

Battalion Bits BT11: PzKpfw III Ausf E/F/G

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Background

The PzKpfw III was the standard tank with which Germany started the war. The main gun was upgraded from 37mm to 50mm but further development was limited by its smaller turret. The chassis remained in service for StuGs until near the end of the war. The Tamiya kit represents a late model Ausf L, so this resin conversion set allows the builder to backdate this kit to an Ausf E, F or G, as used in France, Russia and North Africa until about 1942. The key identifiers of the early IIIs were the 37mm gun and the early series turret with bulged rear plate and early armoured cupola.

Before Assembly

As with all resin sets, wash all the parts in a strong detergent and rinse in clear water to remove any oils or mould releases. Remove pour stubs and clean up the parts; use a mask when sanding resin and wet sand where possible. Cyanoacrylate adhesives work best but quickly; use five minute epoxy if joint requires manipulation while setting. These instructions follow the step-by-step kit instructions with variations where applicable.

Step 1. On part E5, sand off the square fan drive hatch and replace with resin part 1 (E,F only). Do not use parts E2 and E11; instead, resin part 18 is included.

Step 2. Early Pz IIIs (E, F) had the front return rollers mounted further aft. If desired, use a razor saw and cut off the front return roller mounts on each side of the white metal lower hull, and sand the area smooth. Make a spacer to account for the thickness of the cut, and re-attach the mount 0.1" / 2.5mm further aft. Do not install armour plates E21/22. Install hook plates E13 and E14, but cut off the hook section so that the plate forward edge at the top is vertical. Cut off and discard the cylindrical sections of the suspension damper (parts A19 & A20). File smooth the bottom pin on the hull at

each location, then instal the upper section on the upper pin. Cut the resin part 2 at the end of the spring area, test fit and then glue to the upper damper mounts.

Step 3. As per kit instructions.

Step 4. Do **NOT** use the idlers (parts P3, P4). Instead, use the old style idlers (not shown on the instruction sheet but they're parts A6, A7). Replace the main drive sprocket part A4 with resin part 3.

Step 5. As per kit instructions.

Step 6 and 7. If you have moved back the front return rollers, the top run of track will need a little careful bending to adjust the fit. Early Pz IIIs had a 380mm wide track with a smooth tread bar, while later tanks (like the Tamiya L) had a 400mm wide track with a raised tread pattern on the tread bar. The width difference in 1/48 scale is 0.016" / 0.4mm; hardly noticeable, although you could sand the tread bars smooth in the front and rear areas where visible. If you are really keen, you could drill out the guide horns in the tracks ... have fun.

Step 8. Remove the thin flash in the turret race of the upper hull resin part 4, and from below, open up the flash where the assembly screws go through. Install the intake trunks (parts E15, E16). Do not use the louver guards (parts E12). Use a SHARP blade, slice off the antenna mount on part F14 and re-attach in the same area on resin upper hull, but F14 and F13 are not required.

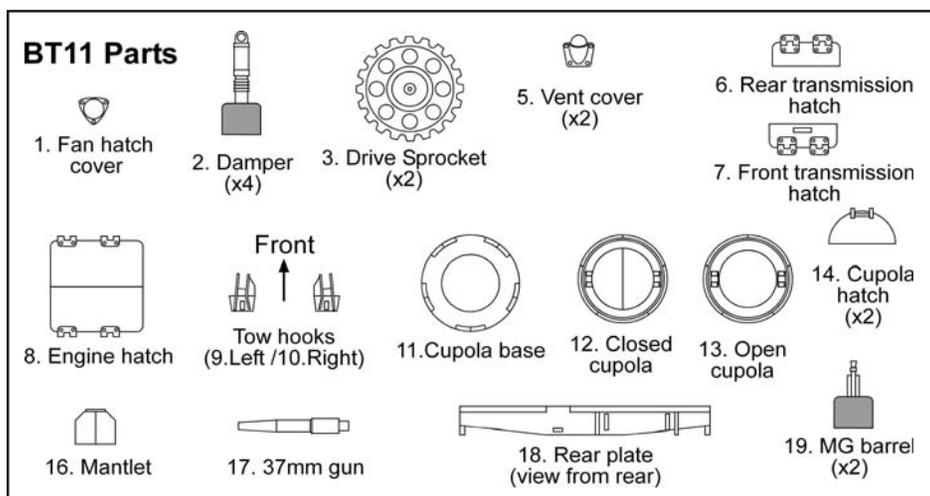
Sand the right-hand hull visor off for an E variant; all later ones had that visor.

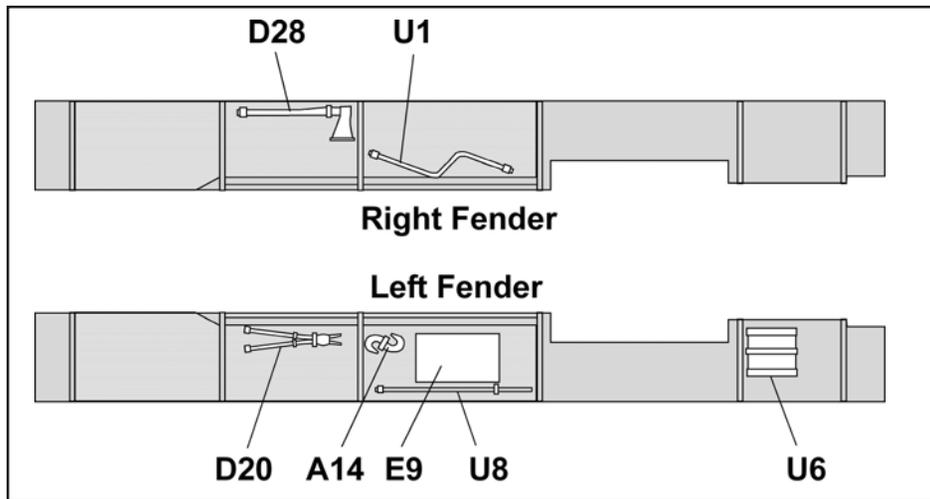
One of the main differences between the E/F and the G was the improved armoured vision slots for the driver. To make a G, you must remove the drivers visor from the resin upper hull, slice off (or sand the backing away) the drivers visor from kit part F29, and install. You may be tempted to simply add part F29 to the hull, but that part has the later-style machine gun mantlet.

Step 9. As per kit instructions, but substitute resin part 18 for the rear grill. The small crank access cover plate which goes in the gap in this part can be made from a piece of 0.02" x 0.125"(0.5 x 3.2mm) strip, 3/16"(4.7mm) long.

Step 10. Front spaced armor (F9,F30), spare roadwheels (P2, P5) and jack not required. Use the rear portion of the driving lights (part F28) only; the early Pz IIIs had smaller driving lights, but the kit parts can be modified. Sand the front smooth, then drill out and fill after painting with epoxy resin or small aftermarket lenses.

Step 11. Replace vent covers part F27 with resin parts 5 for PzKpfw III F and later; the E variant had none. Notek light (part D10) not required. Sometimes these were back-fitted to earlier Pz IIIs. In those cases, you could remove the Notek mount from





the fender of the kit upper hull, and place it where you desire. Replace cover plate F3 with resin parts 6 and 7. The one with the small bar goes in front. Replace rear cover plate E17 with resin part 8. The cover plates E12 are not required, neither are the spare roadwheel mounts E7. One towhook (parts A14) and box E9 will be relocated according to sketch.

Step 12. Front spaced armor not required. The turret ring splash guard (part F24) was not originally installed on the Ausf E, but was on all subsequent models. The extra track links on the lower glacis plate (parts D15, E6) was not an original fit, but was often back-fitted. Check your references. Wood block (part U6) will be re-located. Rear light D2 is not used.

Step 13. For the E/F, use 2 x parts A1 for the taillights. For the G which had a single, use the kit part U2. Shovel (U10), axe (D28) and cutters (D20) will be re-located according to the sketch.

Step 14. For Ausf G, use the kit cupola parts. However, for the E/F, use the resin early cupola parts. This cupola had an armoured ring which was raised to allow vision through one of the five gaps between the five projecting lips (with a gap in the centre of each) along the edge. This conversion allows two options. The closed cupola (resin part 12) is configured with the armoured ring lowered, and the upper hatches closed. The open cupola (resin



This photo shows the assembled open cupola with gap forward (here seen on a PzKpfw IV)

part 13) is shown with the armoured ring in the raised position, and also with the hatches moulded separately (resin parts 14). For either configuration, make sure the slots on the ring and on the projecting lips line up, a gap faces forward AND the hatch hinges are on each side. There are two ways to assemble this and only one is correct. See the photo for clarification. The resin cupola base (part 11) fits into the hole in the turret top; ensure that the base is placed so that one of the gaps faces forward. Glue in place.

Steps 15-18. Superseded by use of resin turret. The early PzKpfw IIIs mounted a 37mm gun in an internal mantlet, and the turret rear plate had a protruding section for the base of the cupola. Use the resin turret part 13. Trim the small corners off the kit turret base (F23) and trim the edges so it fits flush in the resin top part.

Use a round file to contour the rear of the gun base (resin part 16) and glue it in place where shown. The scribed longitudinal line goes on top. Drill a 1/16" (1.5mm) hole in the end, and glue the brass barrel (part 17) in place. Cut one machine gun barrel (resin part 19) off flush with its base, and shorten the other to 1/8" (3.2mm) long. Glue these in place where indicated on the turret mantlet, the shorter one being on the outside.

The G variant has the left side signal port on the turret roof removed, and a ventilator (use kit part E1) installed instead, centred 0.17" (4.7mm) further inboard.

Some Fs andGs had the turret storage bin (F11,F12) back-fitted; check your references. Because this bin was made for the later turret with the single plate back, it sat out a bit and needed side support bars to attach it at the top.

Step 19. Do not attach part F15

Further Steps.

1. Updating an Ausf E, F or G

Many Panzer III E/F or G were up-gunned with the 5cm KwK L/42, otherwise looking similar to their original configuration. To make one of these versions, use the resin turret as described earlier. However, use the external mantlet (parts S4 and F10) and install directly over the resin mantlet. The kit gun barrel can be used if you can accept some inaccuracy of the shape of the conical transition which is a little too long for the L/42. Shorten the barrel S3 by 3/4" (19mm). These 50mm gun variants had a ventilator (use kit part E1) installed on the turret roof, located 1/4" (6.3mm) right of centreline and 5/16" (8mm) forward of the signal ports.

2. Making an Ausf H

The Ausf H has the features of the updated G, but the turret rear does not have characteristic bulge of the earlier variants. You could use the kit turret in combination with the resin upper hull. It's best to consult references to see if there are any other changes required. The Ausf H also had additional 30mm armour plates on the glacis plates and hull front.

References

1. **Panzer Tracts No. 3-2 Panzerkampfwagen III**, Tom Jentz and H.L. Doyle, Darlington Publications 2007
2. **PzKpfw III in Action**, Squadron Signal Publications