

How to Paint Flames

Downloaded from www.customflamepainting.com

Your Online Source for a comprehensive How To section on Flame painting.

Since 1997, this has been the most informative "Flames How-To" on the Internet. We hope this truly helps you customize your bike, street rod, or anything else you want to flame. The step-by-step below show will show you the basics on getting the job done and getting it done right!

Keep in mind, these are just the **basics** to help get you started. There are many different, advanced and updated ways of doing a flame or graphic job. But for the beginner, this should definitely get you going.

This section was revised back in July of 2002.

Quick Links

- [Print these Practice flames to help get you started](#)
- [READ this before proceeding](#)
- [How To Help](#)
- [Materials needed for the How-To](#)
- [Step One-Before we start](#)
- [Step Two-Prepping before we paint](#)
- [Step Three-Spraying the basecoat](#)
- [Step Four-Laying out the Flames](#)
- [Step Five-Taping up the Flames](#)
- [Step Six-Before we spray](#)
- [Step Seven-Spraying the Flames](#)
- [Step Eight-Clearing](#)
- [Step Nine-Wetsanding](#)
- [Step Ten-Buffering](#)



Tip: Before you even start, be sure that you have your bike parts securely fastened so you don't end up a mess later on.

One of the first things you will need to do is to remove all chrome and anything else in the way of your paint and flames.

You also want to make sure that your tank/fender is securely fastened throughout the sanding and painting steps. Here, I used a 2x4 hanging access two 55 gallon drums. I also wrapped them with masking paper (you can use newspaper here) to keep any type of splinters or debris from flying in the paint. Hanging the parts on a 2x4 also keeps the bottom of the sides from touching anything so the clear will not adhere itself to another surface.

[Tank Photo](#) | [Fender Photo](#) | [Bonus Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)

Step One

Before we start

These are the parts before we start. Since the pinstripes are located under the clear, we will need to respray the tank. The fender does not have any stripes on it, but we are going to refinish it anyway, just to make sure both blacks are the **exact** same color.

Step Two

Prepping before we paint



Tip: You will know when your done sanding the original finish when you don't have any shiny spots showing. This will allow fro proper adhesion for your new paint

Once you have completed step one, you will need to start sanding. Since the tank and fender were in excellent shape, we simply used 1000 wetsand paper to sand both parts. A simple spray bottle of water (with a few drops of dish soap).

Make sure where the pinstripes are that you do not feel any type of line. If you do, you will need to block this out before proceeding. If you can feel any hint of this line, you will see it in the final product. You can accomplish this by using a **3M hand block**. Make sure there no shiny spots let on the surface. Once you feel you have it sanded properly, blow off the surface with an **air-blower** and at the same time wipe down the surface with a clean **lint free towel**.

When you are all done, you can tape up any holes that you do not want to get paint into. You will need to use a high grade quality **3/4" and 1 1/2" masking tape** to do this. I suggest using 3M tape. In these photos and all the rest of the How To photos, you will notice the "lime green" on the parts. This is simply a version of 3M tape that they have.

[Tank Photo](#) | [Fender Photo](#) | [Bonus Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Tip: When spraying basecoat, you do not have to spray wet coats (unlike enamels). Spraying medium wet coats is sufficient. Remember, the paint will dry to a dull finish anyway.

You do this by dampening a lint fee rag (I use Krew-400 towels-avail at your local paint store), wiping the surface to be painted, then going over it with a dry lint-free rag. Once you have wiped it down, blow off your tank and fender, at the same time you will need to tack it off with a good quality **tack rag**. Tack off the surface one last time before you spray (without blowing it off). This will ensure a good clean surface to spray on.

Mix the basecoat according the the manufacturers instructions. Each one is different, so be sure and read them. In this How-To, I will be using the **PPG Global line**. You are now ready to spray! In this step, I only needed to spray a couple of coats, mainly to hide the pinstripe color. I went ahead a sprayed a coat on the rest of the tank and fender just to give it a consistent look. As with most basecoats, the paint will dry very dull (your clear gives you the shine) and will dry rather quickly, usually within 10-20 minutes). It is best to use a basecoat rather than any type of enamels. Two good reasons are it dries quickly and also it is easier to work with.

[Tank Photo](#) | [Fender Photo](#) | [Bonus Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Step Four

Laying out the Flames

Tip: Don't rush the layout! This will make or break your flame job

Tip 2: If this is your first flame job, you might want to spray a coat of clear over the black, then proceed to do your flames. Why do this you ask. If you happen to get a little flame color over the bare black basecoat and you try wiping (or sanding) it off, not only will the flame color come off, the black will to. So the clear will give you protection. Make sure you wet sand the clearcoat, then you can do your flames.

Once you give your basecoat time to dry, you are ready to layout the flames. I'm sure by now you have printed out my [practice flames](#) to give you a better idea of how to do flames. One the the best tips I can give you on the layout is to be as *smooth* and free-flowing as possible.

Hopefully before you begin your project, you have a real knack at it. To layout your flames, I suggest using **3M's 1/8" fine line plastic tape**.

This comes in a blue color (don't use the green fine line tape that 3M offers as this does not curve and stick as good). The way I layout flames is I do not make the flames symmetrical, but I **do** try to give it the appearance that it is by making my "ovals" between the flames as close in appearance as possible on both sides. In other words, you do not want your flame job to look "heavy" or lopsided on one side. You can view a very good example of what I mean [here](#). When laying out your flames, do not let your "tips" get too skinny, keep in mind that your flames will be **on the inside** of the 1/8" tape. Don't let the 1/8" tape fool you into thinking that this is part of your actual flame job. So stay focused on the **inside** of your 1/8" tape. You will also notice the In the photo above, you will see how I am holding and lying the tape, using one finger to guide it onto the surface.

[Tank Photo](#) | [Fender Photo](#) | [Bonus Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Tip: Double check your taping once your done. If you leave any air pockets, your flame color will get on your basecoat. Also only use good grade masking tape. It does make a difference!

Once you cover the outside of your flames with the **1/4"**, you will now move on and start taping up the rest of the areas with **3/4" tape** and fill in the bigger areas with 2" tape. You will notice that you will not be able to do tight curves the 3/4". There is a technique in which you can do a curve without actually trying to stretch and rip the tape. To do this, you will need to place your index finger on the side of tape that will be closest to the 1/4" you just laid. As you are laying the tape down, as you move (about every 1"), press the tape down. Hard to explain, but it works great. I will try to get a photo of this. You will also notice in the "Fender" photo on this step that on the smaller areas that need to be taped up, I simply used the blue 1/4" tape instead of cutting smaller 3/4" masking tape. Once you have the are you do not want to get flame paint on, press all the tape down very good. Go on to Step 6.

[Tank Photo](#) | [Fender Photo](#) | [Bonus Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Step Six

Before we spray

Tip: Make sure you tack off your flames before you spray them. A dust particle under your flames may be hard to buff out later.

Now that you have your flames laid out and your happy with them, you need to double-check your work. Careful go over all your tape work to make sure that you don't have any tape holes that over spray can get onto your base with.

I added an extra photo on this step to show you how I marked the center of the fender before I laid out and taped up the flames. You can do this with anything your flame to give you a good reference point of where the center is. You can now begin getting ready to spray the flames. Lightly tack off the open flame areas to ensure a good clean surface. You will not need to re-sand the basecoat since this is fresh and the new paint will adhere to it anyway. If you happened to spray the basecoat the night before or earlier, you might want to lightly scuff it down with a gray **scotch-brite pad** or simply spray some **adhesion promoter**. This will ensure a good adhesion. Once you feel you are all set to spray your flames, move on to Step Seven.

[Tack Rag Photo](#) | [Fender Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Tip: If you are spraying your flames a solid color such as yellow, orange, red, over a basecoat such as black, it is a good idea to first lightly spray a coat of white first. Newer paints do not cover that good, so spraying a coat of white first will make your color cover quicker, thus preventing too much paint buildup

It does not take a lot of paint to do ghost flames. You could basically do this job with 1/2 pint of the pearl/blending clear mixture. You will then need to reduce this about one to one with reducer. Most likely medium will do the trick-of course it depends on the temperature.

It shouldn't take more than 2-3 coats of pearl. Make sure you don't go overboard with the pearl. It's very easy to do so. You will hardly even notice it on your masking tape. It might be a good idea to pull a very small piece of tape next that is directly next to the black (make sure the tape is in a discreet area-possibly the lower front of the tank). This way you can keep in eye on how many coats you really need. The more coats you lay on, the more your flames will stand out. This will also increase your paint thickness.

[Step Seven Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Tip: A simple way to tell if you are ready for your next coat is to touch a section of tape that has clear on it. Now pull your finger away, if the clear is "stringy", it is not ready. It must feel tacky without being stringy.

So check very carefully. If you do have overspray, you can **carefully** use a piece of **2000 grit sandpaper** to sand it off.

Step Seven

Spraying the Flames

In this How-To, I am spraying ghost flames. Ghost flames, are of course flames that do not stand out as much as a regular flame job. To accomplish this, I used a mixture of about one to one Toner number D763 which is blue pearl and the other part being D895 Blending Clear which is basically a transparent basecoat.

Step Eight

Clearing

Once you have your flames sprayed you can now, carefully remove all your masking tape. Be sure and leave the original tape that cover the areas you do not want to get paint on. Double check to make sure you did not get any pearl overspray on the black, because once you clear it, it's a done deal.

You are now ready to clear. Mix the clear according to the instructions. In this How-To, I used PPG's 893 clear with the 884 hardener. I also use the **871 (medium) reducer**. You will want to spray a medium wet coat as your first coat, let it tack up. Depending on the weather, usually about 5 minutes should do it.

On your next coat, you will need to spray it on a little wetter, you will now start seeing the depth of both the black and your flames. :) If it does not look right to you, you did not apply the clear wet enough, or if you have runs...

After you let the second coat dry, you can apply your third and final coat. Even though the PPG clear is a 2 coat clear, I usually add a third since I know I am going to do buffing on it anyway. If your flame edge is thick, this third coat will give you a little insurance on flattening the edge out.

[Tank Photo](#) | [Fender Photo](#) | [Bonus Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Tip: Although wetsanding and buffing is not necessary, it will definitely make your job stand apart from a normal paint job. Not only will it take out any dirt specs you may have gotten, it will flatten your paint job out, thus even giving your flames and paint more depth.

You will need to use a piece of **3M 2000 grit paper** to wetsand your clear with. Use your spray water with soap mixture you used in Step 2 of the How-To. Keep the surface well watered while wetsanding. Make sure the surface remains clean to prevent any deep scratches that won't buff out. Once you get an area dull, you can double-check it by running your **3M black squeegee** across the surface. If you have an edge on your flames, you can use a soft rubber block with the 2000 grit around it to flatten it out. Again, you can run your squeegee across the edge to see if you have flattened it enough. Once your tank and fender are completely dull, you have succeeded in wetsanding your parts. Now for buffing!

[Spray Photo](#) | [Squeegee Photo](#) | [Bonus Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)



Tip: Be sure and use good grade buffing materials when finishing your flame/paint job. You've come this far, no need to skimp on materials now. After all, it will make a difference on the final outcome of your flame job.

If you do the following in a step by step process, you will come out with a super nice gloss.

First, you will need to use your 3M rubbing compound with your foam pad setup. If you have a variable buffer set this to around 1800 RPM's or "High" if you do not. Apply the compound to both the pad and the part, then start polishing. Keep doing this until **all** 2000 scratches are gone. Don't

Step Nine

Wetsanding

Why buff it when you have a shiny finish? Well, for one, you can flatten out your flame edge. With a ghost flame job, the edge should hardly be noticed anyway. Another reason, is that when properly buffed, the flatness of the paint will even give you more depth

Step Ten

Buffing

Now, time to bring the shine back. If you don't have a professional buffer, be sure to rent or borrow one. It is important to use a good grade buffer (not a drill setup). I use a **Mequires foam pad** for buffing and a **black waffle pad** for the final polishing. I also use the 3M Finesse III polishing products to do the buffing a polishing with.

push down hard, letting the buffer do all the work.

Once you have your fairly shiny, with all the 2000 scratches gone, you are now ready to change pads. You will need to use the black waffle pad along with the [foam polishing glaze](#). This not only will remove all the compound's haze, but bring your parts back to a nice high gloss finish. If you have a variable buffer, you will need to now change this to about 1400 RPM's or "Low". Apply the foam glaze to the pad and also the part. Move the buffer slowly while keeping an eye of where you have been. Making sure you do not burn through the paint. You will need to do this until your tank and fender achieve a very high gloss.

To finish out the process, you can use [3M's Imperial Hand Glaze](#) to apply by hand. You do this as though you are waxing your parts. Rub it on, let it slightly haze, then wipe off.

You can now remove the final pieces of tape, carefully pulling off the tape so the compound does not go into your tank.

I suggest not putting a coat of wax on your fresh parts for about 3-4 weeks. This will give your paint a chance to properly cure. In the meantime, if you have a show or something you need to give it that "waxed" look, go ahead and use the Imperial Hand Glaze.

[Step Ten Photo](#) | [Back to Top](#)

There you have it! The basics on getting your motorcycle parts painted and flamed. I hope you enjoyed this section of [Custom Flame Painting by Attitude Custom Painting](#). If you still don't want to tackle your paint/flame job, feel free submit our [Estimate Request Form](#) for a Free price quote.

If you have any questions, [comments](#) :) on this please post them on the [Flames Board](#).

If you enjoyed the How-To, please post them on the [Guest Book](#)