

The Complete Guide to ACRYLIC PAINT

Everything you need to know to choose, use and love acrylics.

WHAT IS ACRYLIC PAINT?

Acrylic paint is a fast-drying paint made of pigment suspended in an acrylic polymer emulsion. It is water-based, versatile and works on many surfaces.

WHY ARTISTS LOVE ACRYLICS

- ⚡ Fast drying
- 💧 Water-soluble (wet)
- 🛡️ Water-resistant (dry)
- 🌈 Vibrant, versatile & durable
- 🎨 Great for layering
- 📦 Works on many surfaces

TYPES OF ACRYLIC PAINT

STUDENT GRADE	ARTIST GRADE	HEAVY BODY
Affordable and great for practice.	Higher pigment load, better lightfastness.	Thick, holds texture and brushstrokes.

SURFACES YOU CAN USE



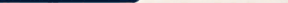
KEY POINT

Quality paint makes your work easier, more enjoyable and longer lasting.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



Acrylic paint is well supported by artists worldwide.



Understanding PIGMENTS

The secret behind colour, lightfastness and quality.



WHAT IS A PIGMENT?

Pigments are tiny particles that give paint its colour. The type and quality of pigment determine how vibrant, transparent, lightfast and permanent your colours are.

PIGMENT PROPERTIES THAT MATTER

- 🌈 Lightfastness – how well it resists fading
- 🔍 Transparency – transparent, translucent or opaque
- 🎨 Staining power – how easily it tints other colours
- 🌿 Granulation – natural texture in paint
- 📏 Particle size – affects smoothness & strength

PIGMENT INDEX EXPLAINED

Each colour has a unique code. Example: PB15:3

PB	15	:	3
Colour Family	Base Number		Variant Number

Example Families:

PB • Blue • PR Red • PY Yellow • PG Green
PW White • PBk Black • PBr Brown

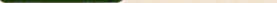
KEY POINT

Better pigments mean stronger colours, better mixes and longer lasting artwork.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



Understanding pigments helps you buy smarter and create better.



Student vs PROFESSIONAL PAINT

Is the upgrade worth it? A side-by-side comparison.



KEY DIFFERENCES

FEATURE	STUDENT GRADE	PROFESSIONAL GRADE
Pigment Load	Lower	Higher
Colour Intensity	Good	Excellent
Lightfastness	Fair to Good	Very Good to Excellent
Consistency	Variable	Consistent
Blendability	Good	Excellent
Coverage	Good	Excellent
Durability	Fair	Excellent
Price	Lower	Higher

WHICH SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

- Student Grade – ideal for learning, practice and large projects.
- Professional Grade – ideal for serious work, exhibitions and archival quality.

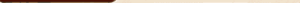
KEY POINT

You don't always need the most expensive paint, but know what you are paying for.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



Higher quality often means better performance and value.



How to choose ARTIST BRUSHES

Shapes, fibres and quality that make a difference.



BRUSH SHAPES (AND USES)



BRISTLE TYPES

NATURAL HAIR (e.g. Sable, Hog, Goat)

- Excellent paint holding
- Smooth application
- Best for traditional techniques

SYNTHETIC (e.g. Nylon, Taklon)

- Durable & affordable
- Great for acrylics
- Cruelty-free option

QUALITY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Secure ferrule (no wobble)
- ✓ Balanced weight
- ✓ Springy bristles (snap back)
- ✓ No shedding
- ✓ Comfortable handle

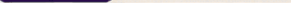
KEY POINT

The right brush improves control, enjoyment and the final result.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



Good tools won't make you perfect, but they help.



CANVAS EXPLAINED

Surfaces, textures and how to choose the right one.

CANVAS TYPES



WEAVE & TEXTURE



PRIMING MATTERS

- A well-primed canvas prevents oil or acrylic from soaking in and keeps your colours true.
- ✓ Acrylic: Acrylic Gesso
- ✓ Oil: Oil Primed or Universal
- ✓ More coats = smoother surface

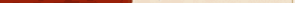
KEY POINT

A good canvas supports your art for generations.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



Canvas quality directly affects the durability of your artwork.



EASELS EXPLAINED

Find the perfect easel for your space and style.

TYPES OF EASELS



WHAT TO CONSIDER

- ✓ Adjustability – height & angle
- ✓ Stability – reduces wobble
- ✓ Weight – will you move it?
- ✓ Max. canvas size
- ✓ Storage – built-in or not?
- ✓ Budget – invest according to use

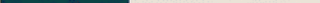
KEY POINT

A stable, comfortable easel lets you focus on creating, not struggling.

TAFAT TRUTH METER

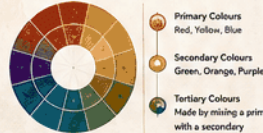


The right easel supports your creativity and posture.



COLOUR THEORY

Understand colour to create with confidence.



COLOUR HARMONY BASICS



COLOUR PROPERTIES

- 🎨 Hue – the name of the colour
- 🌑 Value – lightness or darkness
- 🌈 Saturation – intensity or dullness
- 🌡️ Temperature – warm or cool

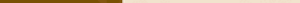
KEY POINT

When you understand colour, your art becomes more powerful.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



Colour theory is proven to improve composition and impact.



STUDIO SETUP

Design a space that inspires and works.



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- 💡 Lighting: Natural light is best. Add task lighting.
- 🪑 Ventilation: Important for paints & solvents.
- 📦 Storage: Organised supplies save time & stress.
- 🧑 Ergonomics: Comfortable height reduces strain.
- 🪞 Work Surface: Large, sturdy and easy to clean.
- 🌱 Inspiration: Surround yourself with what inspires you.

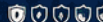
TIPS FOR ANY BUDGET

- ✓ Keep frequently used items within reach
- ✓ Use vertical storage to save space
- ✓ Clear clutter = clear mind
- ✓ Create good lighting
- ✓ Personalise your space

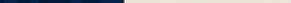
KEY POINT

A well-designed studio boosts creativity, productivity and joy.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



A good environment helps artists of all levels thrive.



TAFAT EVIDENCE GUIDES
KNOW MORE. BUY WISELY. CREATE BETTER.



Evidence Based



Tested Standards



Honest Reviews



Better Choices

The Complete Guide to ACRYLIC PAINT

Everything you need to know to choose, use and love acrylics.

-  Types of acrylic paint
-  Quality vs price
-  Pigments explained
-  Best brands compared
-  Tips for lasting results



MAKE INFORMED CHOICES.
CREATE WITH CONFIDENCE.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

Acrylic painting is versatile, forgiving and incredible for artists of all levels. This guide helps you understand the materials, make smart choices, and get the best results from your creativity.

-  Different types of acrylic paint
-  Understanding pigments and colours
-  Choosing brushes and canvas
-  Best brands and value for money
-  Tips for techniques and longevity



TAFAT TIP

Good materials inspire better art. Take time to choose what works for your style and goals.

TYPES OF ACRYLIC PAINT

Acrylic paints are water-based and dry quickly, making them ideal for many techniques and surfaces.

- **Heavy Body** – Thick, creamy texture. Great for impasto and brush strokes.
- **Soft Body** – Smoother and easier to blend. Ideal for layering and washes.
- **Fluid Acrylics** – Thinner consistency. Perfect for pours and glazing.
- **Heavy Gel** – High viscosity for texture and mixed media.



KEY FEATURES

-  **Water-Based**
Easy to clean with soap and water.
-  **Fast-Drying**
Works well for quick layers and techniques.
-  **Versatile**
Suitable for canvas, paper, wood, and more.
-  **Durable Finish**
Dries flexible and resistant to cracking.

BEST USES

-  Canvas painting
-  Mixed media
-  Art journaling
-  Illustration
-  Craft projects

ACRYLIC PAINT: QUALITY VS PRICE

Price isn't always a sign of better quality. Look for pigment load, consistency and durability—not just the cost.

	BUDGET	MID-RANGE	PROFESSIONAL
Pigment Quality	Lower	Good	High
Colour Strength	Good	Better	Excellent
Blendability	Average	Good	Excellent
Durability	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Best For	Students & Beginners	Hobbyists & Frequent Use	Professional & Serious Artists

★ Invest in good quality paint for projects you care about most.

ARTIST BRUSHES

The right brush makes a big difference. Consider shape, size and bristle type.

- **Flat** – For bold strokes and large areas
- **Round** – For detail and smooth lines
- **Filbert** – For blending and soft edges
- **Fan** – For texture and special effects



CANVAS MATTERS

Canvas affects how paint behaves and how your art lasts.

- **Cotton** – Affordable and versatile, great for beginners
- **Linen** – Stronger texture and excellent durability
- **Primed Canvas** – Ready to use, saves time



TAFAT TRUTH

-  Evidence Based
-  Artist Focused
-  Transparent Reviews
-  Better Choices



TAFAT PRODUCT EVALUATIONS

We are currently evaluating artist supplies using the TAFAT Editorial Standard. Recommendations will only be published after comparing quality, durability, transparency, value and real-world performance.

[LEARN ABOUT OUR EVALUATION PROCESS](#)



WORK SMARTER, CREATE MORE

Great art starts with the right tools and knowledge. Explore, experiment and keep creating!



TAFAT



Informed Choices



Better Decisions



Stronger Results

BUILDING A SMARTER
PATH TO BETTER LIVING



STUDENT vs PROFESSIONAL PAINT

IS THE UPGRADE WORTH IT? A SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON.

Not all paints are created equal. Understanding the real differences helps you choose what fits your goals, your style and your budget.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ What really makes paints different
- ✓ How it affects colour, coverage & durability
- ✓ When student paint is the right choice
- ✓ When professional paint is worth the investment
- ✓ How to get the best results either way

DID YOU KNOW?

The same colour name can look completely different depending on the pigment and the quality of the paint.

It's not the name, it's what's inside.



KEY DIFFERENCES AT A GLANCE

FEATURE	STUDENT GRADE	PROFESSIONAL GRADE	WHY IT MATTERS
Pigment Load	Lower	Higher	More pigment = stronger, richer colour
Colour Intensity	Moderate	High	More vibrant and clean colours
Coverage	Less	More	Better hiding power & fewer coats
Consistency	Often thin	Buttery & smooth	Easier to control & blend
Lightfastness	Fair to Good	Very Good to Excellent	Colours last longer without fading
Durability	Fair	Excellent	More resistant to cracking & wear
Resin / Binder	Basic	High quality	Better flexibility & adhesion
Price	Lower	Higher	Paying for quality ingredients
Best For	Learning, practice, studies	Professional work, commissions, galleries	Match the paint to your goals

WHAT MAKES THEM DIFFERENT?

STUDENT GRADE PAINT

- Lower pigment concentration
- More fillers and extenders
- Less expensive raw materials
- Colours may appear duller
- May require more coats
- Good durability for learning

PROFESSIONAL GRADE PAINT

- Higher pigment concentration
- Minimal fillers and extenders
- Premium quality pigments
- Colours are vivid and clean
- Better tinting strength
- Built to last for archival work

LOWER COST

Great for learning and experimenting



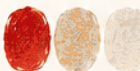
HIGHER QUALITY

Built for performance and longevity.

PIGMENT LOAD: THE BIG DIFFERENCE

STUDENT GRADE

More filler, less pigment
Less colour power



PROFESSIONAL GRADE

More pigment, less filler
More colour power



More pigment = more colour per brushstroke.
Less filler = better performance.

COVERAGE COMPARISON

STUDENT GRADE



PROFESSIONAL GRADE



Professional paint often covers better with fewer coats.

BEST USES

STUDENT GRADE IS IDEAL FOR

- ✓ Beginners learning techniques
- ✓ Practice and experimentation
- ✓ Studies and sketching
- ✓ Large background areas
- ✓ Schools and workshops
- ✓ Budget-friendly projects

PROFESSIONAL GRADE IS IDEAL FOR

- ✓ Professional artwork
- ✓ Commissions and exhibitions
- ✓ Fine detail and glazing
- ✓ Colour-critical work
- ✓ Archival and long-lasting pieces
- ✓ Artists who demand the best

TIP: You can mix both! Use student grade for large areas and professional grade for important details.



VALUE VS PRICE

Upfront Cost

Lower price



Higher price

Higher price



Long-Term Value

May use more paint, needs replacing sooner, can limit your results.

Use less paint, better results, lasts longer.

Quality paint often saves money in the long run.

EXAMPLE: SAME COLOUR, DIFFERENT RESULTS

Cadmium Red Hue



STUDENT GRADE

Less vibrant, more chalky, may shift in mixtures.

PROFESSIONAL GRADE

Richer, cleaner, more stable in mixtures.

TIP: Professional pigments stay truer when mixed and layered.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR ON THE LABEL

Always check the tube or jar for information about the paint you're buying.



PIGMENT NAME
The actual pigment used (or a close match).



PIGMENT CODE
Tells you the chemical family and identity.



LIGHTFASTNESS RATING
I = Excellent II = Very Good III = Fair IV = Poor



OPACITY
Transparent (see-through) or Opaque (hides).



SERIES / PRICE RANGE
Lower number = usually higher quality.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Choosing only by price
- ✗ Ignoring pigment load
- ✗ Not checking lightfastness
- ✗ Buying too many colours at once
- ✗ Thinking more expensive always means better for you



TAFAT TRUTH METER



- ✓ Professional paint has more pigment and less filler.
- ✓ More pigment gives stronger, cleaner, longer lasting colour.
- ✓ Lightfastness protects your artwork from fading.
- ✓ Student grade paint is perfect for learning and practice.
- ✓ The right paint depends on your goals and budget.



TAFAT RESEARCH

We compare technical data from manufacturers, independent tests, artist reviews and real-world experience to help you choose with confidence.

Our goal is simple: better information leads to better choices and better art.



TAFAT PRODUCT EVALUATIONS

We test and evaluate art materials using the TAFAT Editorial Standard. Recommendations will be published after comparing quality, performance, durability, transparency and value.

LEARN ABOUT OUR
EVALUATION PROCESS
TAFAT.co.uk/standard

OIL PAINT

THE RICH, TIMELESS MEDIUM

Oil paint is renowned for its depth of colour, smooth blending and long working time. Understanding the characteristics of oil paints will help you achieve better results and enjoy the process more.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ The types of oil paints
- ✓ Oil paint properties
- ✓ How to choose quality paints
- ✓ Best brushes and mediums
- ✓ Tips for better results



DID YOU KNOW?

Oil paint has been used by artists for over 600 years and is still one of the most versatile and expressive mediums available.



KEY FEATURES OF OIL PAINT



Rich Pigments

High pigment load delivers vibrant, lasting colour.



Long Working Time

Slow drying allows blending and reworking.



Depth & Texture

Creates a rich finish with beautiful texture.



Durable

With proper care, oil paintings can last for centuries.

TYPES OF OIL PAINT

Student Grade

More fillers, less pigment. Lower cost but less colour strength and coverage.

Artist / Professional Grade

Higher pigment load, better quality oils, stronger colour, more consistent results.

Heavy Body

Thick, buttery consistency. Holds brush marks and texture well.

HOW TO CHOOSE QUALITY OIL PAINT

- ✓ Look for a high pigment load.
- ✓ Check the pigment information (avoid excessive fillers).
- ✓ Choose lightfast colours (ASTM I or II).
- ✓ Consider the consistency that suits your style.
- ✓ Buy from reputable brands with good reviews.



BEST BRUSHES FOR OIL PAINT



Flat

For broad strokes and blocking in colour.



Filbert

For blending and soft edges.



Round

For detail and fine lines.



Fan

For blending and special textures.

Natural bristle brushes hold more paint and are ideal for oil.

OIL PAINT MEDIUMS



Linseed Oil
Increases flow and brilliance. Speeds up drying.



Stand Oil
Thicker, more glossy, slows drying.



Turpentine
Thins paint and cleans brushes. Use in a well-ventilated area.

CANVAS & SURFACE

- Use primed canvas or boards suitable for oil paint.
- Cotton canvas is common; linen is more durable.
- Acrylic-primed canvas works well.
- Always ensure the surface is clean and dry before painting.



OIL PAINT TECHNIQUES



Glazing

Thin, transparent layers for depth and luminosity.



Alla Prima

Paint wet-on-wet for a fresh, spontaneous look.



Impasto

Apply thickly for texture and dimension.



Scumbling

Use a dry brush to create soft, broken colour.

CARE & CLEANING



Clean brushes with brush cleaner or solvent.



Wipe excess paint from brushes immediately.



Store brushes properly to maintain their shape.



Allow paintings to dry fully before varnishing.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Using too much solvent (weakens the paint).
- ✗ Painting on an unprimed surface.
- ✗ Not allowing proper drying time between layers.
- ✗ Poor quality paints with low pigment load.
- ✗ Neglecting brush care.

BUYING GUIDE

- Invest in good quality paints and brushes.
- Buy the colours you use most.
- Start with a limited palette.
- Quality now saves money (and frustration) long term.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



- ✓ Oil paint offers exceptional colour, texture and longevity when used and cared for properly.

TAFAT PRODUCT EVALUATION



We are currently evaluating oil paints using the TAFAT Editorial Standard. Recommendations will only be published after comparing quality, durability, transparency, value, and real-world performance.

LEARN ABOUT OUR EVALUATION PROCESS

PAINT BRUSHES

THE RIGHT BRUSH, BETTER RESULTS

Your brush is an extension of your hand. The right brush improves control, delivers better results, and makes painting more enjoyable. This guide explains the different types of brushes, materials, shapes, and how to choose the best brushes for your style and medium.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ Different types of paint brushes
- ✓ Brush shapes and their uses
- ✓ Bristle types: natural vs synthetic
- ✓ How to choose quality brushes
- ✓ Brush care and maintenance tips



DID YOU KNOW?

A good quality brush can last for years with proper care. Many professional artists have brushes that are decades old!



BRUSH SHAPES AT A GLANCE

ROUND	FILBERT	FLAT	BRIGHT	FAN	ANGLE	MOP	LINER
Detail work, lines, fine point, and glazing.	Soft rounded edge. Blending, portraits, and general use.	Bold strokes, backgrounds, edges, and thick paint.	Shorter flat edge. Details, highlights, thick curves.	Blending, softening, textures, foliage.	Sharp edges, clean lines, corners, and geometric shapes.	Large washes, blending, and loose work.	Very fine lines, detail work, long strokes, signature.

BRISTLE TYPES

NATURAL BRISTLES

Made from animal hair.

- ✓ Excellent paint holding
- ✓ Great for oils and traditional techniques
- ✓ Durable and springy
- ✓ Best for thicker paints

Examples: Hog, Sable, Kolinsky Sable, Ox Hair



SYNTHETIC BRISTLES

Made from nylon or polyester.

- ✓ More affordable
- ✓ Great for acrylics and watercolours
- ✓ Consistent quality
- ✓ Cruelty-free
- ✓ Good for fine detail and smooth strokes

Examples: Nylon, Taklon, Polyester



BRUSH QUALITY GUIDE

QUALITY	FEATURES	BEST FOR
STUDENT ★	Basic materials, less paint holding, may lose shape	Beginners, practice, experimentation
INTERMEDIATE ★★★	Better materials, good snap, holds shape well	Regular painting, improving skills
PROFESSIONAL ★★★★	High quality bristles, excellent paint holding, precise	Serious artists, detail work, long-term use
PREMIUM ★★★★★	Finest materials, hand-shaped, superior control and longevity	Professional artists, master level work

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT BRUSH

- ✓ Consider your medium (acrylic, oil, watercolour).
- ✓ Choose the shape that matches your technique.
- ✓ Invest in a few good quality brushes, not many cheap ones.
- ✓ Look for good spring (the bristles return to shape).
- ✓ Ensure the handle feels comfortable in your hand.
- ✓ Match brush size to the scale of your work.



TIP: You don't need every brush. Start with a basic set and build as your skills and needs grow.



BRUSHES BY MEDIUM

ACRYLIC PAINTING

Synthetic brushes are most popular for acrylics.

- ✓ Stiff enough to handle heavy paint
- ✓ Resistant to wear
- ✓ Easy to clean
- ✓ Good for texture and details

Best Shapes: Flat, Bright, Filbert, Round, Fan



OIL PAINTING

Natural bristle brushes are traditional for oils.

- ✓ Holds more paint
- ✓ Excellent for blending
- ✓ Durable with proper care
- ✓ Great for impasto

Best Shapes: Flat, Filbert, Bright, Fan, Mop



WATERCOLOUR PAINTING

Soft brushes hold water and release it smoothly.

- ✓ Soft, absorbent bristles
- ✓ Create smooth washes
- ✓ Excellent control
- ✓ Perfect for delicate work

Best Shapes: Round, Mop, Rigger (Liner), Flat



BRUSH SIZE GUIDE

Brush sizes vary by brand, but here is a general guide.



Smaller sizes = detail work, fine lines
Larger sizes = broad strokes, backgrounds, washes

COMMON BRUSH SETS

BASIC STARTER SET (5-7 Brushes)

- Round (small & medium)
- Flat (small & medium)
- Filbert
- One larger brush (Mop or Flat)



ALL-PURPOSE SET (8-12 Brushes)

- Round (3 sizes)
- Flat (3 sizes)
- Filbert
- Bright
- Fan
- Detail/Liner



PROFESSIONAL SET (12+ Brushes)

- Various rounds
- Flats in multiple sizes
- Filberts
- Brights
- Fan, Mop, Angle
- Liner/Rigger



BRUSH CARE ESSENTIALS



Clean brushes immediately after use.



Use the right cleaner for your medium.



Reshape the bristles while damp.



Store brushes upright or flat.



Never leave in water.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Using the wrong brush for the medium.
- ✗ Not cleaning brushes properly.
- ✗ Letting paint dry in the ferrule.
- ✗ Storing brushes bristle-down.
- ✗ Pressing too hard and ruining the shape.



TIP: Treat your brushes well and they will serve you for years.



TAFAT BUYING GUIDE: BRUSHES

- ✓ Buy quality over quantity.
- ✓ Choose brushes suited to your medium.
- ✓ Look for strong ferrules (no loose shedding).
- ✓ Test the spring and shape.
- ✓ Read reviews and artist recommendations.
- ✓ Replace worn brushes that no longer perform.



TAFAT TRUTH METER



A good brush improves your control, results, and enjoyment. It's an investment that pays off with every stroke.

TAFAT PRODUCT EVALUATION

We test and evaluate brushes using the TAFAT Standard.

Our scoring includes: paint holding, shape retention, control, durability, comfort, and value for money.



LEARN ABOUT OUR EVALUATION PROCESS
TAFAT.CO.UK/STANDARD

CANVAS EXPLAINED

THE FOUNDATION OF EVERY GREAT PAINTING

Canvas affects how your paint looks, how it lasts and how enjoyable your painting experience will be. Understanding types, weaves and preparation helps you choose the right surface for your art.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ The different canvas types and their uses
- ✓ Canvas weaves and textures
- ✓ Priming and surface preparation
- ✓ Stretched canvas vs boards and rolls
- ✓ How to choose the right canvas for your art



DID YOU KNOW?

Prime-quality linen canvas can last for centuries. Many master paintings from hundreds of years ago are still on their original linen.

The surface supports the soul of the artwork.



CANVAS AT A GLANCE

COTTON CANVAS



Affordable, versatile and great for most techniques.

LINEN CANVAS



Stronger, more durable and preferred for museum-quality work.

PRE-PRIMED



Ready to paint. Saves time and ensures even primer.

UNPRIMED



Allows you to custom prime for special needs.

CANVAS BOARD



Rigid and flat. Great for studies and portability.

CANVAS WEAVE: TEXTURE & EFFECT

PLAIN WEAVE



Smooth, even surface. Best for fine detail and realism.

TWILL WEAVE



Diagonal pattern adds strength. Holds paint well.

SATIN WEAVE



Very smooth surface. Ideal for detailed and blended work.

HEAVY WEAVE



More texture. Great for expressive and impasto work.

TIP: A smoother weave shows less texture through thin layers of paint. Heavier weaves add character but may show texture in fine detail.

STRETCHED CANVAS vs OTHER OPTIONS

STRETCHED CANVAS



Ready to paint. Strong and durable. Comes in many sizes and depths.

CANVAS ROLLS



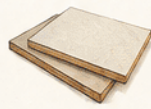
Flexible and economical. Great for large works and custom sizing.

CANVAS PANELS



Rigid and portable. Ideal for plein air and tight detail.

CANVAS BOARD



Flat, smooth and sturdy. Perfect for studies and practice.

CANVAS MATERIALS COMPARED

FEATURE	COTTON	LINEN
Source	Cotton plant fibre	Flax plant fibre
Durability	Good	Excellent
Strength	Good	Superior
Elasticity	Moderate	High (less likely to sag)
Surface	Smooth to medium texture	Natural texture, beautiful tooth
Best For	Students, practice, most techniques	Professional, archival, long-lasting artwork
Price	More affordable	Higher investment
Longevity	Many decades with care	Hundreds of years with care

TIP: Linen is an investment that rewards with longevity and beauty.

PRIMING: WHY IT MATTERS

Primer seals the canvas, protects it from oils and moisture, and creates the right surface for paint to grip.

BENEFITS OF PRIMING



Protects the canvas from acid and decay



Improves paint adhesion



Prevents oil from soaking into fibres



Creates an even painting surface

COMMON PRIMER TYPES



ACRYLIC GESSO
Fast drying, flexible, water resistant.



OIL PRIMER
Excellent adhesion for oil paint.



UNIVERSAL PRIMER
Works with both oil and acrylic.

TIP: Two thin coats of primer are better than one thick coat.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CANVAS

DETAIL & REALISM	Smooth weave cotton or linen.
EXPRESSIVE & TEXTURED	Heavy weave or raw linen.
ACRYLIC PAINTING	Cotton or linen, pre-primed.
OIL PAINTING	Linen preferred, oil-primed.
MIXED MEDIA	Heavier weight canvas or canvas board.
BUDGET FRIENDLY	Cotton canvas or canvas panels.

CANVAS WEIGHT (DENSITY)

Measured in ounces per square yard (oz/yd²)

- 6-8 oz** Lightweight – good for studies, practice and smaller works
- 9-11 oz** Medium weight – most popular for acrylic and oil
- 12-14 oz** Heavy weight – professional quality, less prone to sagging
- 16 oz+** Extra heavy – large canvases and traditional oil painting

TIP: Heavier is better for longevity, especially with oil paint.

DEPTH OF STRETCHED CANVAS

Also called "profile" or "gallery depth".



Deeper edges allow painting around the sides and give a more striking presentation.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Choosing the cheapest canvas for important work.
- ✗ Using unprimed canvas without proper preparation.
- ✗ Using too thin a canvas for large paintings.
- ✗ Ignoring the weave and texture for your style.
- ✗ Storing canvases in damp or extreme conditions.

TIP: Invest in the surface. Your painting is only as strong and beautiful as its foundation.

QUICK CANVAS CARE TIPS



Avoid extreme heat and direct sunlight.



Store in a dry, well-ventilated area.



Keep canvases flat or upright.



Handle with clean, dry hands.



A well-cared-for canvas will last a lifetime.

TAFAT TRUTH METER



- ✓ Quality canvas improves durability and results.
- ✓ Linen lasts significantly longer than cotton.
- ✓ Proper priming protects and enhances painting.
- ✓ The right canvas depends on your goals and technique.
- ✓ Good surfaces are worth the investment.



TAFAT RESEARCH

We compare technical data from manufacturers, artist reviews and real-world experience to help you choose with confidence.



TAFAT PRODUCT EVALUATION

We evaluate canvas products using the TAFAT Editorial Standard: durability, surface quality, priming, value and suitability for different techniques and artists.



COMING SOON: TAFAT CANVAS EVALUATIONS

We are testing and comparing leading canvas brands and surfaces. Evidence-based recommendations will be published after thorough evaluation.

EASELS EXPLAINED

FIND THE RIGHT SUPPORT FOR YOUR ART

A good easel supports your creativity. The right easel improves comfort, stability and the quality of your work. This guide will help you understand the different types of easels and choose the one that suits your style, space and budget.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ Different types of easels and their uses
- ✓ Key features to compare
- ✓ How to choose the right easel for you
- ✓ Portability, stability and adjustability
- ✓ Care and maintenance tips

DID YOU KNOW?

Easels have been used by artists for over 500 years! Leonardo da Vinci designed many of his own easels.

A stable easel leads to a free and focused mind.



TYPES OF EASELS AT A GLANCE

TABLETOP



Small and portable. Great for desks and beginners.

STUDIO



Most versatile. Suitable for various canvas sizes and techniques.

FIELD



Lightweight and portable. Ideal for painting outdoors.

H-FRAME



Very stable for large canvases. Perfect for big projects.

DISPLAY



For showing finished artwork in galleries or at home.

EASEL COMPARISON CHART

TYPE	BEST FOR	PORTABILITY	STABILITY	CANVAS SIZE	STORAGE
Tabletop	Small work, studies, hobbyists	★★★★★	★★★☆☆	Up to 20"	Very easy
Studio	Most artists, all-around use	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	Up to 60"+	Moderate
Field	Plein air painting, travel	★★★★★	★★★☆☆	Up to 24"	Easy
H-Frame	Large canvases, professional work	★☆☆☆☆	★★★★★	Up to 80"+	Requires space
Display	Presenting finished artwork	★★★★★	★★★★☆	Any size	Easy

★ = Low ★★ = Fair ★★★ = Good ★★★★ = Very Good ★★★★★ = Excellent

KEY FEATURES TO CONSIDER



Adjustability
Look for height, angle and canvas holder adjustments.



Stability
A wide base and strong construction prevent wobbling.



Portability
Consider weight, folding design and carrying options.



Material
Beech, pine and oak are popular. Metal easels are very durable.



Canvas Support
Check the maximum canvas height and weight capacity.



Storage
Does it fold flat? Does it have drawers or trays for supplies?

DETAILED LOOK: POPULAR EASELS

TABLETOP EASEL



- Compact and light
- Perfect for small canvases and practice
- Works well on tables and desks
- Affordable option for beginners

STUDIO EASEL



- Most popular all-round easel
- Adjustable height and tilt
- Suitable for many canvas sizes
- Strong, stable and long-lasting

FIELD EASEL (BOX EASEL)



- Built-in storage for paints and brushes
- Lightweight and easy to carry
- Great for outdoor and travel use
- Sets up quickly

H-FRAME EASEL



- Extremely stable for large work
- Holds heavy canvases
- Great for studios
- Not as portable, needs space

DISPLAY EASEL



- For displaying finished art
- Elegant and simple design
- Folds flat for storage
- Available in many materials

CARE & MAINTENANCE

- ✓ Wipe your easel regularly with a dry or slightly damp cloth.
- ✓ Avoid leaving your easel in direct sunlight or moisture.
- ✓ Tighten screws and bolts when needed.
- ✓ Oil wooden easels occasionally to keep the wood nourished.
- ✓ Store in a dry place to prevent warping or rust.



COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Buying an easel too small for your future needs.
- ✗ Choosing portability over stability (or vice versa).
- ✗ Ignoring weight capacity for large canvases.
- ✗ Not checking adjustability and comfort.
- ✗ Forgetting storage space at home.



QUICK TIP

If you plan to grow as an artist, invest in a good quality studio easel. It will support you for years and all your projects.



TAFAT BUYING GUIDE: EASELS

- ✓ Choose the easel that matches your main use.
- ✓ Check build quality and material.
- ✓ Consider your space and storage.
- ✓ Look for smooth adjustments and strong locks.
- ✓ Read reviews and compare before buying.



TAFAT TRUTH METER



A good easel improves posture, comfort, and results. It's not just a tool — it's part of your creative process.

TAFAT PRODUCT EVALUATION



We test and evaluate easels using the TAFAT Standard.

Recommendations will be published after comparing stability, adjustability, build quality, portability, storage and value.

LEARN ABOUT OUR EVALUATION PROCESS
TAFAT.CO.UK/STANDARD

COLOUR THEORY

UNDERSTANDING COLOUR, CREATING IMPACT

Colour theory helps artists understand how colours work together so you can create harmony, contrast, mood and depth in your artwork. This guide breaks down the basics of colour theory and shows you how to use it effectively.



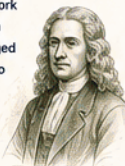
WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ The colour wheel and relationships
- ✓ Primary, secondary and tertiary colours
- ✓ Warm vs cool colours
- ✓ Hue, value, intensity and temperature
- ✓ Colour harmony schemes
- ✓ How to apply colour theory in art



DID YOU KNOW?

Most colour systems are based on the work of Sir Isaac Newton in 1666, who arranged colours in a circle to show their natural relationships.



THE COLOUR WHEEL



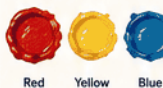
The colour wheel shows the relationship between colours. Understanding it helps you mix, match and balance colours.

- Primary Colours**
Red, Yellow, Blue
- Secondary Colours**
Orange, Green, Purple
- Tertiary Colours**
Red-Orange, Yellow-Orange, Yellow-Green, Blue-Green, Blue-Violet, Red-Violet

PRIMARY, SECONDARY & TERTIARY COLOURS

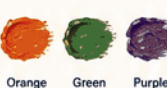
PRIMARY

Cannot be made by mixing other colours.



SECONDARY

Made by mixing two primary colours.



TERTIARY

Made by mixing a primary and a neighbouring secondary colour.



WARM vs COOL COLOURS

WARM COLOURS

Feelings of warmth, energy, excitement and movement.



COOL COLOURS

Feelings of calm, peace, relaxation and distance.



TIP: Warm colours move forward, cool colours recede. Use this to create depth in your painting.

COLOUR PROPERTIES

HUE	VALUE	INTENSITY	TEMPERATURE
The name of the colour.	How light or dark a colour is.	The brightness or dullness of a colour.	The warmth or coolness of a colour.

COLOUR HARMONY SCHEMES

Complementary	Analogous	Triadic	Split Complementary	Monochromatic
Opposite colours on the wheel. High contrast and vibrant.	Colours next to each other. Creates harmony and flow.	Three colours equally spaced. Balanced and vibrant.	One colour and the two colours beside its complement. Less intense contrast.	Different values and intensities of one colour. Simple and elegant.

COLOUR MIXING BASICS

Start with these basic mixes:



TIP: You can mix endless colours by adjusting the ratio and adding white, black or grey.

HOW TO APPLY COLOUR THEORY IN YOUR ART

CREATE MOOD

Use warm colours for energy and dramatic scenes. Use cool colours for calm and peaceful scenes.



FOCAL POINT

Use a strong contrast colour or warm colour to draw attention to the main subject.



DEPTH & PERSPECTIVE

Use cooler, lighter colours in the background and warmer, darker colours in the foreground.



BALANCE

Distribute colour throughout your painting so one area doesn't overpower the rest.



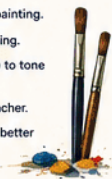
UNITY

Repeat colours and values throughout your artwork to create a sense of harmony.



COLOUR TIPS

- ✓ Limit your palette for a more cohesive painting.
- ✓ Test your mixes on a scrap before applying.
- ✓ Use neutral colours (grey, brown, beige) to tone down intense colours.
- ✓ Observe real life - nature is the best teacher.
- ✓ Practice! The more you experiment, the better your colour choices will become.



COMMON COLOUR MISTAKES

- ✗ Using too many colours - creates chaos.
- ✗ Colours that clash without purpose.
- ✗ Ignoring value (light and dark).
- ✗ Over-saturation - colours that are too bright.
- ✗ Not testing your colours before painting.



TIP: Step back and squint your eyes. Does your painting have good contrast and balance?

COLOUR INSPIRATION EXAMPLES

Sunset



Forest



Ocean



TAFAT BUYING GUIDE: COLOUR MATERIALS

- ✓ Buy high quality paints with good pigment.
- ✓ Choose a limited palette to start.
- ✓ Invest in good brushes in various shapes.
- ✓ Use quality paper or canvas.
- ✓ Read reviews and test brands.



TAFAT TRUTH METER



Understanding colour theory takes time, but it is one of the most powerful skills you can develop as an artist.

TAFAT PRODUCT EVALUATION



We evaluate colour materials using the TAFAT Standard.

Ratings include: colour quality, pigment strength, lightfastness, ease of use, durability, value for money, and real-world performance.

LEARN ABOUT OUR EVALUATION PROCESS
[TAFAT.CO.UK/STANDARD](https://www.tafat.co.uk/standard)



TAFAT

BETTER INFORMATION.

BETTER CHOICES.

BETTER LIVING.

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STUDIO SETUP

CREATE A SPACE THAT INSPIRES FOCUS AND FLOW

A well-set-up studio makes creating easier, safer and more enjoyable. It doesn't have to be big or expensive—just thoughtful. This guide will help you design a space that supports your creative journey.



1. LIGHTING: SEE COLOUR TRUE



NATURAL LIGHT

Best light for artists.
North-facing light is ideal
—soft and consistent.



ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

Use daylight LED bulbs
(5000K–6500K). Avoid
yellow bulbs.



AVOID GLARE

Position lights to the side,
not directly in front of
your canvas.



TIP: Check your colours at different times of day to ensure your lighting is consistent.



2. WORK HEIGHT & LAYOUT



EASEL HEIGHT

Center of the canvas
should be at eye level
when seated or standing.



TABLE HEIGHT

Elbows at about 90°
when working on a table.



MOVE FREELY

Ensure enough space to
step back and view your
work.



TIP: Good posture helps you paint longer and reduces strain.



3. STORAGE: KEEP IT SIMPLE



CLOSE AT HAND

Keep frequently used
items within easy reach.



CLEAR CONTAINERS

See what you have.
Label if needed.



DRAWERS & SHELVES

Organize by type:
paints, brushes, paper,
tools, etc.



DECLUTTER OFTEN

A tidy space = a clear
mind.



TIP: Use a rolling cart for mobility in small spaces.



4. VENTILATION & AIR QUALITY



GOOD AIR FLOW

Open windows when
possible.



LOW ODOUR PRODUCTS

Choose low-toxicity or
water-based paints.



EXTRA HELP

Use a small fan to
improve circulation.



PROTECT YOURSELF

Consider a mask when
using sprays or solvents.



TIP: Your health is part of your creativity. Breathe well, paint well.



5. BRUSH & PAINT ORGANIZATION



BRUSHES UP

Store brushes upright
to keep their shape.



DRY BEFORE STORE

Always wash and dry
brushes before putting
them away.



PALETTE AREA

Keep a dedicated
space for mixing.



PAINTS BY GROUP

Organize by colour
or type.



TIP: Good care makes your brushes last for years. Clean today, paint tomorrow!



6. PROTECT YOUR SURFACES



TABLE COVER

Use a mat, plastic,
or drop cloth.



FLOOR PROTECTION

Use a drop cloth,
cardboard or old
sheets.



SPLATTER ZONE

Be ready for drips
and happy accidents!



TIP: It's easier to protect your space than to clean it perfectly!



7. COMFORTABLE POSITIONING



SUPPORT YOUR BACK

Use a chair with good
back support.



FOOT SUPPORT

Feet flat on the floor or a
footrest.



TAKE BREAKS

Stand, stretch and rest
your eyes.



HYDRATE

Keep water nearby.



TIP: A comfortable artist creates more and enjoys more.



8. SMALL SPACE SOLUTIONS



WALL SHELVES

Use vertical space.



FOLDABLE FURNITURE

Easel or table that folds
away.



MULTI-USE CART

Store supplies and
move as needed.



PORTABLE SETUP

Pack a box with your
essentials.



TIP: Small space is not a limit—it's a creative challenge.



9. BEGINNER STUDIO BUDGET

ITEM	BUDGET (ZAR)
Starter Acrylic Paint Set	R300 – R600
Brush Set (basic)	R200 – R400
Easel (tabletop or floor)	R300 – R700
Palette	R50 – R150
Canvas Pad / Boards	R150 – R300
Storage (boxes / containers)	R100 – R300
Table / Work Surface	R0 – R500*
Lighting (LED lamp)	R250 – R500
TOTAL ESTIMATE	R1 400 – R3 450+

*Use what you have (an old table works!). Build your studio step by step.

TAFAT QUICK CHECKLIST: STUDIO SETUP

- ✓ Good lighting (natural + LED)
- ✓ Clean brushes & tools
- ✓ Comfortable working height
- ✓ Protected surfaces
- ✓ Organized storage
- ✓ Comfortable posture
- ✓ Good ventilation
- ✓ Inspiring and clutter-free



TAFAT TRUTH METER



A well-set-up space doesn't make you a better artist, but it removes distractions and helps your creativity grow naturally.

TAFAT FINAL WORD

Your studio is more than a room—it's your creative home. Keep it simple, keep it clean, and make it a place where you love to show up every day.

Your best ideas are waiting here.





ADVANCED COLOUR MIX IDEAS

AQUA MARINE BLUE & BEYOND

Aqua Marine Blue is a powerful, versatile colour that can create breathtaking waters, skies and moods when mixed with the right partners. These professional recipes will give you depth, atmosphere and realism.

UNDERWATER COLOURS

Create the sense of depth, light and mystery under the surface.

DEPTH LEVEL Shallow, Clear Water		+		+		Use for tropical shallows, reefs, and sunlit water.
	Aqua Marine Blue		Phthalo Green (Yellow Shade)		Titanium White	
Mid Depth Water		+		+		Balanced blue-green for moderate depth.
	Aqua Marine Blue		Ultramarine Blue		Phthalo Green (Blue Shade)	
Deep Ocean		+		+		Cool, rich and deep for open ocean.
	Aqua Marine Blue		Prussian Blue		Dioxazine Violet	
Very Deep / Almost Black		+		+		Use sparingly for abyssal depth.
	Aqua Marine Blue		Payne's Grey		Alizarin Crimson	

TIP: Add a touch of Burnt Umber to any deep mix for a natural, subdued look.

SKY & CLOUD COLOURS

Aqua Marine Blue brings beautiful freshness and atmosphere to skies.

Clear Day Sky		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Cobalt Blue		Titanium White	
Soft Horizon Sky		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Ultramarine Blue		White	
Stormy Sky		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Payne's Grey		Dioxazine Violet	
Sunset Sky (Cool Base)		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Alizarin Crimson		White	

TIP: Clouds reflect the sky. Paint them slightly warmer or cooler than the sky behind.

ATMOSPHERIC COLOURS

Create mood, distance and feeling in your paintings.

Misty Morning		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Lavender		White	
Rainy Mood		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Payne's Grey		White (very little)	
Fog / Distant Mountains		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Ultramarine Blue		White (lots)	
Night Sky (Cool Night)		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Prussian Blue		Dioxazine Violet	

TIP: Reduce contrast and saturation for more depth and realism in distance.

EXTRA NOTES & PRO TIPS



Layer for Depth

Build from light to dark. Start with thin glazes and deepen gradually.



Temperature Matters

Warm colours advance, cool colours recede. Use this to guide the viewer's eye.



Mix, Test, Adjust

Always test on a separate area. Wet paint looks darker when dry.



Observe Nature

Water and skies change constantly. Take reference photos.



Quality Paints

Professional colours have higher pigment load and better lightfastness.



Value is Key

Before colour, get your values (lights and darks) in place.



Glaze for Magic

Transparent layers create depth, glow and atmosphere.



UNDERWATER LIGHT EFFECTS

Simulate how light behaves under water.

Sunlit Ripples		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Titanium White		Yellow Green	
Caustic Highlights		+		+		
	Titanium White		Aqua Marine Blue		Tiny touch of Yellow	
Light Beams Through Water		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Ultramarine Blue		White (thin glaze)	
Surface Reflection		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		White		Phthalo Green (Yellow Shade)	

TIP: Use glazes (thin transparent layers) to build depth and light.

PROFESSIONAL NEUTRALS & GREY MIXES USING AQUA MARINE BLUE

Perfect for shadows, atmospheric perspective and subtle tones.

Cool Grey		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Burnt Sienna		White	
Blue Grey		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Ultramarine Blue		White	
Green Grey		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Raw Umber		White	
Neutral Grey		+		+		
	Aqua Marine Blue		Alizarin Crimson		Yellow Ochre	

TIP: Adjust warmth by adding more Burnt Sienna (warmer) or Ultramarine (cooler).

COMPLEMENTARY & HARMONIOUS PALETTES WITH AQUA MARINE BLUE

Use these ready palettes for balanced, professional colour schemes.

Ocean Harmony						Aqua Marine Blue, Phthalo Green, Ultramarine Blue, White, Sand / Ochre
Cool Coastal						Aqua Marine Blue, Cobalt Blue, Soft Grey, White, Warm Beige
Tropical Vibes						Aqua Marine Blue, Yellow Green, Coral / Orange, White, Sand
Dramatic Seascape						Aqua Marine Blue, Payne's Grey, Ultramarine Blue, White, Burnt Sienna

TIP: Limit your palette to 5 colours for harmony. Mix the rest!

REMEMBER

Aqua Marine Blue is not just a colour—it is a gateway to light, depth and emotion in your art. Master your mixes, master your paintings.



TAFAT TRUTH METER



✓ Understanding and mastering colour mixes is a skill that grows with practice and observation.

PRACTICE EXERCISE

Create a small study using at least 3 of the underwater mixes and 2 of the sky mixes above. Observe how they interact and build a mini scene.





ADVANCED COLOUR MIXING II

BEYOND THE BASICS: SKIN, EARTH, FOLIAGE, SHADOW, SUNSET, STONE & ATMOSPHERE

Great art lives in subtle colour. These professional recipes help you mix convincing, harmonious colours for any subject. Use these as starting points—then adjust to suit your light, mood and medium.



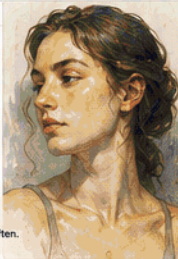
1. NATURAL SKIN TONES

Build from a neutral base, then warm or cool.

WARM NEUTRAL BASE	COOL NEUTRAL BASE
Titanium White + + + +	Titanium White + + + +
Yellow Ochre +	Raw Sienna +
Burnt Sienna +	Ultramarine Blue +
Alizarin Crimson (touch)	Alizarin Crimson (touch)
Ultramarine Blue (tiny touch)	Phthalo Green (Blue Shade) (tiny touch)

Add Yellow Ochre for warmth, Alizarin for bluish, blue for veins/shadows.

Add Alizarin for warmth/bluish, blue for cool shadows, Raw Sienna to soften.



TIP: Skin is rarely one colour—observe warm lights, cool shadows and subtle colour shifts.

3. LUSH, BELIEVABLE FOLIAGE GREENS (NO TUBE BLACK)

Create a full range of greens that keep life and light.

Sunlit Leaf Green	Yellow Green + Lemon Yellow + Titanium White (touch)
Mid Green (Balanced)	Sap Green + Yellow Ochre + Ultramarine Blue (tiny)
Deep Forest Green	Sap Green + Ultramarine Blue + Burnt Sienna (touch)
Blue Green (Shadow)	Phthalo Green (Blue Shade) + Ultramarine Blue + Alizarin Crimson
Muted Olive Green	Sap Green + Yellow Ochre + Alizarin Crimson (tiny)

TIP: Warm light, cool shadow. Add a touch of its complement to mute and deepen.

5. SUNSET & SUNRISE COLOURS

Glowing skies with smooth transitions.

Brilliant Sunset Orange	Cadmium Orange + Cadmium Yellow (or Yellow Ochre) + Alizarin Crimson (touch)
Fiery Sunset	Cadmium Red + Cadmium Orange + Alizarin Crimson (more)
Soft Peach Sky	Yellow Ochre + Alizarin Crimson (touch) + Titanium White (more)
Cool Distant Sky	Ultramarine Blue + Cerulean Blue + Titanium White (more)
Dusk Purple	Ultramarine Blue + Alizarin Crimson + White (tiny)

TIP: Warm near the sun, cool away from it. Soften edges for believable atmosphere.

7. ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE

Make distance believable.

Distant Mountains	Ultramarine Blue + Alizarin Crimson (tiny) + Titanium White (more)
Hazy Mid Distance	Ultramarine Blue + Burnt Sienna (tiny) + White (more)
Far Distant / Aerial	Cerulean Blue + White (much more) + Alizarin Crimson (touch)

TIP: Lose contrast and saturation as distance increases.

2. EARTH & LANDSCAPE COLOURS (WITHOUT BLACK)

Rich, natural earths using complements and neutrals.

Rich Warm Earth	Burnt Sienna + Ultramarine Blue + (more Ochre)
Cool Earth Brown	Ultramarine Blue + Burnt Sienna + Raw Sienna
Muted Earth Green	Sap Green + Burnt Sienna + Ultramarine Blue (tiny)
Dry Grass / Field	Yellow Ochre + Raw Sienna + Ultramarine Blue (tiny)
Deep Soil	Burnt Umber + Ultramarine Blue + Burnt Sienna

TIP: Build darks with complements (blue + orange) for depth and richness.

4. SHADOWS & CHROMATIC DARKS

Never use black—use colour for richer, more natural shadows.

Chromatic Dark (Universal)	Ultramarine Blue + Burnt Sienna
Cool Shadow	Ultramarine Blue + Alizarin Crimson (touch) + Burnt Sienna
Warm Shadow	Burnt Sienna + Ultramarine Blue (touch) + Alizarin Crimson (touch)
Deep Atmospheric Shadow	Prussian Blue + Burnt Umber + Alizarin Crimson (touch)

TIP: Chromatic darks contain colour—this keeps shadows lively and realistic.

6. STONE, ROCK & SAND

Natural, varied neutrals that never look flat.

Warm Stone	Yellow Ochre + Raw Sienna + Ultramarine Blue (touch)
Cool Grey Rock	Ultramarine Blue + Burnt Sienna + Titanium White (more blue)
Granite (Speckled)	Titanium White + Burnt Sienna + Ultramarine Blue (touch) + Yellow Ochre
Sand (Warm)	Yellow Ochre + Raw Sienna + Titanium White + Burnt Sienna (touch)
Sand (Cool)	Raw Sienna + Ultramarine Blue (touch) + Titanium White (more)

TIP: Observe tiny shifts—stones contain warm and cool notes together.

8. NEUTRALIZE & MUTE WITHOUT MUD

Control intensity while keeping clarity.

TO MUTE A COLOUR:	COMPLEMENT QUICK GUIDE	NEUTRAL MIX EXAMPLES
Too Bright? Add a touch of its complement.	Yellow ↔ Purple	Alizarin Crimson + Sap Green = Soft Brown
Too Warm? Add a touch of cool (Blue / Green).	Orange ↔ Blue	Ultramarine Blue + Yellow Ochre = Natural Grey
Too Cool? Add a touch of warm (Orange / Ochre).	Red ↔ Green	Cadmium Orange + Ultramarine Blue = Muted Warm Brown
Too Intense? Add a neutral (Raw Sienna, Yellow Ochre or White).	Green ↔ Red	
	Blue ↔ Orange	
	Purple ↔ Yellow	

TIP: Use tiny amounts and test. It's easier to add more than to fix over-muting.

PROFESSIONAL COLOUR HABITS

- Observe the subject, not the name of the colour.
- Mix on your palette, not on the canvas.
- Use a limited palette—master it deeply.
- Keep notes of your favourite mixes.
- Test how mixes dry—they always change.



TAFAT TRUTH METER



PRACTICE EXERCISE

- Create a study using:
- 5 skin tones
 - 5 foliage greens
 - 5 earths
 - 3 skies
 - 3 neutrals

Paint from life or strong reference.



BEFORE YOU BUY ART SUPPLIES

SMART CHOICES. BETTER RESULTS. LONG-TERM VALUE.

The right materials won't make you an artist—practice will.
But the wrong materials can hold you back.
Use this guide to buy with purpose, confidence and wisdom.



8 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU BUY

- What medium am I actually using?**
Different media need different properties. Buy for your medium and technique.
- Beginner, developing, or professional level?**
Match the quality to your skill level and goals—upgrade as you grow.
- Which specifications genuinely affect performance?**
Pigment, binder, lightfastness, paper weight, tooth, opacity, viscosity—know what matters.
- Will I use this often enough to justify the price?**
Cost per use is a smarter measure than price alone.
- Is a smaller professional-quality set better than a huge cheap set?**
Quality over quantity—fewer better colours outperform more poor ones.
- Are replacement parts or individual colours available?**
Refills, pans, nibs and nib units save money and reduce waste.
- Am I paying for quality or merely branding?**
Fancy packaging ≠ better performance.
- What do independent artists report about longevity and performance?**
Reviews from real users over time tell the truth.

QUALITY vs. QUANTITY

HIGH QUALITY, SMALLER SET

- ✓ Better pigment load
- ✓ More lightfast
- ✓ Smoother handling
- ✓ Less waste
- ✓ More consistent results
- ✓ Grows with you

Investment that improves your art.



VS.

LOW QUALITY, HUGE SET

- ✗ Weak pigment
- ✗ Fades quickly
- ✗ Hard to mix
- ✗ More waste
- ✗ Inconsistent results
- ✗ Frustrating to use

Costs more in the long run—time and money.



WHAT SPECIFICATIONS REALLY MATTER

- PIGMENT QUALITY**
Artist grade means higher pigment load and better performance.
- LIGHTFASTNESS**
Look for ASTM ratings (I-Excellent, II-Very Good, III-Fair, IV-Fugitive).
- PAPER WEIGHT & TOOTH**
Watercolour: 300gsm (140lb) ideal. More tooth for texture, less for detail.
- BINDER & VEHICLE**
Affects flow, drying time, adhesion and flexibility.
- OPACITY / TRANSPARENCY**
Choose based on your technique: layers need transparency.
- CONSISTENCY**
Too thin or too thick can affect control and finish.
- SAFETY & TOXICITY**
Especially important for studio practice and classrooms.
- ARCHIVAL QUALITY**
Look for acid-free, lignin-free, archival and fade resistant.



BEWARE OF...

- Marketing hype**
Big claims, little proof.
- Unclear labels**
No transparency, no trust.
- Extremely low prices**
Often low quality materials.
- All-in-one kits**
Convenience over quality.
- Ignoring your needs**
Wrong tool for the technique.



SMART BUYING TIPS

- ✓ Start small, but start good.
Build a core set of quality basics.
- ✓ Buy fewer colours, learn to mix more.
Skills beat more tubes.
- ✓ Test in-store if possible.
Feel, compare, ask questions.
- ✓ Keep notes on what works.
Track colours and brands you love.
- ✓ Upgrade gradually.
Invest where it makes the biggest difference.



“The cheapest product is not always the best value.
The most expensive product is not automatically the best quality.
BUY FOR THE WORK YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO CREATE.”



QUICK CHECKLIST BEFORE YOU CHECKOUT

- ✓ I know my medium and technique.
- ✓ I checked the key specifications.
- ✓ I compared quality and reviews.
- ✓ I know I will use it.
- ✓ It's worth the price over time.
- ✓ It fits my goals and style.



TAFAT TRUTH METER



- ✓ Good materials don't replace skill—but they remove unnecessary obstacles.

YOUR ART, YOUR CHOICE

There is no single best brand—only the best choice for you.

Know what you need, understand what you buy, and let your creativity lead.



HOW TAFAT EVALUATES ART PRODUCTS

INDEPENDENT. RESEARCH-BASED. HONEST.

TAFAT exists to cut through the noise. We test art products the way real artists use them—so you can spend less time guessing and more time creating. Our recommendations are based on evidence, experience and integrity, not advertising or sponsorships.

OUR 10-STEP EVALUATION PROCESS



RESEARCH & SHORTLIST

We research materials, read datasheets and gather artist feedback to create a shortlist worth testing.



PURCHASE INDEPENDENTLY

We buy products with our own funds—no freebies, no special treatment.



UNBOX & FIRST IMPRESSION

We assess packaging, labelling, accessibility and first usability.



STANDARDISED TESTING

We test using repeatable methods that simulate real studio use.



REAL-WORLD USE

Products are used in complete projects over time, in different conditions.



PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

We analyse results: application, behaviour, lightfastness, mixing, drying time, durability and more.



COMPARE & SCORE

Each product is scored against our 7 core criteria using a transparent rubric.



VALUE ASSESSMENT

We consider price in relation to performance and long-term value.



VERDICT & NOTES

We record strengths, limitations, best uses and who the product is right for.



PUBLISH & UPDATE

We publish honest findings and update reviews when formulations or prices change.



TIP: Good products today can change tomorrow. We re-test regularly.

HOW WE TEST (EXAMPLES)



COLOUR & PIGMENT POWER

Tint strength, opacity, granulation, staining, mixing range.



LIGHTFASTNESS

We reference ASTM ratings and independent lightfastness data.



APPLICATION FLOW

Smoothness, drag, levelling, control, brush response.



DRYING TIME & BEHAVIOUR

Open time, drying time, changes in sheen or value when dry.



MIXING COMPATIBILITY

How well it mixes with others in the same range and across other brands.



SURFACE COMPATIBILITY

Works on different papers, canvases, boards and surfaces.



DURABILITY TESTS

Rub, scratch, water and tape tests (where relevant).



LONG-TERM USE

We use products over weeks and months to see how they hold up.



TIP: One quick test doesn't tell the full story. Time always does.

WHAT WE DON'T DO

- ✗ We do not accept payment or free products for positive reviews.
- ✗ We do not let popularity or marketing influence our scores.
- ✗ We do not give perfect scores lightly—only when earned.
- ✗ We do not rank products we haven't personally tested.
- ✗ We do not stop updating reviews when things change.



OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU



HONEST ABOVE ALL
We tell you the truth, even when it's not popular.



EVIDENCE LED
We test, measure and research—so you get real answers.



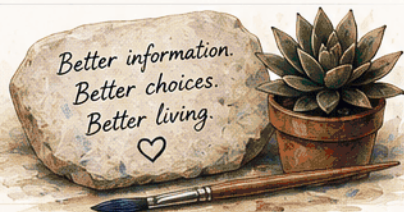
ARTIST FIRST
We are artists too. We know what it's like to create every day.



BETTER CHOICES
Better information leads to better tools and better art.



BETTER LIVING
When creation thrives, life becomes richer, calmer and more joyful.



THE 7 CORE CRITERIA WE SCORE

CRITERIA	WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WEIGHT	MAX
Performance	Does it perform as promised? Application, coverage, blendability, controllability.	20%	20
Durability	Lightfastness, water resistance, adhesion, strength, stability over time.	20%	20
Materials Quality	Quality of raw materials, pigment grade, binder/resin quality, paper fibres.	15%	15
Transparency	Clear labelling, ingredient disclosure, origin, safety data availability.	10%	10
Usability	Ease of use, consistency, ergonomics, cleanup, user experience.	15%	15
Price (Fairness)	Is the price fair for the quality and performance delivered?	10%	10
Long-term Value	Longevity, refill/replace options, versatility and overall return on investment.	10%	10
TOTAL		100%	100

90-100	EXCELLENT	★★★★★
75-89	VERY GOOD	★★★★☆
60-74	GOOD	★★★☆☆
40-59	AVERAGE	★★☆☆☆
0-39	POOR	★☆☆☆☆

Our scoring is weighted to reflect what matters most in real-world art-making.

WHAT INFLUENCES OUR VERDICT

- ✓ Consistency across batches and availability in the market.
- ✓ Support from the brand (documentation, education, customer service).
- ✓ Sustainability and responsible manufacturing practices.
- ✓ Value for different artist levels—beginner to professional.
- ✓ How it inspires creativity and helps you create your best work.



Great art comes from the balance of good tools and great ideas.

HOW TO USE OUR REVIEWS



Know your needs
Start with what you need the product to do—not the most expensive option.



Match to your level
Consider your skill level, goals and how often you will use the product.



Read beyond the score
Look at strengths, limitations and who it's best for.



Trust your experience
Our guides inform your choice—your hands and heart confirm it.



TAFAT

BETTER INFORMATION.

BETTER CHOICES.

BETTER LIVING.

TAFAT.co.uk



ART & CREATIVE STUDIO
ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

Better information. Better choices. Better living.

INDEPENDENT. RESEARCH-BASED. HONEST.

Thank you for reading. Every guide in this collection was built to help you choose artist materials with confidence — through transparent evidence, honest comparison, and real-world understanding. Explore the Art & Creative Studio Evidence Library at tafat.co.uk for more guides, and check back as TAFAT Product Evaluations are published under the TAFAT Editorial Standard.

HONEST ABOVE ALL

EVIDENCE LED

ARTIST FIRST

[TAFAT.co.uk](https://tafat.co.uk)

Editorial independence: Our recommendations are based on evidence and real-world performance, not sponsorships.

FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY - NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE!