

“Eliminate Airbrush Air Bubbles”



The problem of bubbles coming back up into the color cup or bottle (**picture 1**) occurs when air and paint mix at the point slightly in front of the nozzle. Or, that's the way it's supposed to be. Needless to say, if there is any gap in the paint system, air is going to find it. Also, air in the paint system may show up as a fluttering sound or in the form of pulsing spray.

Fist; make sure that the nozzle cap (**picture 2**) is on all the way. Next, eliminate any build-up of paint that will deflect air into the tip of the nozzle (hope for this because it's the easiest thing to fix). The nozzle is supposed to protrude from the nozzle cap a short distance, but if (**picture 3**) it has been shaved or is the wrong nozzle for the airbrush, the tip may remain inside the nozzle cap.

If your airbrush is absent a nozzle (please don't ask how I know this) it will blow the cap off the brush followed by, disastrously, any paint reserves in the airbrush. In fact, bottle-fed airbrushes will eject plastic bottles with enough force to break them.

The most common location of a leak occurs is where the nozzle screws into the body of the airbrush. The reason plumbers use pipe dope when connecting metal pipes is that water at three to five PSI will work its way through a gap that is several microns wide. Air at 40 PSI will find its way through gaps that are smaller than that! A strong preventive measure for air leaks is to apply a small dab of soft wax (bee's wax or Chap Stick) on the threads of the nozzle before you attach it. This will seal the gaps and make the nozzle easier to remove. Select the bee's wax if the airbrush is used for food service.

Now, if you've been a less than honorable person, been mean to your dog, or have recently insulted a witch doctor, the most likely cause is damage to the tip of the nozzle. You can test this by changing nozzles or by inspecting the tip using a 10-power jeweler's loupe. A perfect, undamaged nozzle will show a smooth taper to its tip, and a clean, round opening. If you detect cracks, ragged edges, a flaring out of the tip, or anything that appears misshapen, you'll likely have to replace the part.

Almost invariably, air leaks in the color cup are nozzle related, and you'll notice that bubbles don't result until you pull back on the trigger of the airbrush. Hey, the good news is that it's generally repairable.

However, there are two causes that usually signify time to replace your airbrush. If your airbrush has a floating nozzle, such as the Iwata Eclipse or Paasche VL. If scratches appear in the hold that the nozzle fits into, you'll experience air leaks there. You may be able to extend the life of the airbrush by sealing the affected areas with soft wax to the base of the nozzle.

Airbrushes with screw-in nozzles may be cracked at the base where the nozzle screws in the stem. This happens when the airbrush is dropped or the stem is bent. Sadly, there is no known cure for that!