

Hints and Tips - Colour Guide - Vikings

By Michael Farnworth

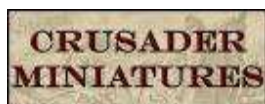
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Crusader figures (left) and Artizan figures (right) painted by Mick Farnworth

Artizan and Crusader figures are fully compatible and can be mixed in the same unit.

Item	Colour	Vallejo Model Colour
Helmet	Bronze	GW Shining Gold 61.63
Helmet	Silver	Natural Steel 70.863 or GW Chainmail 61.56
Chainmail	Silver	Natural Steel 70.863 or GW Chainmail 61.56
Armour edges	Brown	Mahogany Brown 70.846 or GW Bestial Brown 61.13
Clothing	Various (see notes)	
Leather Belt	Brown	Mahogany Brown 70.846, Flat Brown 70.984
Shoes	Brown	Mahogany Brown 70.846, Flat Brown 70.984
Sword and Spear	Silver	Natural Steel 70.863 or GW Chainmail 61.56
Javelin Shaft	Sand	Vallejo Iraqi Sand 70.819 or GW Bleached Bone 61.17
Spear Shaft	Brown	Mahogany Brown 70.846 or GW Bestial Brown 61.13



Introduction

This guide will help you to quickly paint units of Vikings to look good on a war games table. Historical notes, paint references and painting tips are included.

Historical Notes

Vikings were warriors originating from Scandinavia. The word Viking has many interpretations ranging from voyager to explorer to pirate. Vikings travelled far and wide reaching Greenland and America in the West and Russia and Byzantium in the East.

The Viking Age is regarded as starting with raids on Lindisfarne in 789 and ending with the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066. Throughout the 9th and 10th Centuries Vikings raided England, Ireland, France and Spain. Vikings settled in northern France where they became the **Normans** and also in Russia, where they were known as **Rus**.

There were various Viking kingdoms in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Beneath the kings, were **Jarls** (Earls) and beneath them the **Hersir**. The **Hersir** were local military commanders whose function could be a local governor. Their retainers and guards were referred to as the **Hird**. **Hirdmen** provided the bulk of most armies on raids and international campaigns. On raids, they were often accompanied by mercenaries and adventurers seeking loot. In times of crisis, national armies were enlarged by calling up the **Bondi**. **Bondi** were land owning farmers. In an extreme crisis, slaves, known as **Thralls** were also pressed into military service.

Among the Hirdmen were fanatics, who whipped themselves into a furious battle rage. They were known as **berserkers**. Although we think of berserk as meaning fighting mad, the word actually derives from bear-shirt. Similar troops from earlier times were the **Ulfhednar** who wore wolf skins. Both of these troop types were seen in pagan armies. As Vikings converted to Christianity, the berserker beliefs were outlawed.

In battle, Vikings adopted a defensive position known as **Skjalborg** (shield-wall). The shield wall formed a defensive barrier of closely packed men with their shields interlocking. Shield walls were often formed as a line on a ridge. Occasionally, circular shield walls were used. The shield wall was supported with a reserve of fast moving troops and archers who would try to disrupt attacks. In attack, a wedge formation called **Svinfylka** (swine-array) was often used.

Horns were used for signalling and flags denoted the position of the commanders. The most famous flags depicted a Raven.

Uniform Notes

Vikings had blonde, brown or red hair.

Spears were probably the main weapon in the shield wall. Once the attack started, axes and swords were used. Vikings are famous for double handed axes with a bearded shape. Many of the Hirdmen would have had chainmail shirts, good swords and iron helmets. Shields were round until the 11th century. Better shields had a leather face and an iron boss. Shields were often edged with hide. Poorer troops would have had plain wooden shields, spears and often a **sax** single edged short sword. Bows were popular. Slings are also recorded.

Wealthier warriors often wore very bright colours. Red, leaf green and blue were favourites Burgundy, brown, black, white and grey are also recorded. Striped trousers are also known. Poorer warriors would have been dressed in earth tones - cream, brown, mossy green and grey.

It is often easier to differentiate between spears and javelins if the spears are dark and javelins are light coloured. This simulates that javelins would be new freshly cut wood, whereas spears were kept for a long time and often stained.



Hirdmen



Berserkers and Ulfhednar



Bondi

Painting Tips

Bases

It is worth deciding on the rules that you are going to use before you start to base and paint the figures. Mass battle games often specify multiple bases to represent regiments.

For Fields of Glory, in 28mm scale you should mount four figures on a 60mm x 20mm base although it is acceptable to base 3 figures on a 60mm x 20mm base.

For Warhammer Ancients Battles, Vikings go on 20mm x 20mm squares or on 25mm x 25mm squares.

For skirmish games, most rules suggest individual bases. Some rules suggest 25mm diameter bases and some suggest 20mm diameter bases.

Plastic bases (e.g. Slottabases), wooden bases, washers or coins are all suitable. 20mm steel washers can be used with magnetic bases so that the figures can be adapted to many different sets of rules.

Metal Spears

Metal spears can be obtained from North Star or you can make them yourself. North Star makes 4 types of metal spears. These are available in packs of approximately 80 and can be found on the Artizan and Crusader websites under Modelling Materials. NSS104 is the best choice for Vikings, NSS102 can be used if cut down. NSS102 can also be used as a flagpole.



- NSS101 are thin wire javelins, 40mm long with the ends flattened and shaped into spearheads. They are also suitable for 15mm figure ranges
- NSS102 are 100mm long wire spears, with one end flattened and shaped into a spear point. These can be used as a pike or cut down for spears and javelins. You can also use them for flag poles.
- NSS103 - Wire Lances or Pikes. This wire spear is 100mm long with one end fashioned to a point rather than a spearhead. This makes them suitable to be cut down for Cavalry lances, or to be used as pikes that had more of a spiked end than a spearhead. They can also be used as flag poles
- NSS104 Wire Spears and Javelins. These wire spears are 40mm long, with one end flattened and shaped into a spearhead. The wire is the same gauge as NSS102.

Transfers

Transfers provide a quick and easy way to add complex details to models. Transfers allow detailed heraldic designs and insignia to be made easily. There are three principle types- waterslide transfers, stickers and rub on transfers. Waterslide transfers are the type provided in plastic kits of aircraft and tanks.



Little Big Man Studios- LBMS make transfers as wonderful full colour paintings miniaturised to stick on shields and flags. These require care to apply correctly, so read the instructions. LBMS transfers must be applied to a flat white surface. These figures used LBMS transfers.

Waterslide Transfers - These are the same as the items that you find in model aircraft kits. They are applied to a painted shield. There are several manufacturers and are usually simple one colour designs.

Step by Step

There are many ways to paint 28mm figures. Many people paint the clothing with a dark shade then the main colour and then a highlight colour. For wargaming, where you want to get reasonably good results quickly, it is easier to paint only the main colours and then add shade with a wash of dark transparent stain.

Here is a basic assembly and painting sequence for typical Vikings. This method is designed for painting about 20 figures at a time. The painting sequence is designed so that minor mistakes can be corrected at the highlight stage. There is no need to correct minor mistakes as you go along.

1. Remove mould risers, mismatch, and flash. Mould risers are typically found on hands, elbows, feet and weapons. Sometimes they can be flicked off with a fingernail but usually tweezers or needle nosed pliers are needed. Occasionally they must be filed away with a needle file.
2. Before you start to assemble the figures decide on whether you want to paint the shields on the figure or separately. If the shield is large and close to the body, painting the body is difficult. With Vikings, it is probably easier to add the shields after you have painted the body.

TIP - With Vikings, it is much easier to add the shields after you have painted the body.

3. Sand the base flat. Easiest way is to place a sheet of coarse sandpaper on a workbench. Hold the figure firmly and vertically in your right hand and push it over the sand paper. Two or three strokes should be enough to give a flat base. The base is flat when the underside is covered in scratches from the sandpaper.
4. I used metal spears NSS 102 for the flagpole and NSS 104 for the spears. These can be obtained from Artizan and Crusader. Assemble the spears on the figures using cyanacrylate adhesive (superglue).
5. Glue the figure to a base. If you are going to use individual bases, this will be the final base. Use cyanacrylate adhesive (superglue) for a permanent bond. If you are going to use multiple bases, use a coin as temporary base so that you can hold the figure for painting. For temporary bases, use PVA glue, as it is easy to remove later.
6. If you are using slotted bases, glue on some small squares of thin plastic card to cover the slot.
7. Using epoxy putty (e.g. Milliput), blend the figure base into the base.



8. Prime and undercoat the figure. This can be done with brush on enamel paint (e.g. Humbrol Matt Black) or with a spray paint (e.g. GW Chaos Black Spray). For plastic figures spray undercoat usually works well. Metal figures often need touching up afterwards as the spray rarely reaches into the recesses. A black undercoat is usually easiest as it also acts as the darkest shade.

TIP - It can be difficult to get the spray paint on the under surfaces of the figure. A simple method is to lay the figures on their side on a paper and spray. When the paper has dried to matt black, turn the figures over and spray again. Then stand the figures upright and spray from all sides.

9. I sorted out the figures in chainmail armour and put them to one side. Next, I spray painted all of the rest in brown. This saves time later as you do the base, belts, hair, spears, scabbards, shoes and straps in one go.



10. Paint the back of the shield brown. Try to leave the dimple unpainted. A good trick is to put a small blob of Blu-tack in the dimple and then spray the shields.



11. Drybrush the helmet, spear point and sword in a steel colour. This is done first so that you do not need to be careful about covering other areas.

TIP - use a cocktail stick to smear a small amount of paint onto a piece of cardboard. Brush the paint out using a largish brush (I use a no 6 brush with fairly stiff bristles.) so that there is a very small amount of paint on the brush. Then brush in several directions across the figure.

12. Paint the hands and face with a basic flesh colour (GW Dwarf Flesh is a good base coat for flesh). Highlight with a quick damp brush of a lighter flesh tone (e.g. GW Elf Flesh).



13. With irregular armies such as Vikings, a variety of clothing colours looks best. To do this task quickly - sort out the figures into groups before painting. Then paint the groups in a sequence - e.g. group A gets blue trousers, group B gets grey trousers, group c gets green trousers and group D gets red trousers. Next, sort the figures into new groups and do the same again for the vests or tunics.

TIP - Decide on a colour scheme before you start. I chose Turquoise, Light Green, Blue, Burgundy, Grey and Sand for Vikings. For the better armoured troops, I also added bright Red.

14. Shade the whole figure a dark wash applied with a brush (Army Painter Strong Tone or Vallejo Transparent Smoke 70.939 or GW Devlan Mud Wash).



TIP - Army Painter Strong Tone worked very well. Be careful not to let it pool too much or they look like they have had a mud bath. I prefer the result from a brush as the results from a dip is rather dark. Dipping is also very messy. Note that Army Painter is an oil-based gloss varnish and needs at least 24 hours to dry.

TIP - For a more sophisticated result, use different coloured washes in different areas. (GW Devlan Mud on the bronze parts, GW Sepia Wash on the flesh and wood and GW Badab Black Wash on the silver.

15. Using a fine brush and dilute paint, paint the eyes as a horizontal white dash.
16. Dot the eyes with black or dark blue. A cocktail stick can be used instead of a brush.
17. Transfers - Add the transfers according to the manufacturer's instructions.

TIP - I like to finish the shields to a reasonable level before gluing them to the figure. Glue the shield to the figure before you start the highlight process.

LBMS transfers - Spray the front of the shield with two coats of GW Skull White spray. Cut out the transfer from the shield. Remove the clear backing paper and stick the transfer to the shield, using the centre hole to line up with the boss. For best results, leave the shield for a few days before you paint the boss and the rim.



Waterslide Transfers - If you are going to add waterslide transfers, you will need to paint the shield in the final colours, add highlights and then apply some varnish. A thin coat of spray varnish is usually easiest. Then cut the designs from the sheet and wet the transfer. Slide the transfer onto the shield and position it with a wet paint brush.

18. Glue on the shield. To ensure a good bond, scrape the paint off the hand where it is glued to the shield dimple. Superglue Gel works well.



19. Touch up any mistakes and add highlights as desired.
20. Varnish with a spray of gloss varnish to protect the figure. This is not necessary if you have used Army Painter Strong Tone. After this has dried overspray with matt varnish.
21. Flags - At one time, flags were cast onto the figures and very difficult to paint. Now paper flags are very easy. There are several websites which have flags available to download free of charge.

To make a paper flag, simply print out the chosen design onto ordinary printer paper. A laser printer produces the best results because the image is very sharp and the inks are water resistant. Here, a North Star NSS102 long spear is used as a flagpole. Cut out the flag carefully and fold it in the middle.

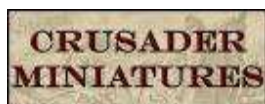
Paint a thin layer of PVA glue on the inside surface and join the two halves taking care to line up the edges. Start from the edge farthest away from the centre and close the flag towards the fold line. Don't forget to insert the flag pole before you finish closing the loop. The flag can be bent and shaped to look like it is waving in the wind before the glue dries. This flag pole has a bead to support the flag. The flag is not glued to the pole and can be rotated. For a final professional result, paint the edges and paint over some parts of the flag so that the shading effects match your style of figure painting.



22. Decorate the base. The easiest way is to paint on PVA glue and dip the base in sand. I glued on the sand in two stages. The first time, I covered the upper surface of the base with PVA and dipped it in sand. Once the first stage was dry, I added more glue and sand to make sure that the step left by the plastic base was hidden. Once the glue is dry, shade the base with a brown wash mixed with a little PVA glue. This also fixes the sand.
23. Highlight with a pale sand colour (GW Bleached Bone 61.17) lightly dry-brushed onto the sand.
24. Add static grass



Viking warband using Crusader and Artizan figures, painted by Mick Farnworth



Further Reading

Books

General Military

Colonel Tim Collins: **Soldier - A Visual History of the Fighting Man** (Dorling Kindersley 2007)

This giant coffee table book describes soldiers from Greek Hoplites up to Modern Western Infantry. 45 soldiers are described in lavish detail. The original 2007 version is 30x25 cm. There is a 2009 compact version which is 25x22 cm. Vikings are described in 12 profusely illustrated pages.

The Vikings Recreated in Colour Photographs by Nurmman, Schulze and Verhülsdonk
1999. Europa Militaria Special No 6, Crowood Press.

This is one of my favorite books. It contains nearly 100 pages of colour photographs of re-enactors and museum reconstructions.

Armies of the Dark Ages by Ian Heath
2nd Edition 1980, Wargames Research Group.

In the early 1980s, Phil Barker and Ian Heath of Wargames Research Group published a series of books covering armies throughout history. These remain a valuable reference source today, so much so that some of the books sell for ridiculous prices. Luckily, *Armies of the Dark Ages Rome* is still available from www.wrg.me.uk.

Osprey books

Osprey Elite 3: The Vikings Ian Heath, Angus McBride
This book describes the history of the Vikings.

Osprey Men-at-Arms 85: Saxon, Viking and Norman Terence Wise Gerry Embleton.
An older book which covers the Dark Age armies of Western Europe..

Osprey Warrior 3: Viking Hersir 793-1066 AD Mark Harrison, Gerry Embleton.
This book describes the tactics and appearance of Viking warriors. It focuses on archaeological evidence includes detailed drawings of helmets, swords, axes, spears and shields are not in the compilation.

Osprey General Military: The Vikings Magnus Magnusson.
As far as I can tell, this contains the full texts of *Elite 3 The Vikings*, *Warrior 3 Viking Hersir* and *New Vanguard 47 Viking Longship*. Most of the illustrations are also included but not the detailed drawings of equipment from *Warrior 3*.