



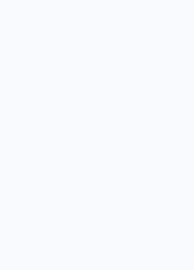
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How do you prime an airless sprayer

Airless sprayers are often the backbone of your painting work, especially for handling large volumes of painting quickly and efficiently. There are a variety of common problems that you can encounter with an airless paint sprayer which are laid out here. Another problem that can often occur with an airless paint sprayer is that material won't spray when the sprayer is turned to the spray cycle, but it will typically spray if the pump is placed in dump mode. If this is the issue that you are having with your airless paint sprayer the following tips will help you decide which of the two issues you're having and how to properly fix them. **First Airless Paint Sprayer Test - Do you hear the pump trying to run?** The first question is whether you hear the pump running when you turn it on. If the pump is not trying to run that would suggest that it is falsely determining that pressure is already appropriate in the pump, which is obviously not accurate as the pump has no pressure built up. If this is the issue you experience the most likely cause is that the transducer is worn out. The transducer signals to the airless pump that pressure is needed and signals to run the pump to build pressure. Failure to build pressure often indicates that you need to replace the transducer. **Second Test - Does the Airless Pump Not Prime or Build Pressure?** But the motor is running if the pump is running but material is not being supplied there are a few things to check for. First, check the upper and lower ball and seats of the airless pump. The ball and seats close opposite of each other allowing the material to be forced out of the airless pump and allowing you to spray. If there is material built up on either ball or if the ball and seat are worn it may prevent the ball and seat from creating a firm stop which will prevent pressure from being able to be built up. When you remove the ball and seat clean them properly and then you can set the ball against the seat and try to blow air around the ball while it sits against the seat. If you can blow air past the ball when it is seated the ball or seat are worn. You may also notice a ball and seat are worn if you find that pressure is ok on one part of the airless piston stroke but not on the other this would suggest the ball and seat on one end of your airless piston are worn or dirty preventing a tight seal. If the ball and seats on your airless sprayer are in good condition you should also check the siphon hose. If the siphon hose has a hole in it or is not tightly secured to the airless sprayer the system may not be sealed and as a result, may suck air in while trying to pick up material. This can lead to the system not pressurizing well. You will usually be able to tell if this is happening because you will hear the pump running rapidly but pressure will not build well. Knowing what can cause an airless paint sprayer to not prime or build pressure can be critical as it can help you figure out how to fix your airless sprayer and get back to painting. If you have issues with your sprayer and want assistance we offer airless paint sprayer repairs. Proper setup of your sprayer is an important step to keep it running at maximum performance and efficiency. Before operating your sprayer for the first time, or any time, always perform the pressure relief procedure to ensure your sprayer is de-pressurized. Engage the gun trigger lock. Turn the on/off switch to OFF. Turn the pressure control to the lowest setting. Reverse the tip and disengage the gun trigger lock. Hold a metal part of the gun firmly to a grounded metal pail and trigger the gun to relieve pressure. Engage the trigger lock. Turn the prime valve to the PRIME, or DRAIN, position. With the pressure relief procedure complete, it is time to prime the pump. Engage the trigger lock. Remove the tip and guard from your gun. Place the fluid intake hose into a paint pail and place the drain tube into a waste pail. Be sure the prime valve is in the PRIME, or DRAIN, position. Turn the pressure control to the lowest pressure setting. Turn the on/off switch to ON. Increase the pressure control until the motor starts. Allow paint to circulate through the sprayer until paint flows smoothly out the drain tube. Turn the on/off switch to OFF. You have now primed your pump with fluid. Next, it is time to prime the hose and gun to be ready to spray. Hold the gun against a grounded metal waste pail, disengage the trigger lock, pull the gun trigger and hold. Then, turn the prime valve to the SPRAY position. Turn the on/off switch to ON. Let the pump run until you see paint come out of the gun. Then, turn the on/off switch to OFF and release the gun trigger. Move the gun to the paint pail, pull the gun trigger, turn the on/off switch to ON and let the pump run for about 20 seconds. Then, release the trigger and allow the sprayer to build pressure. Engage the trigger lock. Screw the tip assembly onto the gun and tighten. It is recommended to use a test surface and test your spray pattern. Test patterns should be sprayed on scraps of cardboard or other waste material. To test the spray pattern, follow these steps... Turn the pressure control knob to a mid-way position. While holding the gun 12 inches from the test surface, disengage the trigger lock and spray a test pattern. If the pattern has heavy edges, often called tails, slowly increase pressure and continue to spray test patterns until the hard edges are replaced with a soft, blend-able spray pattern. After following these steps, you're now ready to spray. When spraying, be sure to follow these start up steps, as well as our safety recommendations, best practice spray techniques, and cleaning steps. Skip to main content Home Skills Painting Updated: Jul. 05, 2019 Family Handyman Learn how to use an airless paint sprayer to paint faster with perfectly smooth results. We show you how the machine works, good painting techniques and how to avoid mistakes. By the DIY experts of The Family Handyman Magazine You might also like: TBD Airless paint sprayers: Pros and Cons An airless sprayer, or a spray paint machine, simplifies painting in two ways: First, if you want to speed up a job that requires several gallons of paint, you can apply it twice as fast as with a roller or brush. And second, if you want a glass-smooth finish on woodwork or doors, the airless sprayer can lay the paint on flawlessly. An airless sprayer works by pumping paint at a very high pressure, up to 3,000 psi, through a hose and out a tiny hole in the spray gun tip. The tip is designed to break up the paint evenly into a fan-shaped spray pattern of tiny droplets. Using different tips, you can spray thin liquids like stain, lacquer and varnish or thicker liquids like latex house paint. With a little practice, you can use an airless sprayer to apply a perfectly smooth finish on doors, cabinets and woodwork. And since an airless sprayer pumps paint directly from a can or 5-gallon bucket, you can apply a lot of material in a short time. This makes an airless sprayer particularly well suited for large paint jobs, like priming bare drywall in a new house or painting a 300-ft.-long privacy fence. But before you get too excited about the benefits of spray painting, there are a few drawbacks to consider. First, the fine particles of paint don't all stick to the surface. A large percentage of the paint ends up in the air, where it can drift and settle onto everything in sight. This means you'll be wasting 20 to 40 percent of the finish, depending on the application. You'll also have to take extra time to mask off and cover up everything you want to keep paint free. Outdoor painting is especially risky. Overspray can end up on your shrubs or roof, or drift with the wind onto your neighbor's car. The other downside is the extra time it takes to flush the paint from the pump and hose and clean up the spray gun. If you're using your own sprayer or an electric paint sprayer, rather than a rental unit, you'll also have to clean the filters and install special storage fluid. And if you're spraying oil-based products, you'll have to store or recycle a gallon or two of used solvents left over from the cleaning process. But despite these disadvantages, an airless can save you a lot of time on big paint jobs and allow you to get a finish that's nearly impossible to get with a brush. Airless sprayers start at about \$200. Spending more doesn't necessarily get you more features, but it does get you a bigger, better motor and pump, which will deliver longer life and trouble-free operation. Owning a sprayer allows you to spray whenever you want and to ensure that the sprayer is clean and well maintained. Renting is a good option if you don't expect to use the sprayer very often and want to avoid the extra maintenance. You can rent an airless sprayer for about \$75 per day. Make sure the hose and pump are clean and that the filters have been cleaned or replaced. Ask for help in choosing the right spray tip for the job. Some rental stores won't allow you to spray oil-based products like lacquer, oil stain or oil paint, so be sure to ask. **Sprayer set-up:** Prime the pump **Photo 1:** Prime the pump **Place the smaller prime tube in a waste pail and the suction tube in the bucket of strained paint.** Turn the prime/spray valve to "prime." Switch on the pump. Turn the pressure valve up until the pump starts. When the paint starts flowing from the prime tube, move it into the paint bucket. **Photo 2:** Clear air bubbles **Clip the prime tube to the suction tube.** Let the pump run for about 30 seconds or until no more air bubbles come out of the tube. Whether you rent or buy an airless sprayer, there are a few key setup points. All sprayers have a screen at the intake point. Make sure it's clean. Most sprayers also have a removable filter near the pump and another one in the handle of the airless spray gun. Check both to make sure they're clean, and plan to strain your paint through a mesh filter bag to remove lumps so they won't clog the filters. Before you can start spraying, you have to prime the pump. **Photos 1 and 2** show how. You may have to repeat this process if the paint in the bucket runs out while you're spraying. **Sprayer set-up:** Fill the hose and gun **Photo 3:** Fill the hose **Hold the airless paint sprayer gun (guard and spray tip removed) over the waste bucket and pull the trigger.** Switch the valve to the "spray" setting. Let go of the trigger when paint is flowing in a steady stream from the gun. Lock the trigger and follow the "Pressure Relief Steps." **Photo 4:** Install the tip **Screw the guard assembly loosely onto the gun and align the guard at a 90-degree angle to your desired spray pattern.** Insert the spray tip until the tab is engaged. **Photo 4A:** Align and tighten the tip **Rotate the tip to face the arrow forward.** Snug the guard assembly hand-tight. Once the pump is primed, you're ready to fill the hose with paint. **Photo 3.** Then lock the trigger and relieve the pressure before installing the tip guard assembly and inserting the tip. **Photo 4 and 4A.** **Pressure relief steps** Turn off the power switch. Turn the spray/prime valve to prime. Aim the gun against the side of the waste pail and pull the trigger to release the pressure. Engage the trigger lock. Spray tips slide into a hole in the front of the airless paint sprayer gun. They're labeled with a three-digit number like 309 or 517 (these may be the last three digits of a longer model number). Doubling the first digit tells you the spray fan width with the gun held 12 in. from the surface. A 415 tip, for example, would have an 8-in.-wide fan, while a 515 would have a 10-in. fan pattern. The next two digits indicate the size of the hole in thousandths of an inch. Choose a smaller diameter hole (.009 to .013) for thin liquids like stain or varnish and a larger hole (.015 or .017) for thicker liquids like latex paint. A 411 tip would work well for spraying varnish on woodwork, while a 517 is a good size for spraying large surfaces with latex paint. **Sprayer set-up:** Adjust the pressure **Photo 5:** Adjust the pressure **Turn on the pump and move the prime/spray lever to the "spray" position.** Spray a strip of paint across a piece of cardboard to check the spray pattern. If the spray pattern has tails, the pressure is set too low. Turn up the pressure. **Photo 5A:** Retest the pattern **Retest and adjust until the paint is evenly distributed across the fan pattern** Too little pressure will result in an uneven spray pattern. And too much pressure causes excessive overspray and premature tip wear. **Photo 5** shows how to dial in just the right amount. If you're still getting "tails" or an uneven spray pattern even at maximum pressure, try using a tip with a smaller hole. If the spray pattern is round rather than narrow, the tip is worn and should be replaced. **Spray techniques** **Photo 6:** Spraying technique **Step 1** Squeeze the trigger before you reach the edge of the door. Move the sprayer quickly across the door, keeping it parallel to the surface. Release the trigger when the sprayer is past the opposite edge of the door. **Photo 7:** Spraying technique **Step 2** Overlap about half of the previously painted strip when you make the next pass with the sprayer. Keep the gun perpendicular to the surface. **Photos 6 and 7** show the correct spray techniques. Here are a few key points: Plan your spraying sequence before you start. On doors, for example, spray the edges first. Then spray top to bottom. Then spray at right angles side to side. Squeeze the trigger while the gun is off to the side, and then move it onto the work. **Photo 6.** Move the gun parallel to the surface, not in an arc. Keep the gun perpendicular to the surface, not tilted. **Photo 7.** Move fast to prevent runs. Several thin coats are better than one thick one. Overlap your strokes about 30 to 50 percent. **Troubleshooting** **Photo 8:** Clear a clogged tip **If paint stops flowing or sputters from the gun, the tip may be clogged.** Twist the tip 180 degrees. Point the gun at a scrap of paper and squeeze the trigger to clear the clog. **Rotate the tip 180 degrees to point it forward again and spray a test strip onto the scrap.** Most spray problems are a result of clogged filters, a clogged tip. **Photo 8,** or a pump that's either leaking at the packing or has stuck ball-check valves. Careful cleaning and proper maintenance will prevent most of these troubles. Other problems, such as runs and uneven coverage, are caused by using the wrong tip size or by a lack of spraying experience. As with most construction tasks, practice is the key to success. Read and follow the safety precautions included in your sprayer manual. If you rent a sprayer, ask for a list of precautions. Here are the most important ones: Keep the trigger locked and follow the pressure relief procedure when you stop spraying, before cleaning, and before servicing the sprayer or installing tips. Never put your hand in front of the sprayer tip unless the unit is off and depressurized. The high-pressure spray can inject paint under your skin, causing a serious poisoning hazard. If you do puncture your skin with the spray, get to a doctor immediately. Wear safety glasses and an approved respirator when you're spraying. Work in a well-ventilated area. **Caution:** When you're spraying flammable oil-based products, follow all grounding precautions to prevent sparks. Read your manual or ask the rental store for instructions on grounding the gun and metal pail. Originally Published: July 05, 2019



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