

## TECH TIPS

### Common Sense Spray-Gun Tips

#### How Many Guns Do I Need?

Whether the gun is several years old or brand new, you have to take into consideration what material you're spraying before you choose your gun. Since the advent of VOC laws, the material you spray has changed too, so it's even more critical to choose the spray gun based on what you'll spray with it. For example, there are spray guns designed especially to spray clearcoats. Others are designed for primers and other heavy-bodied materials. Many painters also have a spray gun for primers and surfacers, another for basecoats and still another for clearcoats. If you can afford to have three spray guns, this is the ideal scenario. At the very least, you should consider one spray gun dedicated to spraying only clearcoats.

#### Choosing Nozzle Setups

So what nozzle setups should be used for which products? Actually, you'll achieve the best results when you refer to the paint manufacturers technical data sheets for that particular product you're spraying.

A general rule of thumb is:

- Heavy-bodied primers and primer surfacers work best when you use a nozzle size of 1.7 to 2.0.
- Basecoats should be sprayed with a 1.3 to 1.5 nozzle.
- Clearcoats should be sprayed with a 1.2 to 1.5 nozzle.
- Sealers and single-stage urethanes should be sprayed with 1.4 to 1.6 nozzles.

Understanding the product and what's needed to apply that product is very important, and many times problems can be attributed to not being aware of the basic fundamentals of choosing proper equipment for the product you're spraying.

#### Air Errors

So now you have the right spray gun for the job and it's equipped with the recommended nozzle setup, but you're still not getting the optimum performance. Many times, this happens after you buy a new spray gun, especially if it's a different brand from the one you were using. What does this have to do with it, you ask? Plenty! Maybe you don't have enough air to properly run your spray gun. The fact of the matter is, PSI (pounds per square inch) doesn't matter at all. The air consumption of a spray gun is measured by cubic feet per minute (CFM). Air requirements for a spray gun can range from 2 or 3 CFM for a small touchup gun to as much as 18 CFM for some gravity-feed or siphon guns. The average for most popular guns is around 12. Other considerations are your air hose and fittings. If you're using a 1/4-inch air hose, you're severely hampering air flow and should consider at least a 3/8-inch inner-diameter air hose with high-flow couplers and fittings. This will dramatically improve air flow and efficiency.

## **Clean your Gun!**

The next subject is cleaning. This is the worst part about painting, but a thorough cleaning after painting is critical to ensuring your next job will go smoothly.

You need to remove the fluid needle and nozzle as well as the air cap after each use and thoroughly clean them. Flush the gun with fresh solvent after each use unless the material you sprayed was water-based, in which case, you should first flush and clean the gun with tap water, followed by gun-wash solvent.

## **How to Handle a Gun**

The final step in achieving the best job possible is proper handling of the spray gun. Different painters have different techniques and operate at different speeds, but it's important to hold the spray gun perpendicular to the surface of the car and to keep it at the proper distance.

Some painters don't hold the gun perpendicular to the surface until they've passed the end of the panel. Toward the end of the panel, they tend to stop the gun and twist their wrist to point the gun to the end of the panel instead of moving their entire arm the length of the panel (much like a brush-stroke-type of method, as if they were painting with a brush). Because of this, the end of the panel does not receive the same even wet coat it would get from extending the gun the entire length of the panel.

A little fine tuning to the paint gun you have may well be all you need to turn in that top notch paint job.