

Spitfires Part 1b

July 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) for Mk I and TBD for Mk II, V and VI.

Except were 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. Merlin II powered
 - 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.
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 - 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.
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 - 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. Merlin III powered.
 - 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.
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 - 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.

Mk II

Sub-variants — Details

- Mk IIa — Produced at the Castle Bromwich factory from late BoB onward (factory was damaged during early BoB so deliveries were delayed). Externally similar to the Mk I late but with a small teardrop bulge over the Coffman starter on the right side forward of the nose low, just behind the prop. Powered by the Merlin XII engine.
- Mk IIa (LR) — A Mk IIa with a permanent underwing fuel tank on the port side of 30 gallons. Performance was poor and only 3 squadrons used them.
- Mk IIb — A few were made late in the production run, just prior to the change to the Mk V, essentially these look like a Mk Vb but with a smaller oil cooler (the larger Mk V oil cooler was retrofitted so really only markings and serial nr identify the difference). Most were

upgraded to Mk Vb standard (more powerful Merlin 45 engine, larger oil cooler, metal skinned ailerons).

- ASR Mk II — A Mk IIb with a dingy pack in the flare chute used for ASR duties from 1943. Conversion only regardless of scale.
- Schemes — applicable to all sub-variants, initially the standard Day Fighter Scheme of DE/DG/Sky w Sky spinner and fuselage band, from late Summer 1941 the DFS switched to Ocean Grey (OG), Dark Green (DG) over Medium Sea Grey (MSG) undersides, retaining the Sky spinner and fuselage band. OG was initially in short supply, so mixing 7 parts MSG with 1 part Night would achieve a color similar to OG and was authorized as a substitute for repainting. There are many variations of this color for aircraft already in service and the transition period could be as much as 3 months...photo refs to be certain. Squadron codes were changed to Sky and the serial remained Night.
 - Note 1: From December 1940 to March 1941 the port wing underside was painted Night for visual recognition. This was discontinued as IFF became more reliable.
 - Note 2: The ASR Mk II versions were painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme of EDSG/DSG over Sky.
- Markings — RAF, Eagle Squadron / USAAF
- 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 but may have to source the Coffman starter bulge.
 - 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, when released.

Mk III

- Included for continuity. Will cover as part of late Merlin Mk's, Part 2.
- Prototype only. 2 made, different enough to warrant separate Supermarine Model numbers. Prototype for next major variant using a 2 speed, single stage Merlin XX engine. Over its life it was reconfigured multiple times so a modeler can make some interesting subjects — 6 cannons! By the end of its life it looked like a Mk VIII with an 'a' wing. Not produced in quantity because the Merlin 45 fit nicely in the Mk II airframe and production would not be affected and the Mk XX was prioritized for the Hurricane Mk II. No kit exists so you have to do a conversion and which kit you start with depends on the variation or timeframe of the 2 serials you want to model.

Mk IV

- Included for continuity. Will cover as part of the Griffon series, Part 3.
- Prototype only. 1 made. Prototype for the Griffon versions using the Griffon IIB. Later re-designated Mk XX. You have to convert a Mk XII or kitbash any Griffon nose to a Mk Va airframe and add a bump on top. Not an easy conversion.

Mk V

- Introduced in early 1941 as an interim Mark to both improve performance and counter the Bf-109F. The Merlin 45 was under development and already considered for a future high altitude variant (see Mk VI) and added 400 hp (from 1,030 hp in the Mk I) to the basic airframe in an engine that was the same size, requiring some internal airframe strengthening but otherwise few other mods.
- Larger oil cooler (round on Mk V vs oval on Mk I/II).

Sub-variants — Details

- Mk Va — 8x 0.303 guns identical to the Mk I/IIa. Only 96 built with another 100 converted from Mk I/II airframes.
 - Note 1: Really only a single “famous” Mk Va, flown by Douglas Bader when he was shot down and made a POW.
 - Note 2: There were 2 aircraft used for camouflage scheme trials. Each wore 2 separate schemes for 4 unique schemes total. National markings and serial only. The schemes were roughly:
 - A.
- Schemes
 - As delivered — DE/DG with Sky Undersides, spinner and fuselage band.
 - Camo pattern was A.
 - Unit codes were Medium Sea Grey and applied at the maintenance unit prior to issue to a squadron.
 - From late Summer 1941 the DFS switched to Ocean Grey (OG), Dark Green (DG) over Medium Sea Grey (MSG) undersides, retaining the Sky spinner and fuselage band. OG was initially in short supply, so mixing 7 parts MSG with 1 part Night would achieve a color similar to OG and was authorized as a substitute for repainting. There are many variations of this color for aircraft already in service and the transition period could be as much as 3 months...photo refs to be certain. Squadron codes were changed to Sky and the serial remained Night.
- Kits — Any Mk I/IIa kit that also contains the larger round oil cooler (most do, but not all).
- Mk Vb — 4x .303 machine guns outboard with 2x 20mm drum fed cannon inboard.
 - Schemes
 - Initial deliveries — DE/DG with Sky Undersides, spinner and fuselage band. Camo pattern was A. Unit codes were Medium Sea Grey and applied at the maintenance unit prior to issue to a squadron.
 - From 15 August 1941 — OG/DG with MSG undersides. Sky spinner and fuselage band. Camo pattern A. Unit codes were Sky and applied at the maintenance unit prior to issue to a squadron.
 - Note: While production had stocks of properly mixed Ocean Grey (OG) available stocks in the field were limited/non-existent. A suitable interim grey was authorized by mixing 7 parts MSG with 1 part Night would achieve a color similar to OG and was authorized as a substitute for repainting. There are many variations of this color for aircraft already in service and the transition period could be as much as 3 months...photo refs to be certain. Squadron codes were changed to Sky and the serial remained Night.
 - Tropical use — While most Mk Vb were used in Northern Europe, a large quantity was used in the North Africa campaign. Early deliveries to NA usually had the DG overpainted with Middlestone (MS) and the undersides with Light Mediterranean Blue. Two different types of tropical filters were used: Vokes (factory) and Aboukir (developed

- in Egypt at Aboukir maintenance unit). Later deliveries had their undersides painted in Azure which is a lighter purple-blue than Light Mediterranean Blue and better suited.
 - Malta use — Mk Vb delivered to Malta ultimately received a “blue” upper camo scheme that can be the subject of an entire episode! Likely it was the Temperate Sea Scheme of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey with either Medium Sea Grey or Light Mediterranean Blue or Azure Blue undersides. Also possible is DE/EDSG over Sky undersurfaces.
 - Night Fighters — Some were used as night fighters and were painted overall Night. Short term (2-3 months) as the Spitfire was not suitable.
 - Intruder scheme — Replace the Ocean Grey with Medium Sea Grey.
 - Sub-sub-variants
 - External windscreen armor
 - Internal windscreen armor
 - Markings
 - RAF Europe / North Africa, USAAF, possible USSR via UK LL
 - 1/72 kits
 - IBG, contains all the parts for all sub-sub-variants.
 - Tamiya
 - KP, limited run
 - 1/48 kits
 - Eduard, depending on boxing, any variant can be made.
 - Airfix, contains all the parts for all sub-sub-variants.
 - Tamiya
 - Hasegawa
 - 1/32 kits
 - Kotare (as they are released)
 - Hasegawa
- Mk Vc — Introduced the “universal wing” that standardized on belt-fed 20mm cannon in addition to the .303 machine guns. Could carry 4x 20mm, 2x 20mm + .303 guns. Primarily used overseas but there were some squadrons in the UK. SAAF is generally the only operator that used 4x 20mm. All were delivered with wide cannon blister panel on top wings, but retrofit kits were available that used the less draggy narrow cannon blister panel once Mk VIII/IX production matured.
- Schemes
 - Day Fighter Scheme for Northern Europe
 - Desert Scheme for North African, Malta, and Italy
 - USAAF modified the scheme by adding a green (Dark Green, Olive Drab, or Verde Mimetico) and possibly a light tan (Sand / Desert Pink or Giallo Mimetico). The Italian colors have a huge range of options so frankly you cannot go wrong.
 - RAAF scheme was Dark Earth / Foliage Green over Light Blue, or just Foliage Green over Light Blue.
 - Markings
 - RAF Europe / North Africa, USAAF, RAAF, SAAF, USSR, Yugoslav AF, Portuguese AF, Turkish AF
 - 1/72 kits
 - Airfix
 - Sword, limited run
 - KP, limited run
 - 1/48 kits
 - Eduard, depending on boxing, any sub-subvariant can be made.
 - 1/32 kits
 - None, Revell is 50 years old!

Mk VI

- Introduced late 1941 in response to a requirement for defense against expected high altitude bombers.
- Only 100 built — high altitude bombers never materialized.
- Pressurized cockpit — Canopy was locked down once pilot was inside
- Cockpit pressurization intake on starboard side below exhausts.
- 4 baded prop
- Extended wingtips
- Internally armored windscreen
- Essentially a late Mk Vb with a 4 bladed prop and extended wingtips.
 - Note: Not successful, most were reconfigured to Mk Vb standard and used for training. Modified Mk Vb were actually better suited (2x .50 cal guns vs cannon, no .303 guns, no radio, 4-blade prop, extended wingtips) and used in North Africa only.
- 1/72 kits
 - AZModel, limited run, if you can find it.
- 1/48 kits
 - Hasegawa
- 1/32 kits
 - None