

# Spitfires

May 2026

## Early Merlins (Merlin I-III, 40, and 50 series)

Discussion Format — Identifying the Mark, paint schemes, best kit in scale. MGPC Episode 124 (published 23 May 2026).

Except where noted “aluminum” denotes paint, not bare metal. Always remember two things about the below information:

1. Build to a reference photo if possible.
2. There are quite a few scheme / marking / color options for any mark of the Spitfire. Your model is likely accurate for at least one serial number.

## Mk I

---

### Sub-variants — Details

- Prototype K5054
  - No guns, No radio, 2-blade wooden prop, Un-armored windscreen, Flat hood
  - Like all prototypes, eventually modified to test production configuration and by 1939 appeared more like an early production Mk I
- Schemes
  - First flight (March 1936) — mix of bare metal, aluminum painted fabric and primed fuselage areas
  - Hendon Public Display (June 1936) — overall light blue paint, national markings. The light blue is generally assumed to be Rolls Royce Blue, a light blue used by RR for their coaches making business. I used a blue version of RLM 76 because it looked pretty close to what I think RR light blue would appear. Modern photos of period autos show colors that range from a light dusty blue to a true blue, even almost a turquoise. Sometimes with a dark blue trim or vice versa.
  - 1939 — Standard camouflage scheme of DE/DG over aluminum undersides
- 1/72 Kits
  - First Flight — IBG 3D printed. Best detailed, limited quantity, currently pre-order
  - Hendon Display — CMR Resin. Very accurate and detailed.
- 1/48 Kits — Alley Cat resin, all schemes
- 1/32 Kits — Scratch conversion only, maybe Kotare in the future, but it's really a different aircraft than the Mk I...
- Mk I early — flat hood, pole antenna, 2 bladed prop, survivors upgraded to Mk I mid/late as each upgrade became available, so some mix/match of variations.
  - Schemes
    - As delivered (initial) — DE/DG over Aluminum, yellow surround to national roundels, squadron number on fin (e.g. No. 19 Squadron had “19” on fin in section color)
    - As delivered (mid-late) — Same as initial, but undersides now in Night / White, which had 3 variations if done in the field. Surviving machines had their undersides painted Sky beginning June 1940.
    - Camo pattern was A/B with A on even and B (mirror of A) on odd serials
    - From May 1940 the fin flash was added, squadrons painting them in various sizes and shapes until standardized in November 1940.

- Note: Unit code letters varied in size as most were applied by the squadron and quite a bit of misinterpretation existed regarding size. Color was Medium Sea Grey.
  - 1/72 Kits
    - IBG. Best detailed. Currently in production. Provides parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
    - Eduard. Near future, likely optional parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
    - Airfix new tool Mk I A01071A or A02010. A02010 provides optional parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
    - All other Mk I kits would require modifications
  - 1/48 Kits
    - Eduard. Includes all parts for all sub-variants.
    - Airfix. Includes all parts for all sub-variants.
    - Tamiya. Easy build includes all parts for all sub-variants.
  - 1/32 Kits — Kotare.
- Mk I mid — bulged hood, standard antenna, 3 bladed prop
    - Schemes
      - As delivered (initial) — DE/DG undersides Night / White. Later repainted to various shades of Sky from a puke green to a light blue.
      - Final deliveries — DE/DG with Sky Undersides from June 1940.
      - After November 1940 all deliveries included Sky spinner and fuselage band.
      - Camo pattern was A/B with A on even and B (mirror of A) on odd serials
      - From May 1940 the fin flash was added, squadrons painting them in various sizes and shapes until standardized in November 1940.
      - Note: Unit code letters varied in size as most were applied by the squadron and quite a bit of misinterpretation existed regarding size. Color was Medium Sea Grey.
    - 1/72 Kits
      - IBG. Best detailed. Currently in production. Provides parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
      - Eduard. Near future, likely optional parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
      - Airfix new tool Mk I A01071A or A02010. A02010 provides optional parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
      - Tamiya. Easy build but only this and late sub-variants.
      - All other Mk I kits are generally the Mk I late variant and possibly have a second windscreen for the Mk I mid.
    - 1/48 Kits
      - Eduard. Includes all parts for all sub-variants.
      - Airfix. Includes all parts for all sub-variants.
      - Tamiya. Easy build includes all parts for all sub-variants.
      - All other Mk I kits are generally the Mk I late variant and possibly have a second windscreen for the Mk I mid.
    - 1/32 Kits — Kotare, future release.
  - Mk I late — as mid, but with armored windscreen from Battle of France onward.
    - Schemes — similar to Mk I mid but transition period in factory was completed just prior to BoB. Can have different spinners depending on whether Rotol or DH 3-bladed prop.
      - As delivered (initial) — DE/DG undersides Night / White. Later repainted to various shades of Sky from a puke green to a light blue.
      - Final deliveries — DE/DG with Sky Undersides from June 1940.
      - After November 1940 all deliveries included Sky spinner and fuselage band with standardized fin flash.

- Camo pattern was A/B with A on even and B (mirror of A) on odd serials transitioning to all being the A pattern by late Fall 1940.
- Note: Unit code letters varied in size as most were applied by the squadron and quite a bit of misinterpretation existed regarding size. By end of 1940 sizes were becoming standardized as BoB wound down. Color was Medium Sea Grey.
- Note: From December 1940 to March 1941 the port wing underside was painted Night for visual recognition. This was discontinued as IFF became more reliable.
- 1/72 Kits
  - IBG. Best detailed. Currently in production. Provides parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
  - Eduard. Near future, likely optional parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
  - Airfix new tool Mk I A01071A or A02010. A02010 provides optional parts for all sub-variants of the Mk I, including the Mk II.
  - Tamiya. Easy build but only this and mid sub-variants.
- 1/48 Kits
  - Eduard. Includes all parts for all sub-variants.
  - Airfix. Includes all parts for all sub-variants.
  - Tamiya. Easy build includes all parts for all sub-variants.
  - All other Mk I kits are generally the Mk I late variant and possibly have a second windscreen for the Mk I mid.
- 1/32 Kits — Kotare, future release.
- Mk Ib — technically never existed but during BoB No. 19 Squadron was reequipped with “cannon armed Mk I”. Performance was poor and cannons failed often. Eventually they reverted to the Mk II but by then BoB was over. Wing configuration is NOT the same as the Mk Vb so the only option is carefully studying photos and the AZModel 1/72 instructions (cuz not clear) to convert a Mk Vb kit’s b wing to the correct configuration.
  - Use any of the above Mk I late kits as your starting point.

---

## Foreign Use

France, Estonia, Greece, Portugal, and Turkey were all considered for foreign sales. France received one in 1939 for evaluation, Estonia and Greece were cancelled, Portugal received 18 late Mk Ia and Turkey received 2 in May 1940, the remaining order was cancelled due to...BoB.