

Acrylic Painting For Beginners

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Acrylic painting is one of the most accessible and versatile mediums for new artists, making it a great place to start if you're learning to paint. It dries quickly, works on many surfaces, and can be adapted for both loose, expressive work and more controlled detail. This guide covers essential techniques, helpful mediums, and specialized methods for creating realistic effects.



Helpful Mediums

To expand your techniques beyond standard acrylics, you can use specialized mediums to alter how the paint behaves:

Retarder: A gel or liquid additive that slows down the rapid drying time of acrylics, giving you more time to blend.

[!\[\]\(cf531ed27e91483460120fcc057b3901_img.jpg\) Mastering Acrylic Mediums: A Beginners Guide](#)

Flow Improver: Breaks the surface tension of the paint, allowing it to flow more fluidly (perfect for watercolor techniques).

Gel Mediums: Mix these with heavy-bodied paint to add structure, gloss, or matte finishes, and to extend the volume of your paint without losing its thickness.



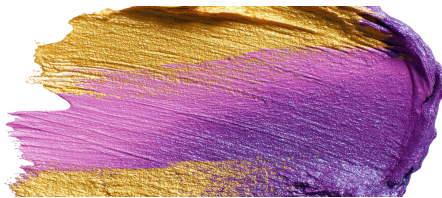
Tips for Beginners

Control your water: Too much water will over-dilute the binder in acrylic paint, making it dull or runny. Keep your water to a minimum unless you are intentionally creating a watercolor wash.

Use a stay-wet palette: Because acrylics dry so quickly, keeping them on an airtight palette (often featuring a damp sponge and special parchment paper) will prevent your paint from drying out while you work.



Essential Techniques



Layering (Wet-on-Dry): The cornerstone of acrylic painting. You apply a layer of paint and wait for it to dry entirely before painting over it. This is ideal for building opacity, creating crisp edges, and developing depth.

[!\[\]\(6059a5aa8b4ca7bb793408023d6c6e42_img.jpg\) How to Blend Acrylic Paint Wet on Dry - 4 EASY Ways](#)

Blending (Wet-on-Wet): To achieve smooth gradients or transitions (like in a sunset), apply two colors to the canvas next to each other and gently drag a damp brush back and forth where they meet before the paint dries.

[!\[\]\(6a9b39b98eb945faa14c645ec99e4eaa_img.jpg\) How to Blend Acrylic Paint - EASY Tutorial, Wet on Wet Techniques](#)

Dry Brushing: Dip a stiff, bristled brush into paint and wipe almost all of it off on a paper towel. Lightly drag the brush across the canvas to leave streaky, textured marks perfect for painting grass, hair, or hazy clouds.

▶ [Learn The Dry Brush Painting Technique | Acrylic Painting For Beginners](#)

Glazing: This involves mixing paint with water or a matte medium to create a very thin, transparent layer. Once applied over a dried underpainting, it adds rich color intensity and shadow without hiding the details underneath.

▶ [GLAZES Explained in Acrylic Painting! #acrylicuniversity #acryliclandscape](#)

Scumbling: Very similar to dry brushing, but you use a round brush to scrub a tiny amount of paint onto the canvas in small, circular motions. This creates a mottled, hazy, or dusty texture.

▶ [A scrubbing technique in watercolour with Samantha](#)

Stippling: Holding your brush vertically, dab the bristles straight up and down on the canvas to create a random dotting effect. This is a highly effective shortcut for painting foliage, bushes, or rough textures.

▶ [Terry Harrison's Pro Arte Masterstroke Brushes - The Deerfoot Stippler](#)

Impasto and Palette Knife: Use a palette knife to apply thick, undiluted acrylic paint heavily onto the canvas. This creates a dramatic, tactile, 3-dimensional effect that is great for architectural elements or mountain tops.

▶ [Palette Knife TECHNIQUES - Learn 8 Different Acrylic Techniques](#)



Splatter Guide

To create a perfect acrylic splatter, thin your paint with a few drops of water until it reaches the consistency of heavy cream. Load your brush, then use simple tools like your finger or a second brush to flick and release the bristles over your canvas.

▶ [How to Splatter Acrylic Paint | Paint Splatter Art Tutorial](#)

Essential Preparation

Paint Consistency: If your acrylics are straight out of the tube, they will be too heavy to splatter. Add water gradually until the paint drips off your tool smoothly but still holds your color.

Workspace Setup: Splatter goes everywhere. Protect your surrounding furniture with newspaper, cardboard, or an old drop cloth.

Test First: Always test your splatter on a scrap piece of paper first to gauge the dot size and paint thickness.



Beginner-Friendly Techniques

The Finger Flick: Load a stiff-bristled brush or a toothbrush with the thinned paint. Hold the brush facing your canvas, and pull the bristles backward with your thumb or index finger, then release them to create a fine mist. Great for painting distant galaxies or starry night skies.

The Tap Method: Dip a standard paintbrush, fan brush, or palette knife into your paint. Hold it over your canvas and lightly tap the handle or spine against your other hand or a second brush. Great for creating larger, more distinct splashes and marks.

Quick Tips for Success



Vary Your Distance: Bringing your brush closer to the canvas creates dense, compact splatter. Pulling your brush further back scatters the paint across a wider area.

Layering: If you are adding multiple colors, let the current layer dry completely before splattering the next color to prevent the wet paints from smudging together.

Clean Up Fast: If a stray splatter lands in an area you want clean, wipe it away immediately with a damp tissue or cloth while the paint is still wet.

Painting Realistic Fur

To achieve hyper-realistic, natural-looking fur in acrylic painting, you don't use just one brush. Instead, you need a combination of specialized texturing brushes and stiff liners, such as rake brushes, filbert grainer brushes, fan brushes, and script liner brushes.

Best Brushes for Painting Fur

Rake or Comb Brush: Often considered the ultimate shortcut for fur, this brush has staggered, serrated bristles (like a mini rake). It allows you to lay down dozens of tiny, individual, parallel hairs in a single stroke rather than painting them one by one.

This brush is my favorite besides the fan brush to use.

📺 [Make Your Own Rake Brush](#)

📺 [Terry Harrison's Pro Arte Masterstroke Brushes - The Flat Comb/ Rake](#)

Filbert Grainer Brush: Similar to a rake brush but shaped with a rounded, curved top (filbert). It's excellent for softening edges and creating overlapping layers of fur.

📺 [How To Use The Princeton Select Artiste™ Grainer Brush](#)

Synthetic Fan Brush: Perfect for longer, wispy fur, manes, or tails. It spreads the paint out for soft highlights, but be sure to use a stiff synthetic bristle so the hairs don't clump together in wet acrylics.

📺 ☆ [Learn EVERYTHING in 5 minutes basic Fan Brush Techniques ☆ #1 | TheArtSherpa](#)

Script or Rigger Liner Brush: This is an extremely long-haired, thin brush designed for fine detail. Use it to add finishing touches like stray flyaway hairs, sharp whiskers, or sharp highlights.

📺 [How To LOAD & USE A LINER BRUSH](#)

Stiff Hog Bristle or Mop Brush: Used primarily for your basecoats and underpainting, these brushes allow you to establish the general fluffiness, shadows, and undertones of the fur before you begin detailing.

📺 [How To use A MOP Brush correctly! Step by step](#)

Key Techniques for Realistic Fur

Work in Layers (Dark to Light): Always block in the darkest shadows of the fur first. Build up to your midzones and highlights with subsequent, lighter layers, ensuring the underlying darks still peek through for depth.

Directional Strokes: Fur grows in specific directions depending on the animal's muscle structure. Always stroke in the direction the fur naturally lies, lifting the brush off the canvas at the end of the stroke to mimic a tapered animal hair.

The Dry Brush Method: For fluffy, fine fur, ensure your brush is quite dry (minimal paint, no added water) and dabbed lightly over the canvas to create soft, broken textures instead of solid lines.



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