

HOW TO PAINT AIRCRAFT BUILT WITH FLITE TEST FOAM

BY RUSS POND

Quite a few RVRC Club members as well as many people outside of our club have had the experience of building aircraft either from Flite Test or built with sheet foam purchased from Flite Test. If you have done this and wanted to paint the aircraft, you may or may not know that the typical cheap Rust-Oleum 2X paint that most people use does not stick very well to either Flite Test foam or some other brands of foam. Some guys usually let the paint “cure” for several days before additional working on the aircraft. However, I have found that this does not always help. The main problem is that if you want to mask any of the painted surface to spray another color on part of the plane, quite often, even though you leave the 1st paint several days before masking, the masking tape used will most of the time lift the original first paint coat. This is shown in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1

Due to this really annoying problem, I have done enough experimentation to mostly solve this problem as follows:

- 1) I have found that it really helps before painting the model to sand all the surfaces to be painted with 180grit sandpaper, making sure to sand any low spots on flat surfaces.
- 2) The next thing is to prime all the surfaces to be painted with one of the two paints shown in Figure 2. These are Rust-Oleum Automotive Primer and Filler (also known as Hi-Build Primer by automotive people). I also found that the 1st primer coat should be applied to just cover the surface completely, and then leave the paint for ½ Hr. before applying a 2nd primer

coat. The reason being that if primer is applied too thick, it is likely to separate the foam from it's paper coating .

3) (Don't ask me how I know.)



Figure 2

- 4) After priming all of areas of the plane to be painted, I waited at least 3 days before further painting.
- 5) The next step is to light sand the entire primed paint surface and wipe all dust off the sanded surface..
- 6) After that the masking process of adjacent sections to protect from overspray of the next color can be done. After applying the primer as above, I found the best tapes to use for masking is either the 3M Low Tach Blue or Frogtape Yellow. The other practice that helps, and is known by many builders, is dragging each section of tape adhesive across your shirt or equivalent before applying.

- 7) Figure 3 & 4 show some scrap Flite Test foam pieces that were primed as explained above. Then part of each piece was sprayed with a 1st 2X Color wanted. After 3 days I masked with pieces of the 3M Blue Low Tach or FrogTape Yellow tapes on the 1st Color. Then the samples were sprayed with some Rust-Oleum 2X topcoat paint with the 2nd Color. You can see that when the tape was carefully removed, there was no lifting of the 1st Color coats.

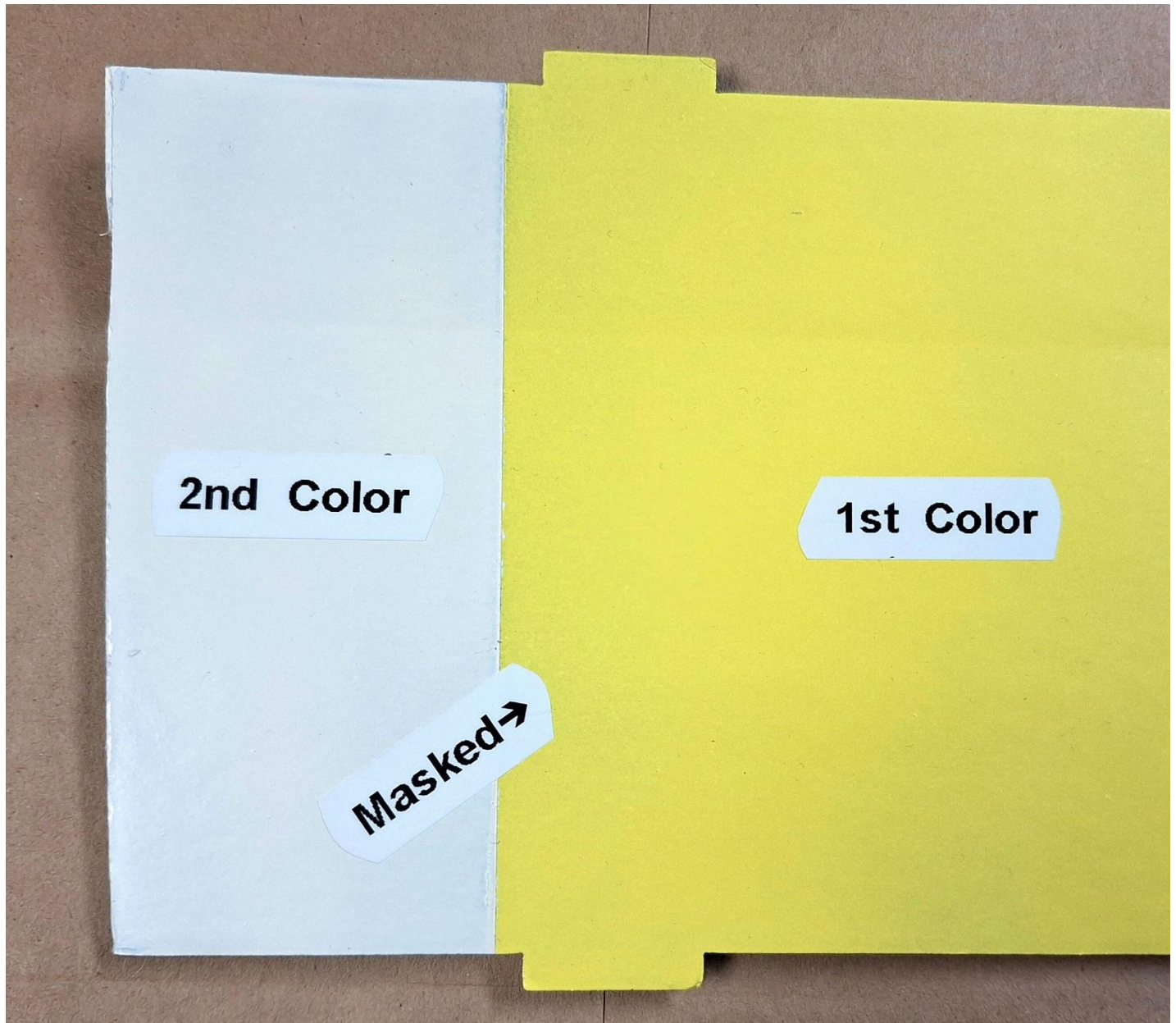


Figure 3



Figure 4

You can see that using this automotive primer really helped eliminate the problem of the masking tapes lifting the previous paint coat.