

CA Glues and "Tips" on Their Use and Preservation

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CA is one of the "facts of life" that we deal with as modelers. We all have our favorite glues that we swear by. CA, for me, is one of those things that I swear at. However, like everyone else, I still use it in some places for some applications — and I have some problems with it. The CA runs places that I don't want it, the joints are sometimes brittle, and I've thrown away more semi-used \$6 bottles of CA that have gotten hard than I care to think about. Some brands of CA (and I think I've used them all) have a higher incidence of "problems" compared to their competitors, but none of them are problem free. Some of the problems are quality problems — while others are user problems.

Superior Balsa offers the following "tips" which can be used with any brand of CA. Superior says it will give you an extra cap and nozzle when you buy CA from them. To prevent CA from running deep into, or out of a joint try this. Before the surfaces are joined, spray a little accelerator on ONE of the surfaces. Let it dry at least two minutes, although it will remain active for several hours. On the other surface to be joined, place a bead of CA (thick works best), and then press the two parts together. They should instantly bond and the CA will not migrate out of the joint.

Clogged tips are usually caused by balsa dust touching the tip or when accelerator is sprayed anywhere even close to an uncapped bottle. To be sure, keep the CA covered or far from the spray and don't touch the tip to your work. Every so often, tap the bottom of the bottle on the bench. This will force the CA in the nozzle back into the bottle. Cut the nozzle at a 45-degree angle instead of straight across. This causes the CA to drain back into the bottle. Tip and tops can be cleaned and reused. Superior suggests you get a few extras. When your tip and top get clogged, place them in a small jar of acetone. Replace the clogged tip with the new one. If it becomes clogged, put it in your jar of acetone and replace it with the tip that was in the acetone. Don't use debonder as it contains chemicals that will keep CA from curing. Debonder is not Acetone as commonly believed. [My understanding is that debonder is primarily nitro methane. But I could be wrong.] CA can be stored for long periods of time if kept refrigerated. Keeping CA in a hot garage will degrade the bonding characteristics. (Well actually I keep mine in a hot garage, and after a period of time it bonds to itself just fine in the bottle and refuses to come out and play with the balsa.) If you use a lot of CA, consider buying an 8 oz or even a 16 oz bottle and transferring the CA to smaller bottles. You can save about 30%.

Using an applicator (49¢) will greatly improve CA application. You'll conserve the amount of CA used. It will enable you to accurately place the CA and minimize clogged nozzles. An applicator (available with fine and regular tips) is essentially a long plastic eyedropper with a long narrow tip. If the tip becomes clogged, merely cut off a 1/16-inch and it will be as good as new. These applicators are essentially cheap plastic bulb pipettes. Ron Boots bought a box of 500 or so of them for not very much at a scientific supply place.

Editor's Note: There's one other important tip in using CA — which is how do you get the stuff off your hands and skin. The quickest way to do it is in the hands of your friendly Avon Lady — well not actually in her hands, but rather in her product line. Avon's Skin So Soft is a hand and bath lotion. After a lengthy building session with CA I'll have my fingers absolutely covered with hardened CA. Before I discovered Skin So Soft, it might take days to get all that CA off my hands. Now, three or four minutes work in a sink with hot water and liberal amounts of Skin So Soft, and all the CA is gone. The oil in Skin So Soft seems to penetrate under the CA and lift it off. If your wife knows of an Avon Lady in the neighborhood, stock up on a couple of bottles of Skin So Soft. Skin So Soft has other good properties. Fly fishermen use it as a mosquito repellent, so I can occasionally find Skin So Soft at Sport Chalet in La Canada.