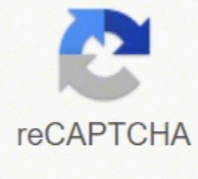




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Hakko fx-951 soldering station review

Not really that impressed with the Hakko, would probably never buy one again.They seem to have not the quality of build that was present in the older units from a few years back.Have had one of these on my bench for about 8 months now, not much chop as a soldering iron !!, the temperature control is not very good and it does not perform very well with lead free solders.I have had a look at the TMT unit that was put up by one of the forum members during xmas, I might be trading up to one of these new RF units, seems to be a much better way of controlling the temperature than conventional irons, has to be better than the one I have ???Please see my comments above Fixing electronics is a hobby of mine I rarely have time for anymore. A good soldering iron makes the process a lot easier, and satisfies my need to collect gadgets. I chose the Hakko FX-951 soldering station to be center piece of my workbench. It comes with one of the best irons on the market today. Let's take a look how the FX-951 performs, and what makes it special.The Hakko FX-951The FX-951 is a mid-range soldering station from Hakko. Covered by a yellow and blue plastic body, this soldering station comes with the excellent FM-2027 iron, a soldering iron of much higher quality than the mid-level price tag of the tool might suggest.Build quality is excellent, as we have come to expect from Hakko. The transformer, the heart of the soldering station, has the size and weight needed to perform up to spec. The station is ESD safe and can be used continuously without taking breaks throughout the day. With proper care the transformer unit will last for decades. The iron and tips wear considerably faster.The FX-951 is a mid-range soldering station with a professional quality iron.The iron holder that comes with the kit is made out of painted metal. A yellow ceramic insert secures the iron without the possibility of anything melting or catching fire. A switch built into the holder puts the soldering station into sleep mode when the iron is positioned in the cradle. This reduces energy consumption and improves tip life at the expense of having to wait for the iron to heat up after taking a break.Instead of a wet sponge Hakko chose to include a wire mesh based tip cleaner with the unit. The mesh cleaner performs just as well as the wet sponge without exposing the tip to the thermal shock caused by the water in the sponge.The Soldering IronThe iron is the most compelling reason to choose the FX-951 over other mid-market soldering stations. The wand is one of the smallest and lightest on the market. From a pure mechanical point of view, this soldering iron is one of the easiest to handle in the industry.A red LED on the handle lights up when the iron is hot. Hakko missed the opportunity to turn the LED green when the iron has reached its operating temperature, which is an essential feature for anyone who cannot hear the buzzer. Deaf users will have to rely on their instincts.There are three parts to the iron: the handle, the tip, and the grip. The piecets are held together by a quick-release built into the grip. By mounting the elongated tip directly in the heater coil of the handle the engineers at Hakko did away with the bulky screw fitting near the tip of so many irons. The result is an exceptionally agile iron with very little mass near the tip.Tip changes are quick. Pressing the quick-release frees the tip and grip from the handle. If you have another handle and tip ready to go, inserting it in the handle is all you need to do to get back to soldering. The tip simply slides out of the grip. Removing a hot tip takes some care, but it can be accomplished without burning yourself.Hakko offers a wide variety of tips for use with the FX-951. Due to their size the tips are 1.5 to 2 times more expensive than the tips used on entry level soldering stations. The iron is compatible with Hakko's professional soldering station, the FM-203, should you choose to upgrade in the future.The ControlsThe control panel is needlessly complicated. Simply changing the temperature requires three buttons to accomplish. The * button selects the digit to change and the Up and Down buttons move it. The # button is used to set the temperature offset based on the thermal capacity of the tip mounted in the iron. Forget switching the unit from the factory default Fahrenheit to Celsius without the aid of the manual. The process involves holding buttons while turning the unit on. Configuring the sleep mode is even more insane.Once the station is set up, however, the temperature control is easy enough to use. Even after coming back to the hobby after a few months, it takes only a few seconds to relearn how it is done. It's just frustrating to see engineers make something so simple so complicated.The Control LockThe key that locks the controls is poorly engineered. Every FX-951 uses the same plastic key. That's only a minor oversight when your workers can defeat the mechanism by inserting a plain piece of paper. A determined attacker will get around the lock in under a minute.Even if you don't care about the lock, the key still manages to get in the way. It must be seated in the keyhole for the control panel to function at all times. Thankfully clever users can do away with it entirely by gluing a piece of paper between the jaws of the optical sensor that controls the mechanism.Thermal PerformanceThe FX-951 is not a particular powerful soldering station. Rated at 75 Watts it is just barely more powerful than Hakko's own entry level station, the FX-888D. All of it adds up to good, but ultimately mediocre performance. It takes the unit ~20 seconds to reach 350 degrees Celsius from a cold start. Recovery from sleep mode takes 5-10 seconds depending on how much time the iron had to cool.Thermal capacity is more than adequate for general purpose soldering. The limits of this soldering station lie exactly where you'd expect them to be judging solely by the transformer's 75 Watt power output. Only parts with high thermal capacity give this iron trouble. Small joints are ready for solder in under a second.The temperature display is inaccurate, but consistent. In my tests I measured ~330 degrees at the tip at an indicated 350 degrees. This error varies depending on temperature, which renders the temperature offset feature of the soldering station ineffective. The good thing about the display is that its temperature measurements are consistent. You can be confident that the temperature you set your iron to will be the same every time, but not necessarily exactly the temperature indicated on the display. It's just a matter of finding a temperature you are comfortable with, and the FX-951 will perform the same every time you turn it on.In UseThe FX-951 is very much defined by its iron, the FM-2027. Getting heat where it needs to go has never been this easy. The small wand almost feels like an extension of your hand. The power cable barely weights it down. Few irons in the industry can match the handling of Hakko's latest iron. This is one of the best irons for soldering small parts you can find on the market.Thermal performance is mediocre, however. At times you'll have to wait almost 10 seconds for the iron to come back from sleep mode. User who take frequent breaks are better served by a faster iron.Recovery time between joints is excellent on small parts. You can move from joint to joint without noticing a drop in performance. Every joint will heat up as fast as the one before.The story changes when working with large parts like voltage regulars. The iron takes considerably longer to heat up those parts compared to the best irons on the market.The FX-951's overall performance makes it a good choice for professional users, who use their soldering station for a few hours at a time. The FX-951 performs well in short bursts, but will fall behind in a production environment. A second here or there waiting for the iron to heat up won't matter to many, but these seconds add up quickly when you make your money soldering all day long.SummaryThe Hakko FX-951 is a mid range soldering station with a professional touch. The exceptionally good iron makes the many flaws of the soldering station worth living with. After working with the iron for only a few minutes you'll never want to go back to a larger, heavier model. Hobbyists and professionals alike will notice the remarkable difference in handling.The FX-951 is a good package that will leave hobbyists and infrequent users wanting for nothing. Professional users should look at more powerful models to bring the iron's recover time down. Everyone else gets one of the best irons on the market today. A standard soldering iron is usually a bit limited in its functionality. Most models do not have a temperature adjuster, and you will not be able to turn off the soldering equipment by pressing a button. Features of Hakko FX-951: Wattage: 65W Voltage input: 120V Heats up in 20 second An electric soldering iron needs a separate stand, and it is difficult to estimate the temperature of the tip without special tools. Therefore, plain soldering irons are not always handy for repairing complex electronic devices. The use of a soldering station greatly simplifies such tasks. It is simple and convenient to use, although the device itself is quite complex and consists of several components. Hakko FX-951 User Manual Today, you can find two types of these devices on the market: Contact stations. These are normally used for the simplest soldering tasks. These are usually equipped by a special heat control unit. The device temperature is regulated by the current power that is transmitted to the heating tip. The latest models can fix the temperature when the tip touches a board or solder. At this moment, the control unit switched on to recoup heat losses. Contactless stations. Here, a flow of hot air is responsible for the soldering process or heat radiation. These devices are can be of two types: hot air appliances (the result is achieved when a high-temperature blower focuses air on the working surface) and infrared appliances (the soldering process happens thanks to infrared emitters) Both types have their own application scope. A lot of amateurs prefer contactless soldering devices, but both of the above types are equally popular. Today we will review a contact soldering station Hakko FX-951 and its main characteristics. Product Description The Hakko company has been constantly improving its products. And Hakko FX-951 soldering station proves the progress, being well-built and very powerful. The device is sturdy and ergonomic. It is made from quality materials - metal, ceramic, silicone rubber and high-temperature plastic. The tool is easy to use and allows you to set temperatures intuitively. The sleep mode feature and the ability to change the tips make the station very convenient. This is a digital soldering station, able to maintain a constant temperature, that is, providing more uniform heating and soldering process. Technical Characteristics Dimensions: 5.1 x 3.1 x 5.1 inches Weight: 2.6 pounds Voltage: 110 volts Special feature: sleeping mode Temperature range: from 400 to 850 F°, you can control the temperature change on the display HAKKO FX-951 station has several adjustable parameters: You can display temperature in ° C or ° F; Time to switch to a standby mode; Low-temperature warning threshold value; Access mode for changing settings. Product Construction As a rule, a typical station includes a soldering iron, a control block, and a fan. With regard to Hakko FX-951 model, it comes with the following components: Key card - 1 pcs Removable soldering tool - 1 pcs Power cord - 1 pcs A special stand for the soldering iron - 1 pcs Cleaning sponge - 1 pcs 1-year warranty certificate. Pros & Cons of Hakko FX-951 Auto switch off if the device is idle for 30 minutes; Low-temperature alarm; Special locking card that protects from unauthorized access; Very low heating time; 1-year warranty; Audible alarms to indicate temp status Comes with the wire for sleep mode function Control and information for the tip temperature High quality No soldering tip is included; You cannot use the device without a control card. Does not come with a tip Buyer's Guide What are the benefits of soldering stations compared to traditional soldering irons connected to the mains? There are some vital functions that directly affect the process quality and result: The ability to regulate the heating level of the device. It allows conducting the process with higher precision and smooth mode switching. Protection from overheating. The ability to fix the temperature of the tip and its automatic increase to maintain the required mode. Additional elements. These can be special accessories designed for solder remains cleaning and hot air guns for covering bigger areas. Soldering station purchase is quite common today. It is widely used by certified electricians and engineers, but amateurs who like to create DIY projects also often buy it. However, if you have never used it before, you may struggle with the choice of the right station without knowing its main configurations, their differences, and features of work. Material of heating element. Manufacturers more often use nichrome or ceramic heaters for this purpose. Nichrome is not the best solution as it is not very durable. Ceramic heaters provide much better heat distribution. Despite the high price, they warm up much faster. Adjustable temperature range. It is one of the most important characteristics of a soldering station. The simplest models often fail to maintain a stable temperature. In this case, with insufficient heating of the soldering tip, the solder alloy cannot be evenly distributed around the targeted area. It leads to a poor connection of the soldered elements. To eliminate such a defect, soldering stations will be more suitable as they provide sufficient temperature for soldering all types of surfaces and materials. The ability to regulate and preset temperatures will allow you to use a soldering station in a wide variety of conditions with the best results. Heating time. A traditional soldering iron takes from 5 to 10 minutes to heat up to a temperature sufficient for reliable melting of the solder and soldering. Besides, the temperature of the tip falls and you need to constantly warm up a soldering iron. Soldering stations do not have this drawback. They heat up in seconds and maintain the temperature. The recommended heating time is 10-20 seconds. Power. This parameter is the first one to consider when buying the device. It is crucial if you are engaged in soldering delicate details tablets, smartphones and other gadgets. Voltage and power. The choice depends on the work for which you are using the soldering station. For soldering circuit boards, a power of 25-40 watts is sufficient. Ergonomics. When selecting a soldering station, opt for models with compact sizes. It will allow you to be engaged in long-term operation without quick hand fatigue. The ability to buy accessories and spare parts. A good soldering station should have replaceable accessories and supplies. You may need several configurations of tips and nozzles for the air heater. And it is important to check if these are available on the market to purchase separately. Video Guide: How To Use Hakko FX-951 Conclusion Nowadays, our homes are literally overloaded with modern electronic devices. And quite often, we face the need to repair or restore microcircuits of miniature size. A traditional soldering iron is absolutely useless in this case, but soldering stations can be really helpful. With Hakko FX-951, it becomes possible to adjust and maintain the temperature. You can easily change tips in a soldering station. Moreover, a sleeping mode will prolong the life of the tips, preventing them from oxidation. Overall, this soldering station has all the basic features necessary to get the best soldering results without special preparation.

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