Alex Polimeni

Resources

Citadel Colour app on your smart phone in Google or Apple app stores

Games Workshop webstore:

<https://www.games-workshop.com/en-US/Painting-Modelling>

The official Citadel Colour website:

<https://citadelcolour.com/citadel-colour-system>

Technique guides

Base paints

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6039187301001/6038874941001>

Layer paints

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6039187301001/6038117344001>

Shades

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6039187301001/6038875855001>

Spray priming

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6038888620001/6038126833001>

Base coating

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6038888620001/6038130493001>

Layering

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6038888620001/6038127287001>

Shading

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6038888620001/6038132291001>

Other guides

Parched cracked ground

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6038720983001/6038909793001>

Rust effect

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6038720983001/6038119325001>

Advanced rust effect

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6039773749001/6099683079001>

Oxidized brass/bronze/copper

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6038720983001/6038125027001>

Old wood structure

<https://citadelcolour.com/playlist/6039773749001/6113313691001>

The Most Important Rule

There is no right or wrong way to hobby, only the way you want to do it!

While this is not the only way to paint figures, it's the way I've been doing it, and it's worked out pretty well for me.

What You Should Know

The Citadel Colour System is manufactured by the United Kingdom tabletop wargaming miniatures company Games Workshop. They are water-based acrylic paints.

By design, Citadel paints are meant for 28mm figures. Unlike more familiar hobby paints (Polly Scale, Model Masters, etc.), Citadel paints are quite thick, and formulated to completely cover any surface in two thin coats and dry within minutes. With care, this makes them ideal for our much smaller model railroading figures.

Furthermore, be advised that Citadel paints are shockingly expensive. Pots of Base and Layer typically run about \$5.00 each, with Shades about \$7.00 each.

Preparing Your Figures

Never, ever paint over bare plastic. Always prime your models. Citadel Colour offers black and white spray can primers, but like their other products, these are expensive at \$17/ea. They are worth the price, however, so long as you do not use them in cold or humid weather. Doing so will cause the finish to cure shiny, in the case of cold, or gloppy, in the case of humidity. If you do not prime, your paint will easily wear off with handling.

The pin-and-cork method

If you're a patient sort, you can drill the feet of your figures and insert a length of roughly 3/4ths inch wire. You can then stick this into cork, allowing you to prime many figures at once; furthermore, you can use wine bottle corks as bases with which to hold your figure while you paint it, and later, you can drill a small hole in your layout to glue the figure in place.

The tape-and-tack method

If you simply wish to prime your figures without blasting them about with your rattlecan or airbrush, you can fold strips of painter's tape inside out and tack the figures to them. Once dry, simply reverse the figure on the same spot it was stuck to previously and prime the other side.

Choosing your paints

The Colour System has several different paint types, but for our purposes we're concerned only with Base, Layer, and Shade. Thin your paints with water before use if needed.

Base paints are thicker and more heavily pigmented than Layer paints.

Layer paints are moderately thinner than Base paints and do not cover as well.

Shade paints are actually washes, similar to an ink but without the gloss.

Which paints should I buy?

If you're not already familiar with the range, Citadel's naming conventions can be very confusing. Here are my recommendations to get the most bang for your buck.

Base

Dryad Bark - Dark brown, good for shoes, belts, briefcases.

Mournfang Brown - Dark brown, good for shoes, belts, briefcases.

Dark Reaper - Blue-gray, good for jeans or suits.

XV-88 - Medium brown, good for shirts and pants.

Averland Sunset - Medium yellow, good for women's clothes and rainjackets.

Mephiston Red - Medium red, good for women's clothes and bandanas.

Steel Legion Drab - Khaki color, good for pants and jackets.

Corvus Black - Dark gray, good for pants and boots.

Layer

Hoeth Blue - Medium blue, good for railway personnel

Ushabti Bone - Light brown, good for shirts and pants.

Baneblade Brown - Light brown, good for shirts and pants.

Dawnstone - Medium gray, good for shirts and pants.

Stormvermin Fur - Dark gray, good for shirts and pants.

Ulthuan Gray - Light gray, good for shirts and pants.

Kislev Flesh - Light caucasian skin tone.

Cadian Fleshtone - Tanned caucasian skin tone.

Bugman's Glow - Hispanic skin tone.

Bloodreaver Flesh - African-American skin tone.

Shade

Reikland Fleshshade - an absolute must for skin tones.

Nuln Oil - Great for shading grays and cold colors.

Agrax Earthshade - Great for shading browns and warm colors.

Where to buy

The Games Workshop online store carries the full range of Citadel products. Furthermore, most game stores (not necessarily hobby shops, mind you) will also carry Citadel. All locations branded Games Workshop or Warhammer will carry Citadel as those are corporate stores.

Other manufacturers

I cannot personally speak for any of these, but I know others who use them to good effect.

Vallejo Game Color

<https://acrylicosvallejo.com/en/category/hobby/game-color-en/>

Formula P3

<https://privateerpress.com/formula-p3/paints>

Reaper Master Series

<https://www.reapermini.com/paints>

Army Painter

<https://www.thearmypainter.com/>

Color comparison chart:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xl-x9eW3bLw5eqDeNUG2JUwn2EZwn34TDKfNIg5uuI4/edit#gid=5>