

Iwata Airbrush Compressors

Once you've chosen an airbrush the next thing to find is an air source. Cans of air and shop compressors can work in certain situations (we cover these in the glossary below) but most makers and creators find that a small air compressor is the best solution. Here's what to look for when choosing a compressor for airbrushing:

- **Horsepower:** Make sure it is powerful enough to run your airbrush. If you are using a small tipped airbrush to spray thin colors, then this will be easy to find. If you are using a larger tipped airbrush like our Eclipse BCS to spray viscous textile paints like Createx Airbrush Colors, then you will want to make sure you take the time to choose a compressor that will suit your set up. We offer some quick recommendations below.
- **Noise Level:** Make sure that it is quiet. Shop compressors at hardware stores provide plenty of power but most users find that they are far too loud for making and creating with an airbrush. Look for a unit with a decibel rating of 60 dB or less. This is about the sound of a dishwasher. Your ears and your neighbors will thank you!
- **Maintenance free operation:** Choosing an oil free compressor will reduce the amount of time you have to devote to maintaining the unit and that means more time airbrushing.
- **Practical:** Make sure it is lightweight and easy to transport. This is especially important for painters who work on location or sets.
- **Air regulation:** Includes a way to regulate, that is, raise and lower your air pressure.
- **Ready to Use:** Has everything you need right out of the box to start using it: air hose, connectors that fit your equipment.
- **Extra Features:** Has the extra features you need for your creative work. If you aren't sure what those are yet, we cover those in-depth in this article.

The Iwata compressors are designed with these criteria in mind. We offer a range of models that are a perfect fit for use in a studio or other small spaces. These units are compact, quiet, and easy to maintain. Plus they include everything you need to connect with your airbrush and get spraying. To make your choice easier we present our compressors in three pressure categories: Low, Low to Medium and Low to High. You can see our complete line of compressors here.

For those looking for a quick recommendation, here are three of our favorite units:

For low pressure applications with small tipped airbrushes, the ultra quiet NEO Air for Iwata proves an easy choice. Not only does it weigh less than a pound but it comes with a set of international plugs so it can be used anywhere in the world. For convenient air on the go, this is the one.

For general purpose or casual spraying, our Smart Jet Pro is an excellent choice. This quiet compressor is powerful enough to run even a large tipped airbrush like the Eclipse BCS, includes a moisture filtration out of the box as well as full air regulation and pressure gauge. Small and compact, the unit is housed in a sturdy carrying case and weighs less than 12 lbs.

For those looking for even more power and features as well as ultra quiet operation, the Power Jet Pro is the way to go. This unit can run two airbrushes at once with full air regulation and gauge for each, or a single mini spray gun. It has a built in 2 liter storage tank for nearly silent operation when using the stored air. This is our most popular full featured unit.

Ready for a deep dive?

Here are some key compressor terms and features to know:

Pressure or PSI

Air Output(AO) Chart for Iwata Compressors	Working Pressure Range
Low	1 - 20psi
Low to Medium	1 - 40psi
Low to High	1 - 60psi

How to determine how much PSI or CFM you need.

As you can see from the chart, compressors in our Low category (like Ninja Jet) are only able to produce low pressures. You cannot power a spray gun with a small compressor. On the other hand, compressors in our Low to High category can produce both low pressures and high pressures. They can handle spray guns for wide coverage as well as small airbrush for spraying details.

Decibels (dB):Noise level is measured in decibels. In terms of compressors, this measures how loud the motor is when running.

For reference:

A lawnmower is 90 dB

A dishwasher is around 60 dB

A whisper is around 30 dB

Iwata compressors run at 60 dB or less, depending on model.

Keep in mind that some compressors, like the Power Jet Pro, have an air tank. The motor will fill the tank up with air and then shut off. At that point you can airbrush using the stored air for virtually silent operation. When the tank is empty, the motor will turn on again to fill up the tank.

Air Regulation: An Air regulator is a device for adjusting air pressure (psi) that allows you to adjust the psi to a desired output. Many regulators have a built-in pressure gauge. All Iwata airbrush compressors allow you to regulate the air to some degree. If your compressor doesn't include an air regulator there are external options available. The FA600DH Moisture Filter with Pressure Regulator and Gauge sits between the compressor and air hose and allows you to make precise adjustments. Those looking for a simpler solution might try the K250 External Mac Valve. This attached to your airbrush between the hose and airbrush. Though not as precise as an air regulator, this mac valve will allow you to raise and lower air pressure on the fly while spraying.

Moisture Trap/Moisture Filter/Water Trap: This device for removing water from air, often found on an air compressor. We also offer add-on filters that attach to the airbrush and air hose, which may be

used in combination or alone. Humidity and high temperatures increase the likelihood of moisture related issues and we recommend using a moisture trap if you live in this environment. Most of our compressors include this feature.

Auto-stop Switch: This feature tells the compressor to stop running when you stop spraying. When you press down for air the motor will kick back on. This lets the motor rest more frequently and contributes to a longer lifespan.

Air tank: An air tank holds the air generated by the compressor. Once the motor runs long enough to fill up the tank, it will shut off allowing you to use the air stored in the tank to spray. There are multiple advantages to a tank. First, the compressor operation is nearly silent when using the stored air. Second, the motor can rest more frequently, thus prolonging the life of the unit. Third, the stored air cools while it is in the tank.

Cans of Air: Cans of compressed air used to be a popular and affordable option for a simple source of air. They can only be used for short periods of time, however, and quickly become limiting.

Diaphragm Compressor: Louder units that are not well suited to airbrush work as they can cause air pressure to pulse.

Single Piston Compressor: A small, low air output (CFM) compressor that is typically used for light-duty use at very low air pressures. Depending on the model, some allow the user to regulate the air pressure, however the maximum pressure is still very low. Our Low and Low to Medium categories are single piston compressors.

Dual Piston Compressor: These compressors are more powerful than their single piston counterparts. They produce various ranges of output (CFM), depending on the model. Because they produce more air than is normally needed to propel an airbrush, they are typically equipped with an air regulator, which restricts the air and allows the user to set the output to a desired level. Most well-equipped compressors have an air regulator and moisture filter that come with the unit, which add to the value and versatility. These upgraded features make piston compressors capable of heavier use. For large volume CFM requirements, industrial grade compressors may be needed.

Oil-free Compressors: Large compressors sometimes require oil to lubricate the machinery and prevent overheating. All Iwata Studio Series compressors, however, are oil-less units and require zero to low maintenance.

Shop Compressors: These units are available at hardware stores and are often used by those who need the extra power to run spray guns or other pneumatic tools along with airbrush. These units have powerful motors but are very loud and are not suited to small spaces. They also often lack precise air regulation and moisture filtration out of the box.

Pressure Gauge: A gauge which tells you what psi you are spraying at.

Air Intake Filter: These prolong the life of the motor by making sure air entering the compressor is clean. They can become clogged over time, so we recommend regular filter replacement to prolong the life of the compressor. Replacement Air Intake Filter packs are available. Refer to the Owner's manual for specific models.

Duty Cycle: This is a measure of how long you should use the compressor continuously. It is a good idea to let a compressor rest in between duty cycles. Small compressors usually have a duty cycle of 30 to 60 minutes. If your compressor doesn't have an auto-shutoff feature, just remember to shut your compressor off while you are mixing paint, cleaning your airbrush or making adjustments to your surface. This will give the unit time to rest.

The above info provided by Iwata.