

History of Airfix Plastic Model Kit Instruction Sheets

As a relative novice to collecting instruction sheets, I'm not sure as to the exact 'types' of instruction sheets (in the style of type 0, 1, 1a as with the header cards), but I know the style and format of the instructions has changed over the years. I am mainly concerned with the instruction sheets from boxed kits, less colourful than the header cards, but just as interesting to collect, and come in infinitely more styles and variants. I guess these sheets also have 'type' categories and perhaps someone could clue me in as to what they are, but here goes with my interpretation of instruction sheet types through the years.

My first model was the Airfix Folland Gnat, bought for my 6th birthday by the older boy next door, who then took great delight in taking it back off me, building it and then handing me back the finished model (unpainted and with no decals applied!) but I loved it. The header card was never returned and I have been unable (so far) to get a replacement. I was hooked on models from then on and started buying my own (along with my bother whose model-making skills can only be described as abysmal!!).

My early models included the Fairey Swordfish, Avro Anson, Armstrong Vickers Wellington and the Hawker P1127, the physical models of which have long since disappeared but for some strange reason, I carefully stored all the instructions in various empty Airfix model boxes. On cold winter evenings I would spend hours looking at these old instruction sheets, and with the aid of my copies of early Airfix catalogues, I would select, buy and then make models that I thought were interesting, if only to add to my instruction sheet collection. I also got a few sheets from friends at school and that really helped me along, along with the buildings that we bought for our model railway. I've lost several sheets along the way, I suspect my brother took some and my mother threw out a lot of 'junk' (hands up anyone else who's had this experience?), but I managed to save quite a few. I digress!

AIRFIX

CONSTRUCTION KIT

1/72 SCALE MODEL CONSTRUCTION KIT**AVRO ANSON I.**

THE AVRO ANSON I

The earliest sheets that I have (there maybe earlier types), has the Airfix name in white capital lettering, with the legend 'Construction Kit' in smaller white capitals below it on a black rectangular background in the top left hand corner. Across the top in a white-on-grey strip is the scale of the kit, followed by either 'Model Construction Kit' or some other description ('Model Car' for example). The model name appears below this in bold capitals. In a few cases, the model name also appears again in smaller print, just above the subject description. This describes the model subject, including early development, notable achievements, typical weapon loads and technical dimensions. Then followed the instructions of assembly.

INSTRUCTIONS

PAINT ALL DETAILS AND LET DRY BEFORE FIXING (SEE SECTION 4).
N.B. FOR PAINTING USE "AIRFIX" PAINTS, FOR FIXING USE "AIRFIX" POLYSTYRENE CEMENT

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ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

The assembly instructions consists of 'modules' (covering both sides of the sheet), which include a numbered and titled diagram on the left hand side, showing what each numbered part looks like, and where it should go. On the right of each 'module' is a numbered narrative, with step-by-step instructions of which parts to assemble and in what order. (Most of the assembly instructions begin with the term 'locate and cement', which was sound advice to a 7 year old who many times tried to 'cement' before 'locating!'). All relative instructions are here, including which parts should not be glued, which parts are clear plastic (not always obvious from the diagram), and which parts are optional (open/closed undercarriage). The last section of the instruction sheet always shows a 2 (sometimes 3) view diagram of the finished model, with a suggested colour scheme showing the appropriate Airfix paint numbers, and the position of relevant decals.

I note that not all instructions were printed in black ink on white paper. My only Vickers Wellington instruction sheet is printed in bright red ink, and I have a Westland Lynx in turquoise and a Porsche Carrera 6 in Royal Blue.



1/72 SCALE MODEL CONSTRUCTION KIT

HAWKER SIDDELEY HARRIER

The next style of sheet contains the first appearance on instruction sheets of the familiar 'scroll' logo. This has white italic lettering on a black 'scroll', in a white circle on a black square background. The white-on-grey strip disappeared, leaving the 'scale' description and 'subject' description clearly printed to the right.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This change also heralded the end to the assembly narrative, and separate sections for 'General Instructions' and 'Special Instructions' appeared. The assembly pictures retain their numbers but the section titles have disappeared. The diagrams included symbols to indicate which parts were optional, which were clear plastic, and which were to be glued and which were not. These also appear as a key below the General Instructions.



CEMENT
COLLE
KLEBEN



TRANSPARENCY
TRANSPARENT
TRANSPARENTE TEILE



DO NOT CEMENT
NE PAS COLLER
NICHT KLEBEN



ALTERNATIVE PART
ALTERNATIVE PIECE
WAHLWISE VERWENDBAR

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

French and German text appeared alongside English in the subject description, and the symbol keys. General/Special Instructions and the suggested colour scheme were also in all three languages.

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1/32 SCALE MODEL CONSTRUCTION KIT

GULF PORSCHE 917

The next style had another change to the Airfix logo, into the more 'art-deco' style, with a more angular 'scroll' in black on a white background. Each numbered assembly module now has the number of the module in a white triangle, and the triangle appears in the symbol 'keys'.



CEMENT
COLLE
KLEBEN



TRANSPARENCY
TRANSPARENT
TRANSPARENTE TEILE



DO NOT CEMENT
NE PAS COLLER
NICHT KLEBEN



ASSEMBLED SECTION
ASSEMBLAGE
BAUABSCHNITT



ALTERNATIVE PART
ALTERNATIVE PIECE
WAHLWISE VERWENDBAR

1



1/72 SCALE MODEL CONSTRUCTION KIT

WESTLAND-AEROSPATIALE LYNX (NAVY)

The next style had a slightly modified Airfix logo, the 'art-deco' style retained but becoming more elliptical.

Further derivations of this logo include an elliptical logo with the word Airfix in white and the rest of the 'scroll' filled in. More languages appeared, including Dutch, Italian, Norwegian & Swedish (I think!).

Of course, each range of models has different size instruction sheets, and some had extra wording on the front page. For instance, the military vehicles range has the legend 'All Airfix military vehicles are made to OO/HO Scale' along the top of the front page, and the Historical Figures has '1/12 Scale Historical Figure' in the same

place. The instruction sheets for the 54mm figures kits were also printed with colour plates, and these are among the nicest I've seen from Airfix. I also have identical instruction sheets but printed on different types of paper, one 'rough' and the other 'shiny' (we're getting really pedantic here!).

Here's a later style (under Palitoy management I think).



KAMOV
Ka-25A/C

1:72
MODEL KIT
MODELE REDUIT
MODELLBAUSATZ
KIT DI MODELLO DA MONTAGGIO
MODELO PARA MONTAR
MODEL BOUWDOOS
BYGGSATS
MODELL BYGGESETT

And here's the latest logo.....

