

# TECH TALK

**Product:** Gatorfoam®                      **Date:** November 9, 2005  
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## **Painting Gatorfoam® Products**

### **Gatorfoam® and GatorLite™**

Gatorfoam® and Gatorlite™ need no special preparation before priming or painting. The surface should be clean and free of any oil or contaminants. If the surface has become lightly soiled or scratched, it may be hand sanded with silicon carbide dry paper 180 grit or finer. After sanding, be sure to clean surface well to remove any dust particles. For optimum results, the surface should be sealed with a good primer.

Gatorfoam® and Gatorlite™ can be painted with acrylic base enamels (water base or oil base), or oil base lacquers (solvent base). Caution should be exercised when using oil base or solvent base systems to prevent contact with the polystyrene foam. These types of paints are likely to attack and deteriorate the foam core.

Any of the common methods application (spray, roller or brush) may be used.

Spray coating normally offers the best all-around results with smoother, more uniform coverage. Curtain coating is not recommended due to a bubbling action created in the paint. The bubbling is caused by an air displacement and solvent flashing situation when applying a high volume of paint so quickly. This problem may be minimized by specifying flat pigment and slower solvents in the paint or by using water base paints.



The paint system may vary depending on the individual requirement or desirability. There are currently a wide range of systems in use. These include:

High Grade System

2 coats primer  
2 coats pigmented enamel  
2 coats clear topcoat

Low Grade System

1 coat primer  
1 coat-pigmented topcoat

In cases where the foam edges might be subjected to exterior exposure, it is necessary to protect the edges from deterioration by the high intensity ultra-violet light from the sun.

It is necessary to protect to foam edge if it is exposed to UV radiation from the sun to keep them from deteriorating. A good coating of a pigmented water-base paint or similar UV barrier should be sufficient to provide this protection. Care should be taken if dark colors are used to coat the edge of the foam since they sometimes do not have a sufficient amount of UV inhibiting pigment in their formulations. With dark colors it may be necessary to use an undercoating that has a heavy load of UV inhibiting pigment or a good quality UV overcoat to achieve adequate UV protection. For exterior applications the edges must be inspected and touched up as necessary.

Drying by oxidation and evaporation is preferred. When it is possible, allow the freshly painted Gatorfoam<sup>®</sup> or GatorLite<sup>™</sup> to dry the length of time suggested by the particular paint manufacturer.

**Gatorplast<sup>®</sup>**

The solid styrene surface of Gatorplast<sup>®</sup> needs no special preparation prior to painting. The board's surface should be clean and free from dust. Sanding of Gatorplast cap sheets is not recommended. Gatorplast<sup>®</sup> can be painted with several types of paint including water-based and some solvent-based paints. Paints must be compatible with and capable of adhering to polystyrene. Contact your paint supplier for specific recommendations.

Latex or water-based enamel paints can be used with a minimum of concern about the compatibility of the paint and the cap sheets. A small area should be tested to ensure that adhesion is adequate. Solvent-based paints such as acrylics, some enamels and lacquers have been used on Gatorplast<sup>®</sup>. The paints selected have mild solvent systems and are recommended for polystyrene. In any case, it is a



good practice to prevent the foam from coming into contact with solvent-based paints. Paints should not be applied in excessively heavy coats. This will retard drying and also may trap solvents, reducing adhesion. Air-drying, following manufacturers' instructions, is recommended for all paint systems. It is a good practice to test adhesion to ensure that the paint has properly dried and cured.

Foam edges can be protected from UV exposure through the application of a water-based paint with UV barrier properties.

### **Painting Gatorblanks<sup>®</sup>**

Gatorblanks<sup>®</sup> can be painted with non-solvent based paints. Water based paints are well suited for Gatorblanks<sup>®</sup>.