

Quick Guide to Painting v4/2023

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Step 1: Purchase Paint & Supplies

It is important that you purchase the correct materials. [A material list](#) can be downloaded from my site.

Step 2: Prepare Your Photo Reference

This is important. Seriously, do not skip this step.

OPTION 1: The masters learned to paint by COPYING paintings by other artists. This speeds up the process of learning as the artist you are copying has already represented the natural world with paint. By copying the color and brushwork you get a feel for painting that would take you much longer to learn on your own. Go online, choose, and download a photo of a painting or portion of a painting you would like to copy.

OPTION 2: If you do not want to use option 1, you must choose a high resolution professional photo to work from. Using one of your photos, a wedding photo, or portrait usually ends in disaster. Instead choose to download a professional high resolution photo from pexels.com or unsplash.com.

Step 3: Print Your Photo Reference

Print the photo as an 8 x 10 glossy or larger. Painting from a tablet or a print from a home printer will make learning more difficult. Use a photo lab such as Walgreen's, Walmart, MPIX.COM, or others. Put a plastic sheet protector over the photo so that when you apply dabs of paint to see how close your mixed color matches, the photo isn't ruined.

Step 4: Transfer Major Outlines of Photo to Canvas

Freehand: Draw the outlines freehand without any aids.

Grid: Draw a grid on the photo **and** on the canvas. Use the grid as a guide to draw the outlines correctly.

Transfer Paper: Print a copy of the your photo at the same size as your canvas. Use transfer paper to mark the outlines on your canvas.

Digital Projector: Use a digital projector to project the photo onto your canvas and trace the outlines.

Step 5: Mix Paint

Use the Color Mixing Guide to mix the colors you desire. Start by painting the background using at least 3 steps of color: a light, a middle and a dark tone.

Step 6: Thin Paint

Oil Paint. Add medium, NOT turpentine, to thin the paint so that it is the consistency of house paint. I recommend [Galkyd Lite](#) or [Galkyd](#) by Gamblin. Learn about the mediums available from [Gamblin here](#).

Acrylic Paint. Thin with water or gel medium.

Step 7: Apply Paint

Apply paint on the canvas from dark to light. You can paint oil over acrylic but never paint acrylic over oil. Paint thin, as if you were painting the wall of a house.

Step 8: Clean Brushes (oil painting only)

When changing oil colors you usually do not need to clean brushes while working, just wipe them clean with a cloth. If you do need to clean brushes while working use Gamsol or odorless turpentine.

Step 9: Oil-Out (oil painting only)

Oil-out with a mixture of 50% Gamsol & 50% Galkyd. Oiling restores matte or "sunken-in" colors and re-saturates colors. This can be done anytime as soon as the surface is dry to the touch and can be done as many times as desired. [Here is a video of the process](#) using Gamblin products.

Video Instruction

DrawMixPaint.com. Mark Carder uses a system similar to what I teach and offers many, many videos all free!

[Michael James Smith on YouTube](#). Smith offers hundreds of "how to" videos covering trees, grass, water, pets, and most any other subject you can imagine.