

Painting a Fiberglass Boat

Painting fiberglass, whether it is found on a boat, storage tank, decorative piece or elsewhere, is easy as long as it is prepared correctly. Paint tends not to stick to slippery surfaces, so roughing up the surface is critical. Using the proper coatings for fiberglass will also go a long way toward ensuring your success. Once you understand the special needs of fiberglass, the painting process is simple.

Prepare the Surface:

If you are going to paint fiberglass, you need to make sure that the surface is perfectly clean. Any grease, oil or dirt--even oil from your own hands--can prevent the paint from sticking properly. Check for roughness also. If the surface of fiberglass is rough, this can prevent adherence as well. Sand it carefully with fine, wet sandpaper. Remember to clean the fiberglass thoroughly after you sand it. Allow it to dry before continuing.

Prime the Bare Surface:

If the fiberglass is bare, apply a coat of Hawthorne Marine Primer before applying the finish coat. Sand the primer with fine sand paper, clean the surface thoroughly, let it dry, then apply the final coat.

Applying the Paint:

Use a HVLP (high-volume, low pressure) gun with compressed air to apply the paint to your fiberglass. This gun allows you to apply more paint to the surface (high volume) without putting a lot of paint particles into the air. Your lungs and the fiberglass surface will appreciate it. Wear protective clothing, eyewear, and breathing mask. Be sure your work area is well ventilated.

Instructions:

1. Remove or tape over any parts or hardware that won't be painted such as the bang irons, ventilators, name plates and registration numbers. Use a clean cloth pad to wipe the boat down with a wax removing solvent. This removes any residue left from any polishes that were ever applied to the boat's surface.
2. Look for any scrapes, dings or gouges on the boat's surface that need repair. Fill these areas with an epoxy filler and allow to dry. Sand the filler down with 60-grit sand paper and a dual action sander. Sand again with 80-grit sand paper to smooth the scratches made with the 60-grit paper.
3. Apply a thin coat of Hawthorne Marine Primer to the boat's surface with a roller or brush. Cover the entire area of the boat that will be painted. The primer won't look great at this point, but as long as the entire surface is covered with a thin coat it will look good after paint is applied. Begin painting within 2 hours of applying the primer so that the primer is still fresh.
4. Paint the boat with the 2-part urethane paint. Apply the first thin coat of paint with a paint roller. Immediately follow this with another thin coat applied with a foam brush to smooth the marks left by the roller.