

KEEPING YOUR GLUE STICKS FRESH

by Jim Hanegan

Best thing to do with your glue sticks when they are not being used is to keep them in a screw-top jar with a little bit of water covering the bottom, and a couple of drops of bleach added to it (to prevent mildew). Retract the glue portion down into the stick body and leave the cap on loosely. This is beneficial for the repositional sticks as well as the permanent ones, and works with dried-out sticks too. Might take a few months in the jar for the old dry sticks, but afterward they should be at least as good as new.

I became inspired to try this after reading about the wildly variable glue stick results that modelers were reporting in the SFA forum. I outlined the details of my tests in the SFA "Tools & Techniques" section recently so won't rehash it here. Hopefully folks will read that post and give this a try, especially those who have encountered frustration in their stick useage.

UHU is likely the best brand of sticks you can buy, maybe the screw cap keeps 'em fresh longer. I've had marginal results with some brands. Coupla years back I picked up a 4/\$1.00 pack of house brand sticks at an office supply store. Got 'em home and every one of them was DOA as soon as they left the shrinkwrap. They barely had enough tack to stick paper together but that was about it. In hindsight, I'm sorry I tossed 'em as they could have gone in the jar.

By-the-way, doping a fuselage prior to using a glue stick to adhere tissue is a no-no — they like porous surfaces. If the glue stick is soft enough it oozes into the balsa grain and tissue weave when they are rubbed in, hence locking the surfaces into place when they dry. Speaking of which, the El Cheapo brands seem to take longer to dry than the premium sticks, sometimes a couple of days compared to several hours. If the cheapies have dried out and been "reconstituted" they sometimes leave glue lumps on the balsa as they are being applied. Next time I'll scrape off all the lumps before I apply tissue, plenty of open time to do this when the glue is soft. How soft? About the consistency of thick, stiff grease. So far, it doesn't appear that you can oversoften the glue into a liquid, the sticks just soak up as much moisture as they can hold and that's it. One cheapie did separate a little bit of clear gel from the stick into the cap (upside-down) but the solid part was still very useable.

Ed. Note: Properly used, I've never had tissue adhered with glue stick come loose, even in one instance a model left overnight on a damp dew coated field. Just make sure the glue has dried (I like overnight) before water shrinking.