

Painting your Dragon RC Sailboat

The Dragon sailboats are a clean palette for the creative skipper. Photos from regattas show often show this creativity in the custom paint jobs or adhesive decorations. Putting a distinctive graphic design on your boat serves to provide an easily identifiable boat at a distance but also serves as a source of pride for a paint scheme well done. But for someone that has never painted a model sailboat this article will describe the process a professional painter takes with his boats.

Larry Cobb has been employed building and painting full size boats since 1963. He had 20 years' experience as a paint and graphics expert for Hallet Boats, which is known for its fantastic graphic designs. He is now retired and enjoys building, painting, and sailing RC model sailboats. Currently, he is designing graphics and painting his own RC sailboats and the sailboats of his friends in the Sun City Model Sailing Club in Georgetown, Texas.

Below is the process Larry has used to paint his sailboats.

1. You will need to draw out the design you intend to put on the boat. Whether that design is very simple or complex it is still useful to fully flesh out what you intend to put on the boat and where.
2. Tape off your design. Use 233 3M green masking tape. It comes in several different widths from 1/8" to 3/4". This tape pulls off very cleanly and leaves clean paint lines. Be sure to ensure that the tape is very securely adhered to the boat prior to painting. Rub the tape edges to insure that no paint bleeds under the tape edge.
3. Use masking paper to cover large areas of the hull you do not want to get any overspray on.
4. Rough the area you intend to paint with 400 grit sand paper. The idea behind roughing up the hull is to give the paint can adhere better to the surface. Use tack cloth to insure that all sanding residue is removed from your hull before you begin the painting process.
5. Be sure your temperature is moderate before attempting to paint, usually between 60 degrees and 70 works well. Obviously, you can paint outside these ranges but your results will be more haphazard.
6. Spray the area to be painted. I use Plastic-Kote lacquer by ValSpar as my paint of choice. It is important to spray evenly. Also, try to keep the spray can a consistent distance from the area being painted so that you are applying the paint in a consistent depth. This will help prevent runs or drips in the painted surface.
7. After the paint dries completely you can remove the masking tape. Usually you will need to wait about an hour before attempting to remove the tape so that the paint is dry enough for the tape to release cleanly.
8. Many skippers like to add pin striping to the paint scheme. Look for pin stripe tape in widths of 1/16" or 1/8" for the simplest way to add pin stripes.

9. Put on clear coats. Remask with tape 1/8" from the graphics. This insures a gap so you don't scuff the graphics/ pin striping. Scuff the painted hull with grey scotchbrite sanding block. The paint should start to dull a bit. Clean again with tack cloth to remove any sanding residue. Begin spraying light coats of clear coat. You will coat the hull up to six times with clear coat. Be sure to let dry between each coat.

10. Wait 24 hours before sanding. Wet sand with 2000 grit 3m sandpaper and then sand again with 3000 grit 3m sandpaper. This is very fine grit paper. The paper should be soaked for a while (15-30 minutes) so the paper is completely wet. Sand the hull in alternating straight lines. You are looking to remove fine scratches. Take your time. This step is not removing material like dry sanding so light pressure.

11. Buff the hull with a light buffing compound and a small buffer with a foam pad. This will put the shine on your hull.

12. Show off that DF95 or DF65 with its spiffy new design.