Tips for Constructing PaperTerrain Models

Cutting Out the Pieces

Scissors or craft knives? Why not both? I use a good set of scissors to cut out most of the pieces and use a craft knife for smaller parts and cuts on inside angles. But this is just my personal preference. And that is the right answer to the question: use whatever works best for you.

Glue

What sort of glue to you use? That's the question I get asked the most. I usually respond with: 'Any glue that will work on paper', but again, the real answer is: whatever works best for you. But there are a lot of choices and here are my thoughts on them.

PVA "white glue" is cheap, easily available, and it will do the job. But personally, I don't use much white glue. It takes a while to dry, and being water-based, it will cause the cardstock to warp and wrinkle, especially on large pieces. Fortunately, since the printing method uses a dry-toner system, there is no danger of water based glues making the printing smear or run.

Clear Glues. I'm not sure what the technical term for this sort of glue is, but it is clear and smelly. Examples would be the classic 'Duco Cement'. Another is 'Bond 327'. They are strong and dry quickly and generally don't cause any warping or wrinkling of the card stock. I use this type a lot. HOWEVER, unlike water-based glues, this sort WILL cause smudging of the toner used in printing. So you have to be careful not to get any on the printed surface which show. Or at any rate, if you DO get some on the printing do NOT try to wipe it off. If you just leave it alone and let it dry, it will generally not mar the printing.

Another clear glue that I like is UHU 'Twist & Glue'. This does NOT smear the printing and it dries quicker than white glue, although it will cause a bit of wrinkling if used in large amounts.

Rubber Cement. I don't use this for general assembly because it is really kind of messy to apply carefully. But if I need to glue pieces back to back (like fences and soldier figures) it works better than anything else I've found and will not wrinkle the cardstock. Just be sure to get the pieces aligned properly, because it gives you very little time to shift pieces around before it sets.

Super Glue. I don't use these, but some people tell me they have. There are even super glues especially for paper.

Folding the Pieces

In the instructions I recommend lightly scoring the fold lines with a craft knife prior to folding. I STRONGLY recommend you do this. It results in a very clean and sharp fold compared with folding without scoring. I should also note that using a toner-based laser printer, as I do, folding without scoring can cause the toner to flake off around the fold. It may be a bit more work, but it will improve the results.

Gluing the Pieces

Whatever type of glue you use, you will need to hold the pieces in place while the glue dries. Holding them together by hand will work, but can be tedious. I use a set of clamps to hold the pieces in place while the glue dries. At first I used electrical 'alligator' clips. These work, but the little 'teeth' on the clips will put tiny dents in the cardstock. I then found some wonderful little clips from Micro-Mark with have flat surfaces and I use them almost exclusively now.
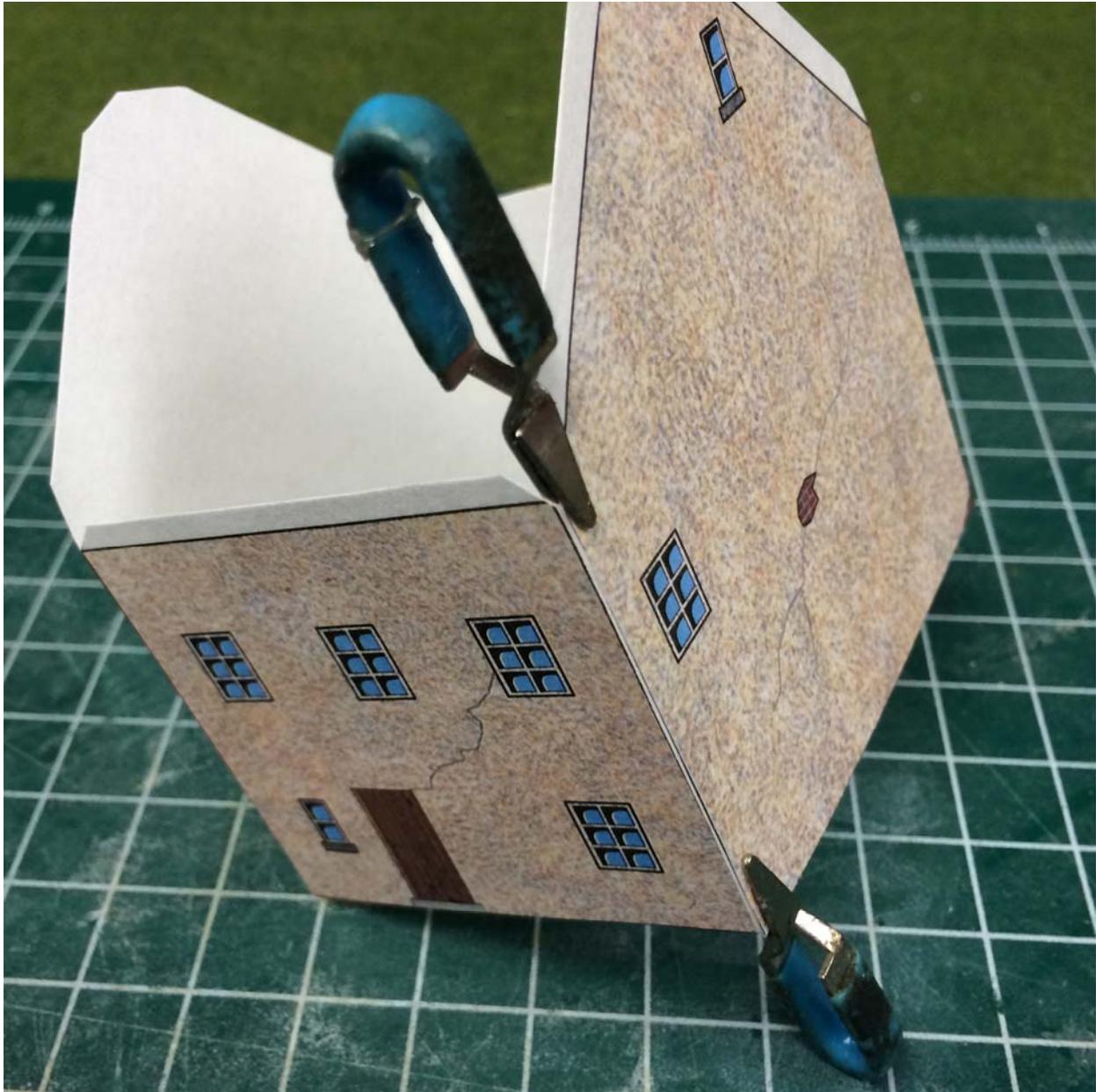
Touching Up the Edges

   Cutting out the pieces will leave the white core of the cardstock exposed. Scoring the pieces before folding will also do this. If the piece is a light color, it probably doesn't matter, but on darker surface, the white edge really stands out and detracts from the look of the model. So, I touch up the edges using a matching paint color and a fine brush. It is more work, but it makes a BIG difference in how the model looks.

Look at the white lines along the folds.
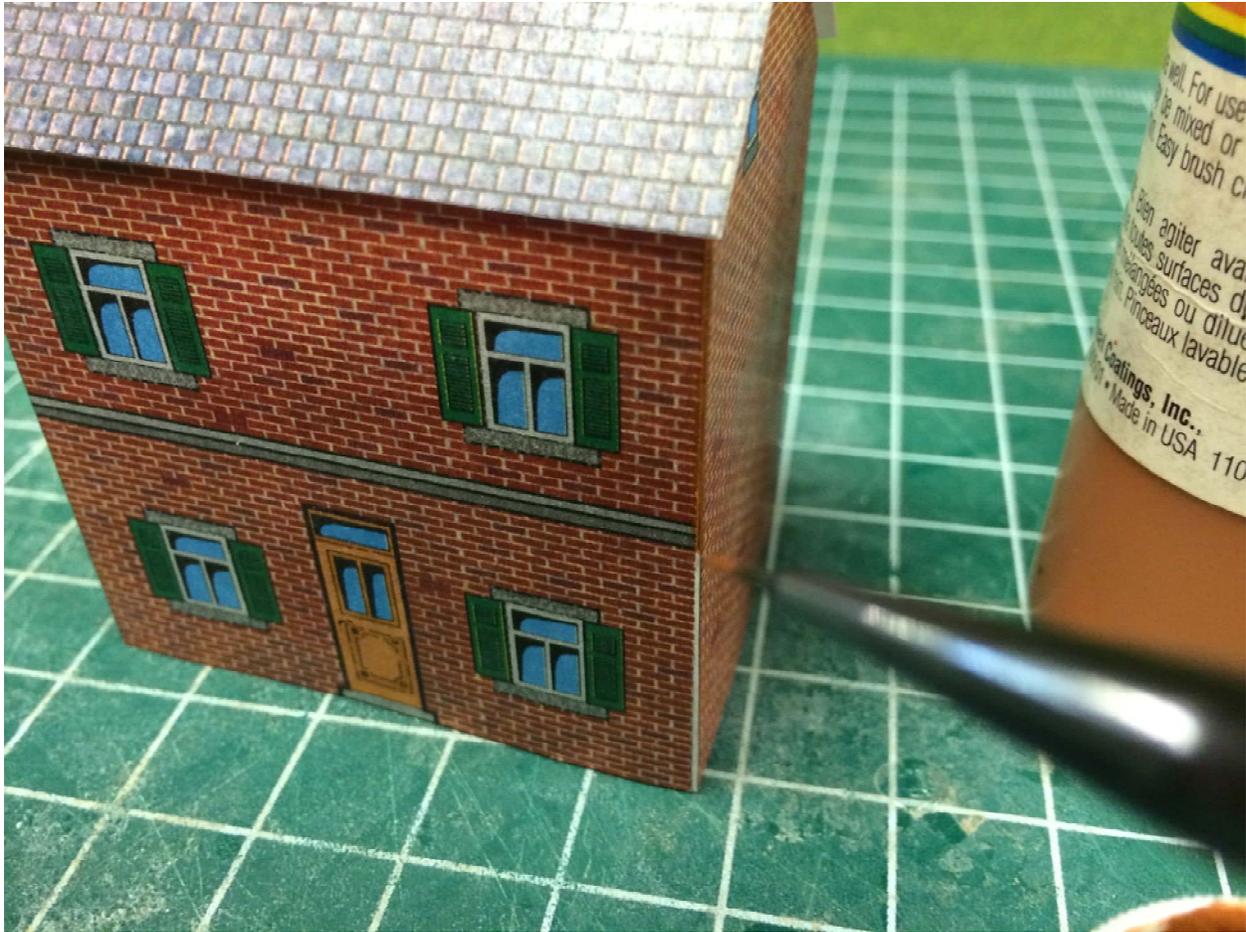
A quick and easy way to darken the edges of the dark gray shingle roofs is to use a black china marker. Just quickly rub this along the edge of the cardstock. It's safer than using a black felt-tipped marker since there is no ink to 'bleed'.
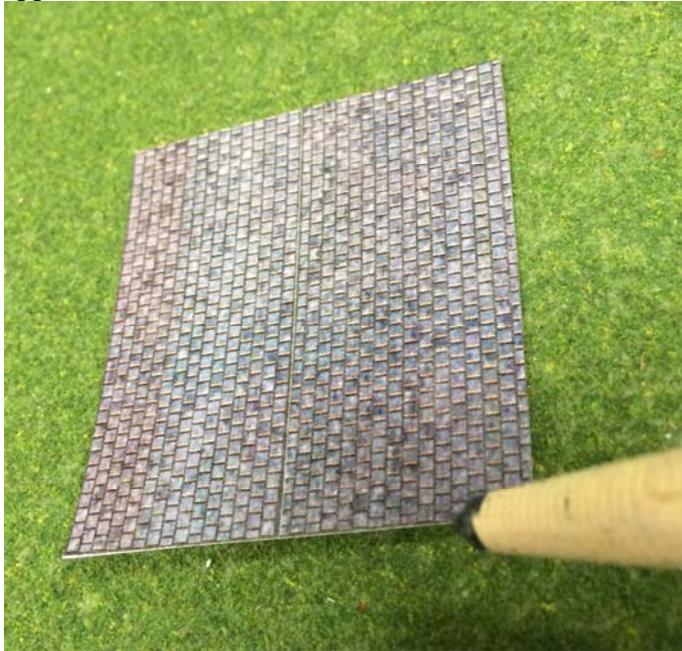
Much Better!

Painting the Inside of the Ruins

        The ruined buildings which come with most of the models have their exteriors printed, but not the reverse, interior sides. If you want to paint the insides a dark gray or brown to give a 'burned out' look to the inside of the ruins, the easiest way to do that is to paint the unprinted side of the paper BEFORE you cut out the ruin. This is very quick and avoids any danger of

slopping the paint onto the printed side by mistake. You can easily do all the ruins in a whole set in just a couple of minutes. Let the paint dry completely before cutting out the ruin!

Dormers and Chimneys

These can be a pain. Do doubt about it. Doing the dozens of dormers and chimneys in a European Village Pack is time consuming and by the time you get the last dormer done you'll never want to see another one again! But if you want a model which looks like more than just a cardboard box, I urge you to persevere and add the dormers and chimneys. No matter how nicely the artwork is done on a paper model there is no way to completely disguise the fact that it is just a flat piece of paper. Adding some three-dimensional elements like the dormers and chimneys will greatly enhance the look of the models.
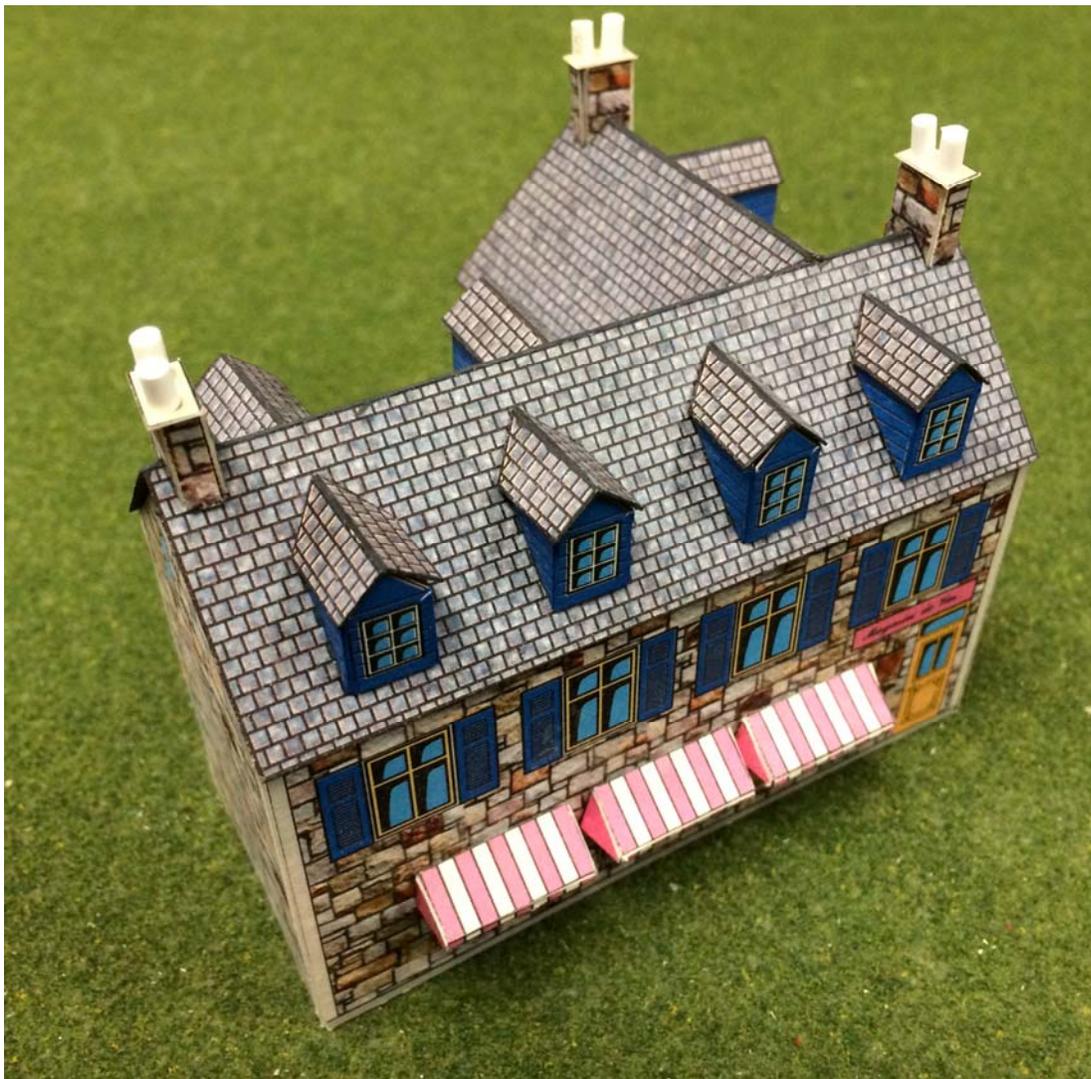
A little extra work makes a world of difference!