

## **Building a Model**

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With the growing popularity of Japanese animation and comics in Taiwan, merchandise based on those media is appearing in ever-larger quantities. One of the oldest and most widespread types of this merchandise is the plastic model. Based on such long-running franchises as Gundam and Macross, plastic models are readily available in toy and department stores around the country. So, now it's time to learn how to build one!

After choosing the model you'd like to build and take it home, you first must prepare the tools you'll need. Choose a clear work area, like a table or desk, on which you will build your model. Make sure there isn't too much stuff on your work area, as you'll be dealing with small pieces that can easily be lost. You'll also need a pair of small but sharp scissors, such as modeling scissors or from a Swiss Army knife. Safety scissors for kids are too dull, and the average household ones are far too big to be useful when cutting out plastic bits. You may also want to get a modeling knife, or one of the retractable blades that most students have, to trim your pieces. Japanese model kits tend to be snap-together kits, so glue won't be necessary. You might want to have some on hand, though, just in case you break something you didn't mean to or if one of the connections isn't as tight as you'd like. If you do decide to use glue, super glue is a better choice than school glue or white glue, though rubber cement may work as well. Super glue is much more durable, but make sure you only glue pieces that you're sure you won't need to separate again! If you happen to have some handy, sandpaper or an emery board may be useful, but they're not necessary.

Now that you have your tools ready, it's time to open the box. Remove all the plastic sprues, the frames that hold the pieces before you cut them out, from the plastic bags. Each of these should have a labeling tag in the corner, generally with English letter, so you can easily distinguish between them. There may be a few smaller bags with some miscellaneous parts in them; it's up to you whether or not to take them out of the bags now, as they may be easier to lose. If you do take them out from the bags, it's best to put them in the box or into some other container so that they don't get lost.

While Japanese model kits instruction manuals are all written in Japanese, they are generally well illustrated so you can figure out what to do without having to read the explicit instructions. All the illustrated parts will be labeled, so you'll know exactly which parts to connect. They're generally labeled with the sprue letter and the piece number, such as A12, or sprue A part 12. When removing parts from the sprue,

use your pair of sharp scissors. Hold the sprue or part with one hand while using the scissors in the other. Be careful not to cut the part with the scissors though. After you cut each part out, there will probably be a little spur of leftover material on it. Here, use your modeling knife or a single blade of your scissors to carefully remove the excess. If you have it, use sandpaper or an emery board to smooth over the scar left by the knife or scissors. Just follow the instructions step by step, and take your time. Even the most complicated processes are made up of simple steps, so take it slow and everything will come together. As you finish each section, like an arm, leg or wing, put it into the box or some other container so it won't get lost or knocked off the table.

Once the model is completely assembled, it is time for the detail work. Most models come with a sheet of stickers or decals that can be added to your model to improve its looks. Generally, the manual will tell you where to put specific stickers, such as those that highlight eyes or trim. Decals, on the other hand, are generally left up to you as to where to put them. Decal sheets generally come with a number of different styles of stickers; choose a style you like and apply those stickers to your model. Military-type models tend to have decals, while models representing specific characters tend to have specialized stickers. If you are truly dedicated to making your model look better, you can paint it, but of course the kit itself doesn't come with the paint. Painting allows you to show much more detail than stickers alone, but it is much more time consuming and much harder to do properly.

With your model now looking as you'd like, find a place to display it! Many Japanese models are posable, so you can present them in a pose that you like. Giant robot models, like Gundam or Macross ones, lend themselves well to battle poses. Make enough, and you can create your own battle scenes! Just remember to dust your models occasionally, to keep them looking clean and lifelike!