

# USING ACRYLIC PAINT

## Free Resources | Tips & Techniques



*Acrylic paints are easy to use and quick to dry!*

### Basic Acrylic Paint Tips

#### • 1 • Use High-Quality Acrylic Paints

Less expensive, craft-style acrylic paints contain less pigment; therefore, they do not mix well and do not offer good coverage.



#### • 2 • Mix Your Colors

Learning to mix your colors, tints, and shades will expand your palette to a limitless array of possibilities. You can create any hue your artistic heart desires from the three primary colors — red, blue, and yellow — plus black and white. A color

wheel can be a handy tool for choosing and mixing colors.

#### • 3 • More Mixing Tools

It's best not to use paintbrushes to mix paint colors on your palette — it can break down the bristles and saturate the brush with paint, making it more challenging to paint with and clean. A palette knife is an excellent tool for mixing colors on the palette. You can also use it to apply paint to your canvas. If you don't have a palette knife, you can use an old butter knife, an inactive credit



card, popsicle sticks, or toothpicks to mix your paints on the palette.

#### • 4 • Blending Practice

Take a little time before starting your artwork to become familiar with blending acrylic paints, especially if you have never worked with them before. Things like color batches and manufacturers can affect the paint's viscosity and drying time, so blending practice is always a good idea. You can test the paints by being mindful of how they blend while mixing colors on the palette — that way, not too much paint goes to waste!



#### • 5 • Drying

Acrylic paint tends to dry much darker than the color that appears when wet. Give this consideration as you plan for color. One of the benefits of acrylic paint may also be one of its downfalls. While it's great if you don't want to wait days for the paint to dry, having paint dry so quickly can be a bit frustrating when trying to blend colors. It's important to mention that thick layers of acrylic paint can take days to dry thoroughly. Make sure your artwork is completely dry before adding layers and details.

#### • 6 • Preserving Paint

Because acrylic paints dry so quickly, it's easy to find yourself wasting lots between painting sessions. Ah, but have no fear; all you need to do is spritz the paint with a fine mist of water, cover the palette with a damp piece of paper towel, and place the whole thing in an air-tight container. If you plan on using the paint within a couple of days, it should stay workable at room temperature. You may also place the air-tight container in the refrigerator, for a slightly more extended period. Just be sure the paint does

not freeze. If the paint partially dries out, reconstitute it by letting a heavy spritz of water sit on it for 10-15 minutes.

**• 7 • Extend Drying Times**

Keep a spray bottle of water to mist your paints while you're working. Spraying them on the palette will help to keep them from drying out as you work. You can also mist your canvas for a more effortless blending of colors. Use a fine mist sprayer to avoid large water drops.

**• 8 • Speaking of Water**

Always keep two containers of clean water handy. One is used to clean your brushes, which should be done at each color change. The other should be kept very clean and used to dilute the paint.

**• 9 • Hands-On Your Brushes**

Make sure you have a nice variety of paint-brush shapes and sizes at your fingertips. This will help diversify your strokes. Larger brushes are perfect for covering large areas with paint, while smaller brushes are imperative for painting fine details. You need not have every shape and size to get started — nor do they have to be the most expensive brushes. Many artists say their cheapest brushes are among some of their favorites. As a side note: You might even try applying the acrylic paint with your hands for a different effect! After all, there is a reason children love to finger paint — it's fun!



**• 10 • Multi-Surface Painting**

Acrylic paints may be applied successfully to a multitude of substrates. While canvas is the usual choice, acrylic paints work on many different surfaces — wood, rock, paper, metal — pretty much anything your

creative mind can conjure up. A small test patch would be advisable before committing to the project.

**• 11 • Thinning Acrylic Paints**

Artists often thin down acrylic paints with as much as 50% water to make the colors lighter and softer. When working on a white canvas, you may choose to apply a thin wash of paint to cover up the white before you begin painting.

**• 12 • Work Large to Small**

Begin by blocking in large areas of your painting. This allows you get the colors and coverage adjusted to your liking. Once you are satisfied and those layers have dried, it will be easier to add any fine details to your artwork.



**• 13 • Acrylic Texture**

Acrylic paint is a fabulous medium to create texture because it's thick. Layering it densely on the canvas produces fascinating effects once it dries. (But don't forget it will take longer to dry!) If you want to create texture with acrylic paint, do not dilute it with water — it will be impossible to create texture.

**• 14 • Texture Tools**

The tools you use to apply paint and make texture are limited only by your imagination. Artists have even been known to create acrylic masterpieces with crumpled-up paper and aluminum foil! More traditional tools for creating texture include paintbrushes, palette knives, sponges, fingers, etc.

**• 15 • See It From a New Perspective**

As you are creating your masterpiece, back away from it frequently. Believe it or not, you'll actually gain a better perspective of composition and color.

**• 16 • Don't Forget It's Fun**

Painting should cure, not cause stress. Al-



remember that there is no right or wrong way to express your creativity through art. Your art and your artistic journey should be unique to you. Therefore, never compare your artwork to someone else's — it simply wouldn't be fair to your artsy self!

**• 17 • Practice Practice Practice**

Anything worth learning to do is a process. Painting is no exception. The more you practice, the more accomplished and confident you will become with the brush and paint. Try to practice every day, even if it's only blending blocks of color or painting random shapes.

**• 18 • Daily Journaling**

A daily art journal can be a great way to practice your painting skills. When painting in an art journal, make sure that you protect the pages beneath the one you are painting by placing a protective sheet of heavy-weight paper or cardboard between journal pages.

**• 19 • Always Sign and Date**

Signing and dating each of your masterpieces encourages ownership and helps you feel like the artist you are. It also establishes a timeline for your creative growth.

**• 20 • Track Your Artistic Journey**

Take pictures of and record notes about your artwork. Photographs not only provide visual documentation of your artistic journey, they also come in handy for creating social media posts and portfolios. Recording notes is helpful for future painting endeavors. Jot down information about the colors you mix, the compositions you design, the inspiration you find, or even something that you learned or observed during the experience. You can refer back to these notes in future painting sessions.