



INTRODUCTION TO OIL PAINTING FOR BEGINNERS

Oil painting is a rich and rewarding medium, known for its vibrant colors, blendability, and depth. While it may seem intimidating at first, understanding a few key techniques and best practices will help you get started with confidence.

Materials to Use

Basic Supplies:

Choosing the right materials will make your painting experience smoother.

You'll need:

- *Oil Paints – Start with a basic palette of primary colors, white, and a few earth tones.*
- *Brushes – A mix of bristle and synthetic brushes in various shapes (round, flat, and filbert) for different effects.*
- *Palette and Palette Knife – A wooden or glass palette for mixing, plus a palette knife for blending and texture.*
- *Mediums – Linseed oil and a solvent like odorless mineral spirits help with consistency and drying time.*
- *Canvas or Panel – Primed with gesso to prevent oil absorption.*





Starting with a Value Wash

Before adding color, it's helpful to begin with a thin wash of neutral paint to establish the composition and values. Mix a bit of burnt umber or ultramarine blue with solvent and lightly brush it over your surface. Then, use a rag or brush to wipe away lighter areas, creating a rough underpainting that guides the rest of your work.

Building Colors in Layers

Oil paint dries slowly, which allows for layering and depth. Instead of trying to finish a painting in one sitting, build it up gradually. Start with thin layers and increase the thickness as you go—this prevents cracking and helps with blending.



Example of building layers in a painting to increase its depth.

A common approach is the fat over lean rule:

- *Lean layers (thinned with solvent) go down first.*
- *Fatter layers (more oil, less solvent) are applied on top.*
- *This ensures a stable painting structure and a smooth drying process.*



Blocking in the Painting

Once the value wash is dry, begin by blocking in large shapes with broad, simple colors. Focus on composition, light, and shadow rather than fine details. Use big brushes to establish forms before refining them. This stage helps keep the painting unified and prevents overworking small sections too soon.



Starting the painting with large shapes and broad colors helps to quickly establish light and shadow in your painting.

Wet-into-Wet (Alla Prima) Painting

Wet-into-wet, or alla prima, means applying fresh paint into still-wet layers, allowing for smooth transitions and natural blending. This technique is great for capturing softness, such as skies, skin tones, or atmospheric effects. Work confidently but carefully—too much blending can lead to muddy colors.



Cleanup and Safety

Oil painting requires proper cleanup to keep your workspace safe:

- *Use odorless mineral spirits to clean brushes, but avoid rinsing them in the sink.*
- *Wipe excess paint from brushes before cleaning to extend their life.*
- *Dispose of rags and paper towels safely—oil-soaked materials can combust if left crumpled. Store them in a metal container with water or a tight lid.*
- *Keep your space well-ventilated, especially when using solvents.*

Final Thoughts

Oil painting takes patience, but it's a rewarding process once you get comfortable with the medium. Focus on experimenting, layering thoughtfully, and enjoying the richness of color and texture that oils offer. With time and practice, you'll develop your own unique approach and style!



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