

# The Instruction Warmup Sheet

*Over the years we've received any number of inquiries about how we did this or that on the prototype dollhouses we've built for Greenleaf. So, we've condensed our techniques and tricks into these pages.*

*The main thing to remember when you look at all those pieces to be assembled is:*

## **DON'T PANIC!**

*Each part has been carefully designed to fit together easily. If you follow the instructions in step-by-step order, the house will go together even if you've never done anything like it before. And, if you use care and don't rush the finishing steps, the result will be a project of which you'll be justly proud!*

*Read over the following, decide what degree of finish you want for your dollhouse, purchase any accessory materials and tools you will need, and jump in!*

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## **Notes on finishing...**

An outline of 3 basic ways your house can be finished.

### **1. Simply assembled & left raw...**

Assemble the house without painting or decorating it by following the assembly instructions **in order**. (This part is very important. If you proceed in the wrong order it will quickly become impossible to complete assembly.)

### **2. Assembled & decorated...**

You may want to decorate with paint, wallpaper, and carpeting. In this case it's a lot easier to **prepaint parts, then assemble them**. If you want to use wallpaper and carpet there are three possible methods: two are permanent, and the third can be redecorated later.

Whichever method you choose, before you begin cutting it's a good idea to spray the printed side of all the wallpaper with a matte spray fixative to protect it.

#### **Method A...**

Cut the wallpaper to size and glue it in place on the walls with model wallpaper paste **before the house is assembled**. Cut out window and door openings and **slots** with a sharp model knife. This requires very careful planning and workmanship.

**With this method interior window and door trim are glued on last.**

#### **Method B...**

Cut the wallpaper to size and **glue to the walls after assembly**. Trim the paper with 1/4" extra to turn the corner between walls. **Always piece the paper at the corners, not in the middle of a wall**. Apply a smooth coat of wallpaper paste (no globs please) to the wallpaper with a foam brush. Before the paper has a chance to dry out, carefully put it in place and rub or roll it to remove any air bubbles. While it's just damp, trim around windows and doors with a **sharp model knife**. If you do discover a bubble, cut a small 'X' in it, force a little paste into the hole and roll the paper smooth. The exactness of the fit at floor and ceiling are not critical if you plan to

use strips of molding to cover them.

You may want to paper the ceilings also! If so, use the same procedure allowing 1/4" extra to turn the corners onto the walls. (Do this before wallpapering.)

**With this method interior window and door trim are glued on last.**

#### **Method C...** (Our favorite)

This method uses patterns and gives you a choice.

If the wallpaper and carpeting are to be **permanently installed**, glue the window and door trim in place after the wallpaper and carpeting.

If you think you'll want to **change either in the future**, glue the trim in place **first**, then cut the wallpaper and carpet patterns to fit **around** the trim.

Using thin but stiff cardboard, measure and cut out patterns of all the walls to be wallpapered including window and door openings. **(It's a bit easier to measure the patterns before the walls are assembled.)** Whenever possible score the pattern to bend around corners, **covering as many walls as possible with a single piece of cardboard**.

Keep cutting and fitting the pattern until it's right. Then lay a sheet of wallpaper (larger than the pattern) flat on your worksurface and apply a smooth coat of paste. Flatten out the pattern and lay it on the wallpaper. **(Make sure the correct side is down.)** Roll it smooth and weight it until it dries.

As a substitute for model wallpaper paste we've used both spray cement in aerosol cans **(be sure to use it in a well ventilated space)**, or doublesided tape. This tape comes in various forms and widths. With all of them be sure to lay down enough strips to completely cover the bonding surface. If you leave any voids your wallpaper will soon develop lumps and bumps which are very difficult to eliminate.



Trim off the excess until the wallpaper is the same shape as the pattern. Fit the wallpapered pattern into the room and hold it in place with glue or doublesided tape. If you want to be able to remove wallpaper and carpeting later, use just enough adhesive to keep it flat; don't coat the whole surface of the pattern back. **You can use the same method for the carpeting.** In fact we use a similar pattern method for shingles which we'll talk about later.

### 3. Assembled, decorated, & electrified

You may want to have the ultimate dollhouse and **electrify it!** (Yes, 1" scale electric lights are available along with dollhouse electrification kits! Ask your miniatures dealer.) In this case **prepaint parts, assemble the house, but don't wallpaper or glue on trim until all the electrical tape is in place.** You'll be hiding the "wiring" with wallpaper and carpet. Our lighting kit will give you specific instructions on how to electrify your house. It's a good idea to **make a "map" of your wiring** before covering it up so you don't accidentally cut a wire while trimming wallpaper or carpet.

## Some notes about painting...

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### 1. Sealing the wood...

Sealing the wood parts makes them much easier to sand and paint. We suggest **shellac cut 50/50 with alcohol.** Apply it liberally to all surfaces with a brush, or dip the parts in a coffee can. It's very watery so it will not produce streaks or runs and dries very quickly. **(Be sure to do this in a well ventilated area! Outside on a bright sunny day is ideal.)**

**If you plan to stain any parts, don't seal them!**

### 2. Filling the wood...

To finish off joints cleanly, use a fast drying wood filler paste. After it dries, sand lightly, feathering it into those areas already painted, then touch-up with paint.

**3. It's easier to prefinish pieces and sub-assemblies.** If there's a section of the house or trim which will be painted one color, then by all means glue the parts together, seal the wood, fill, sand, paint, and set the assembly aside until it's needed.

### 4. Choice of colors...

Some folks who assemble our kits want to make their house look just like the box cover photo, which is fine. We use a standard brand of **good quality semi-gloss or satin finish latex house paint.** If you didn't get paint with your kit, cut out the box photo, take it to your paint dealer and match to his color samples. If it's a custom mix you'll have to buy a quart which is more than you'll need, but they're nice colors to have around for other projects. But, **don't feel you must use the same colors we did,** use your imagination and make your house one of a kind! **(Don't use flat or high gloss paint, you'll be disappointed in the result. The flat paint doesn't produce a tough, smooth, "skin" on the house the way satin finish paints do, and the high gloss will show every imperfection in your craftsmanship no matter how careful you are!)**

We like to apply the satin or semi-gloss latex paint in 3-4 coats with a 1" foam brush and a small artist's brush

for touch up. Sanding after first coat of paint will give a smoother finish.

If you use a separate brush for each color and wrap each one tightly in a plastic sandwich bag between uses, the job will go a lot faster!

Another painting headache is what to do with all the pieces while they're drying. Here's our solution. We use (uncooked) spaghetti! Just spill it out like pick-up sticks on some newspaper and lay the painted parts across them. The spaghetti will keep the pieces from touching the newspaper and paint & sealer won't stick as badly to pasta as they do to strips of wood.

### 5. Wood stains

Stains may be used for flooring, interior moldings, furniture, or roof shingles. Apply a light coat and wipe off immediately. If it comes out lighter than you want, repeat the application. A couple of light coats of clear polyurethane over the stain really make a classy job for floors, moldings, & furniture, but not the roof! Whoever heard of shiny shakes!

If you're using hot glue, take care not to drench shingles or glued joints with stain; some stains will soften or loosen some hot glues! Water based stains work the best.

## other choices...

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### 1. Stucco...

The style of your house may suggest the use of a stucco surface on the walls and/or chimney surfaces. We use Greenleaf Stucco powder which is **mixed with latex paint in about a 50/50 proportion.** Mix it thoroughly in a separate container, not the paint can. Apply the mixture with a brush, foam brush, or roller. You'll find that a number of different textures can be created, but don't make the coating too thick. It's easier to add a second coat if you want more texture than to remove it if there is too much! Most houses with stucco surfaces, such as Greenleaf's Glencroft, have trim pieces which must be glued on over the stucco. If this is the case, **keep the stucco layer thin.**



## 2. Clapboard Siding...

Some houses look terrific with **clapboard siding** on the exterior walls. Greenleaf Siding comes in 12" x 3/4" wood veneer strips.

Beginning at the bottom of the wall, glue first strip of siding flush with bottom edge of wall. Then draw horizontal pencil guidelines 5/8" apart on the wall starting from the top of the first strip. The second strip of siding overlaps 1/2 of the first strip and so on up the wall.

**Use hot glue** because the moisture in white glue tends to warp the siding.

If a wall is wider than 12", you'll have to butt strips end to end. As you proceed up the wall, **stagger the butt joints** so they don't become a visual distraction. The strips of siding can be cut to length either with a sharp model knife or sharp scissors.

## 3. Shingles...

Some dollhouse kits come with **pre-cut sheets of wood veneer shingles** and others require them to be bought **by the bag** as an accessory. In either case they add immeasurably to the appearance and sense of scale of your dollhouse. **They're well worth the effort of putting them on!**

The only difference in working with the two types is in the first step, the remainder is identical.

### A1. If you're using sheets...

Lay the sheets of shingles flat on your work surface good side up. Run a strip of masking tape the full length of each row of shingles and rub it a bit to be sure it's stuck down. Now strip each row out of the sheet, lightly sand any rough edges and set them aside.

### A2. If you're using bags...

Empty the bag, sort the shingles from any scrap, and set any broken shingles aside, you'll be using them.

Tape a straightedge of some sort to your work surface. Lay out a row, about 12" long, of unbroken shingles (good side up) with their top edge touching the straightedge and each butting against the next. Run a strip of masking tape the full length of the row of shingles and rub it a bit to be sure it's stuck down. Pick up the row and set it aside. Repeat for the whole bag.

### after the house is assembled...

**B.** With a ruler and pencil draw horizontal guide lines on each of the roof sections. Draw the first line **1 3/8" from the bottom edge**, and each subsequent line **3/4" from the previous line**. Continue up each roof section until you reach the peak.

If your house has gables, and their pitch is different, the guidelines won't line up at the valley because the spacing will be different between lines on the main roof and lines on the gable. In this case draw guidelines on the main roof with the measurements given. Then pick up a new spacing measurement where these lines meet the gable. The result should be continuous horizontal lines which "bend" at the gable and run to the edges of the roof.

This can be done before assembly, but if you are unfamiliar with the house it's sometimes difficult to tell which side is up!

**C.** For your first roof section to shingle, **pick one with a long straight bottom edge**. Lay one of the strips of shingles from step #1A or B along the bottom edge with the top edge of the shingles on the first pencil line. Notice the shingles overlap the roof edge about 1/8". Mark the ends to be trimmed with a pencil, trim with a sharp model knife or scissor, run two beads of hot glue on the roof, and apply the strip of shingles. **We recommend hot glue because white glue tends to warp the wood veneer shingles and it's much slower!** Once the glue has set, remove the masking tape.

**D.** Lay the second shingle strip on the roof so its top edge aligns with the second pencil line. This will cause the bottom edge of the shingle strip to overlap the first strip (or course) about 3/4".

**Slide the second strip to the side until the middle of the shingles of the second strip align with the joints between the shingles of the first strip.** Make trim marks, trim, and glue in place.

On the second row one bead of glue should run along the top edge of the first row of shingles and another bead should run just below the second pencil line.

**If a roof section is split into two parts at the bottom edge and becomes one solid piece at the top, make sure both sides have their joints staggered in the same pattern or there will be a mismatch at the top.**

**E.** Continue all the way up the roof section. The last strip at the peak will have to be trimmed in depth as well as width. If there's roof ridge trim on the house, cut the depth of the strip to butt up against the ridge trim. If there's no ridge trim, you have the choice of ending the shingles at the top edge of the roof section, or carrying them beyond to meet the shingles on the opposite section of roof. **The second is a bit tricky, but much more realistic.**

**F.** A trick that makes easy figuring of the shingle-cutting angle at the intersection of gables is **to make a gauge from thin cardboard**. The easiest way to do this is by trial and error. Hold the edge of the cardboard along one of the pencil lines, slide it into the intersection and fold the lower corner back until you get the correct angle. When you have a crease that fits nicely, cut the cardboard along the crease. Use this gauge to mark the trim lines on the shingle strips.

**G.** Overlap the shingles along outside roof edges, glue, **then trim flush** with the roof section with a model knife and finish off with a sanding block.

**H.** We've developed another trick for shingling much like the pattern method of wallpapering.

We use brown kraft paper to make patterns (You can even use grocery



bags if they aren't too wrinkled). Fold and trim the paper until it nicely fits the section of roof. Using the same spacing rules mentioned in step B, draw the guidelines on the paper pattern. Glue the shingle strips to the paper following the guidelines, but **don't trim the ends.**

Let the ends overlap the pattern, then go back after all the rows are in place and trim the shingles all at once (face down) with a straight edge and sharp model knife. This can be a bit tricky, take a number of light passes rather than a couple of heavy ones which will tend to split the shingles. Always cut toward the narrow end, or the shingle may split.

Then simply glue the pattern, with shingles in place, to its section of roof!

For convex joints, such as tower roofs, bamboo skewers neatly fill in the gaps between roof sections. Just cut them to length and glue them in place.

### **if your kit includes furniture...**

1. Assemble the furniture following the instructions.

2. To finish the wood parts, see the previous sections on painting and staining.

3. The finishing touch for the furniture is **to upholster it!** To do so, cut out stiff cardboard patterns slightly smaller than the part you wish to upholster and put the furniture aside.

Cut a piece of fabric (preferably thin and stretchy) about 1/4" larger all around than the cardboard pattern. Glue a bit of foam rubber or batting to the cardboard (about 1/4" will do). Then wrap the cardboard with the fabric, covering the foam or batting and wrapping around the edge of the cardboard. Glue the edges of the fabric to the underside of the cardboard (hot glue works very well). Take this finished "cushion" and glue it to the piece of furniture.

Use your imagination in the choice of fabric and the style of the upholstery! Have fun with it!

### **and a few notes on assembly...**

1. Prepare a well lit work area with a nice flat surface (preferable one you can leave in place until you've completed the house!)

2. Gather together all tools and supplies you think you might need such as coffee cans and envelopes to keep parts separated, masking tape to hold parts while glue is drying, hot melt glue and/or white glue, scrap wood to use as sanding blocks, and finishing materials (see notes on painting).

3. **Follow the assembly instructions carefully and in order!** If you change the sequence it may be impossible to complete assembly!

4. **The directions are written and parts named assuming the front of the house is facing you, the back is furthest away from you, the right side is to your right and the left side is to your left.**

5. Included with these assembly instructions is a **schematic drawing sheet** on which are diagrams of all the parts on all the wood and plastic sheets. Look over the diagrams and the wood sheets to become familiar with them. You'll notice that each part is labeled. The part name attempts to describe its location in the house and the labels pointing to tabs and slots attempt to name the part which fits in or onto that tab or slot. We strongly suggest with some of the less identifiable pieces, you label each lightly with pencil on the wood.

### **breaking the code...**

Throughout the assembly instructions you'll find numbers in parenthesis like (7). These numbers tell you which wood sheet that part is on. You'll also find the bold letters **R & P**. This quaint shorthand stands for "Remove & Prepare". By this we mean punch out from the wood sheet the part requested in the instruction, then sand, seal, paint, or otherwise decorate it prior to assembly. You'll also see (G). This simply means glue permanently. (GL) means glue lightly, this is a temporary joint. **Don't glue anywhere except as**

**specifically noted.** This allows the parts to move during assembly. For all steps check the fit of parts before any glue is applied.

### **a note about glue...**

If you have the time and patience wood glue will work very well on your house. However, it requires a considerable amount of clamping (masking tape works well) to keep the joints tight while the glue dries. **Note: you must always use white glue on the plastic windows; hot glue will melt them!** We recommend using a hot melt glue gun which is available at your miniatures dealer, hardware store or craft supply store. It takes a bit of getting used to, but it will make assembly much faster. (In fact, you'll probably find yourself using hot glue for all sorts of household gluing jobs.)

### **and a note about sanding...**

Nobody likes to sand! But it's the nature of wood that requires the use of sandpaper if you want a good finish on your work. Sanding is easier and more effective if you **make yourself a sanding block**. Find a reasonably flat piece of scrap wood and either wrap the sandpaper around or glue the sandpaper to it. Using this sanding block will give you much truer surfaces.

### **enough notes already, lets get on with it...**

*We hope this will answer many of your questions about how to approach the assembly and finishing of your dollhouse kit. Decide which methods you want to use, follow the assembly instructions carefully **and in order**, and don't rush it! Take your time, enjoy, and remember **when all else fails, read the instructions!***

**Stucco, siding, shingles, and furniture kits are available from Greenleaf.**