

# Small-Spot Painting

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With the passage of time, things happen. Some of those things are evidenced by dings in your bodywork – and in your car's bodywork, too. One problem with fixing such spots (in the car) is that it is difficult to keep any repair from turning into a full wings-off repaint. I recently used a "low impact" approach to 3 chips on the 4/4 and they came out really well -- well enough that I thought someone else might be interested.

Now the disclaimers: 1. I am not an expert. I'm confident there are people in OhMog that know more about this than I do. I'm hoping they will provide some commentary in the OhMoggie and we'll all learn something. 2. Modern paints include some very toxic materials. I judged the procedures I used with the very small volumes of paint involved here are acceptable, but again, I'm no expert, and I'll admit that probably the sensible thing to do is to go nearer than 100 yards or so to any auto paint ever. You need to look into the issues and draw your own conclusions. Again, input from the more knowledgeable would be welcome. In any event, get the data sheets from the store or download them and read the directions. They provide some useful info.

The problem with spot paint repairs is that it is very difficult to keep them from expanding into a larger area than you really want to deal with. With a Morgan, if the job strays to the edges of the panel, the beads in the seams make it essentially impossible to get really good results without disassembling the body. Pretty soon, you are contemplating the dreaded full wings-off repaint. So what we're doing here is keeping the repair as small as possible using an airbrush and some careful blending.

The problems at hand were a self-inflicted door ding on a rear wing, a stone chip on the front wing just above the bumper, and a large chip where the corner of the bonnet contacts the radiator cowl. The depth of the chips were significant, especially the one on the rear wing which went through a skim coat or something. So, we'll consider that one.

First, base-coat/clear-coat systems are your friend. From where I'm sitting, no matter what's on your car, you want to do your spot painting with base-coat/clear-coat. The reason is that it allows you to blend the color in one place and the gloss in another. Of course, you really want the best color match you can get. I was lucky. My paint hasn't faded much and the standard color mix was close. If yours requires matching, you need a paint store with people that know what they are doing and you need to take them a door or something to match. Also,

ask plenty of questions. They can give some good advice on the choices of materials and other stuff. And, take heart, it doesn't need to be perfect to look very good.

Modern paints are amazingly easy to use; they dry incredibly quickly. You can put base-coat on primer in 15 minutes and clear-coat on base-coat in even less time. The bad news is that they are very toxic. Fortunately, we are painting a couple of square inches; paint outdoors or, for such a small amount of paint, I felt in the garage with all doors open and a fan running was OK. Either way, wear a chemical mask -- \$35 or so at Lowes. I highly recommend plastic gloves, too. A decent airbrush will save some aggravation, but a \$10-ish one from Harbor Freight will work, though you'll probably need to change a couple of the cap gaskets on the latter. All painting described here was done using the airbrush.

The chip was about half the size of a dime. I cleaned the area with solvent and then used many coats of a high build primer to fill to above the surrounding paint level. I cut a tiny sanding block about 1/2" square from some moderately flexible foam about 1/4" thick. I used this with a little 320 wet (all abrasives were wet-or-dry used wet) to level the fill to the existing finish paint level. This turned out to be the trickiest part of the entire job. The high-build primer is much softer than the finish paint, so it is difficult not to dish it out. On the bright side, the existing finish paint was not worn through the base coat. This is a part of the process that might benefit from some experienced advice. Some sort of skim coat might have been better. That said, I did manage to keep the abraded region to an area not much larger than a 50 cent piece, and that would be difficult to do with more aggressive filling procedures. I hit this area with a little 600 wet. Then the entire region a little larger than I intended to spray with the final clear coat got a pass with 1500 grit wet. A 1500 grit paper is about like a rubbing compound, so it is cleaning up the surface and providing a starting place for blending the gloss.

Next up, I put a coat of basecoat on an area just large enough to cover the area abraded with the 320. I followed this with a second coat covering a little larger area. Finally, a third coat covered a little bit larger area yet. Each of these was maybe 1/4" or so larger diameter than the previous. The idea here is that each layer is a little translucent. So as you move in from the edge to the center, the paint goes from being translucent, wherein the original paint shows through, to opaque. This provides a gradual color transition from the original to the repair color. Three coats is it. The manufacturer recommends keeping the basecoat thin.

I hit the basecoat very lightly with the 1500 for some reason I don't now recall. If there are any dust spots or the like in the basecoat, use the finest grit that will remove it.

The clear coat is done in a similar fashion as the basecoat except the first coat covers the entire area we sprayed with the last base coat. The next one covers a little larger area, and the third a little larger area yet. Just like the color blend with the base coat, we get a gloss blend with the

clear coat, and it is not in the same place as the color blend. All the better to fool the eye. As you will have noted, our spot that started smaller than a dime is now several inches across.

After drying, hit the entire area lightly with the 1500 wet. Wash off the dust and then start polishing with a medium rubbing compound. I didn't want to buy a large volume of the stuff just to let it dry up, so I just got a squeeze bottle of Turtle Wax Rubbing Compound at the local parts place. I polished by hand. It is too small an area to take chances with a buffer, in my opinion. I was very worried about polishing through the clear coat in the areas just adjacent to the repair, and if there is any kind of body edge around, well... bad stuff can happen. Anyway, the slower part is just around the edge of the paint repair. The center will polish up very quickly. The edge will come along. You want to stop just as soon as it is smoothed out to avoid going through the adjacent clear coat.

So there you are. If all went well, nobody will see your repair. If you were lucky with the paint match, even you won't see it. Wait a couple of weeks to wax. While you are waiting, have yourself a cold beverage to celebrate putting off that next repaint a few years.

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