

Answering the 10 most common questions

Acrylic Painting Made Easy

What you need to know to get started before you shop
for supplies!



WELCOME



Hello there! My name is Laurie Rothwell. I am a passionate and fearless (most days) self taught artist who loves to share with you that you do not have to paint perfectly...you just need a love for colors and movement and adventure!

I began back in 2011 in the basement of my home... longing to be home with my youngest of 8 kids, who was 3 years old at the time. I had no formal art education. In fact, my last art class was in the 9th grade. I just knew I loved all forms of art and creativity. I knew I loved teaching and when I put those two passions together Pieces of My Art began.

Pieces of My Art becomes a reality

In August of 2011, Pieces of My Art became mine, a gift from my Heavenly Father. I have held his hand as he filled my heart with confidence and ideas.

This dream actually begin back in 2006 when I was recently divorced and had no career path...nor college. I was a wife, mom and worked with my ex-husband at his printing company. Now scrambling to support my 6 children and be home when they were, I took a job as a para-professional in our home town. There was one student that I took to the art room for classes. Growing up as an art lover...it's a smell I will never for get. A mixture of tempera paints and crayons...maybe a little glue! I realized then, that I wanted to teach art... have my own classroom.

Through a series of events...a book...and some paintings in a restaurant, God began stirring in my heart to teach art to kids in my basement. I was scared would be an understatement! I thought I was cheating because I was not a real teacher. I thought I was cheating because I was following someone else's teaching style. I felt like a fake...and was terrified of being found out!

If it wasn't for God in my life, and the way he had already been teaching me to trust him. I would have never stepped out and started. I had learned life is risky...but the BEST things in life take courage...love, hope, trust...need I go on? I knew without a doubt God loved me and put the desires in my heart...so I did it!

God does care about your heart...your desires...your ideas...He put them there. As each day unfolds, know it's safe to hold His hand. He longs to take you on a grand adventure...because he loves YOU!

With no money to really start...I made flyers, dropped them off at the checkout line at the grocery store. I was soon teaching art classes to kids ages 4 years and up. I had a couple classes a week and I was bringing in a little extra money. I was able to pay for my supplies as people signed up and paid a monthly tuition. Each week I would come up with lessons...always trying to be completely unique to any thing my kids would do at school. Thank the Lord for Pinterest....already evidence of God's good timing!

I had a wonderful 2 years of teaching kids art in my basement. I even had a group of about 25 homeschooled kids I would go and teach...just like a real teacher. I would have two art shows a year to display the kids artwork. Along with some summer art camps, my little art business began to grow. As different people came into my life...new paths were discovered and the fall of 2013, I had my very first wine and paint class!

As life changed and dreams grew, I am now bringing my love for painting and teaching online! I am bringing my studio to you...where ever you want to get creative...exploring together what canvas and paint and brush can do.

READY? LET'S PAINT!

Laurel Rothwell

QUESTION

1. What supplies will I need for acrylic painting?



ANSWER

Paint...brushes...canvas...give me 2 of each please! Wait! Before you pull out that credit card, let's look at the basics. My list is short...and cheap.

- ✿ Canvas or canvas boards. (value packs are wonderful!)
- ***You can also purchase a pad of acrylic or mixed media paper
- ✿ You will need paint...5 colors are enough!
- ✿ 2 brushes....seriously!
- ✿ A cup of water.
- ✿ Paper towels
- ✿ A plate or tray to mix paint on (white coated paper plates are the best!)
- ✿ Some music and a favorite beverage is good too!
- ✿ A quiet corner with some good lighting.

I love keeping it simple.

**It's so easy to want shop for art supplies and you're like a
kid at the candy store...wanting one of each!
You love all the pretty colors and all the brushes.**

Make shopping for supplies easy:

If you would like to get the same paints and brushes I use, I have added the link below. Do you know another brand you love and it mixes beautifully? Please share with me!

[Find supplies here](#)

I am an affiliate for Blick Art Supplies...and if you purchase through the link above...I will get a little bit of money to shop for more art supplies....but it does not cost you anything extra. And we both know art supplies make us happy!

Want to see more?

Check out this [video about my favorite supplies!](#)

QUESTION

2. How do I prepare my canvas, or another surface for painting?



When you purchase a canvas, they are already pre-primed, so no need to do anything to prep it. The exception would be if you are planning to make your own canvases from canvas cloth. Not me! There are so many sizes and brands to pick from, but I suggest starting with something very inexpensive, such as value packs from your local craft store or online. And start with a smaller size such as a 12x16" or smaller to start out. They come in flat boards or canvas stretched on wood with a depth of 3/4" or more.

Never throw out a used canvas!

Painting on other surfaces:

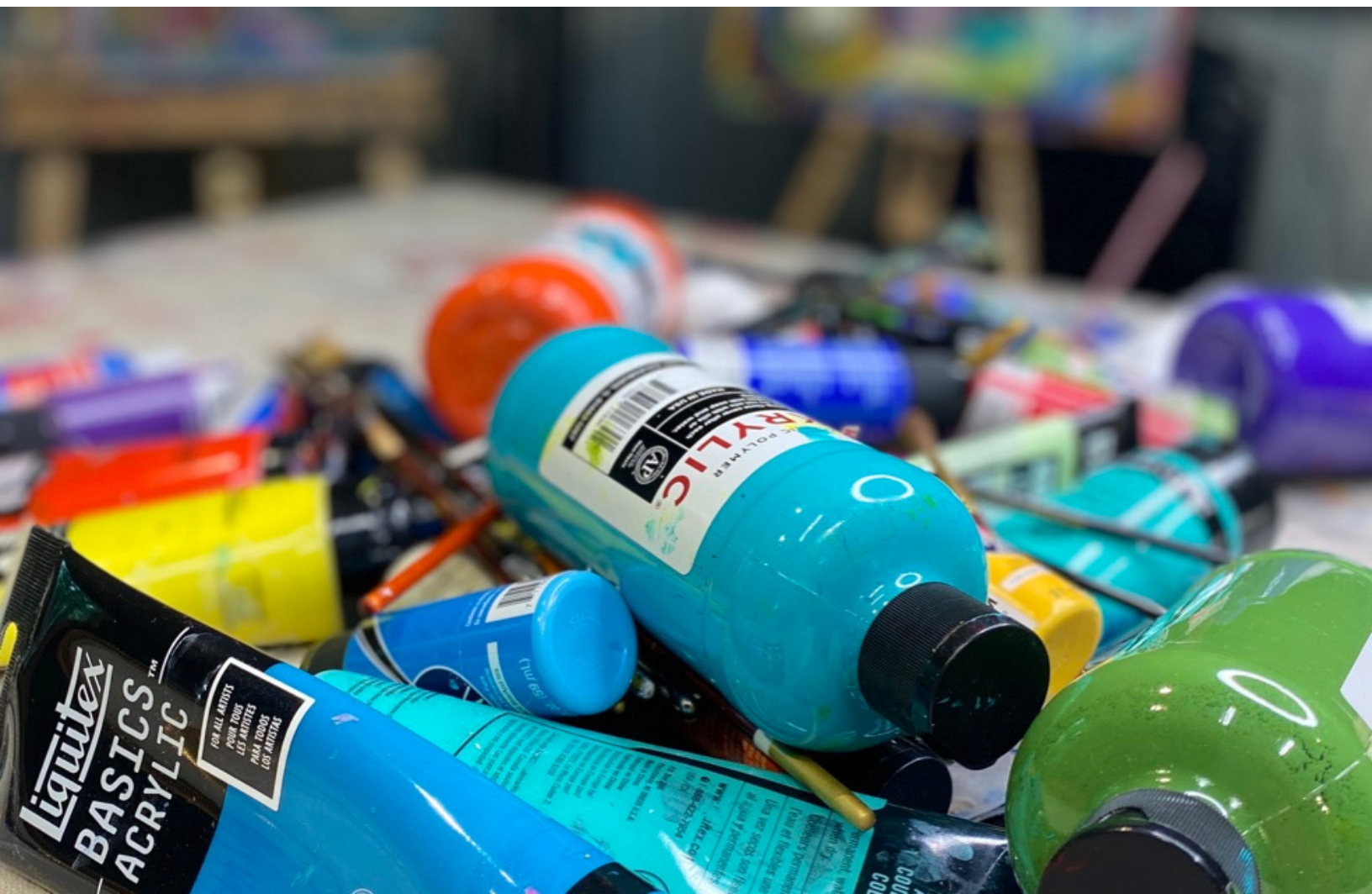
We artists are always thinking of creative ideas to try out our painting skills. I have listed a few of some that I have tried out and love!

-  Used canvas: never throw away a painting you don't like! You can easily paint over it with white, black or any color and start fresh with a new painting.
*Thrift stores are great places to find cheap used canvases. If you are not sure what kind of paint was on it to begin with (oil vs. acrylic), you can re-prime it with gesso and you are good to go!
-  Paint on wood: I love painting on pieces of pine wood. If you have access to a way to cut it you can purchase a variety of lengths at your local hardware store. I have found that the easiest way to "stain" my board is just use watered down black paint. Brush it on quickly then wipe off with a paper towel. Re-apply to get the darkness you want. Then paint with chalk paint or just start with your acrylic. Some colors show up best with a layer of white under them first.
-  Card board or other porous surfaces: Paint a layer or two of gesso on it first and you will be good to go! If you are just practicing on cardboard a couple of thin layers of white paint will be good enough. *Try painting an old book cover!

Watch this [video](#) on prepping wood or canvas to look distressed.

QUESTION

3. What brand of acrylic paint should I use?
And does it make a difference?



ANSWER

I have used the same brand for over 10 years and they have proven over and over to mix beautiful colors. The application is easy and goes a long way. The pigmentation retains beauty as colors are mixed together. Not all paints mix the same...and because I mix all my own colors the brand is of super importance. I have taught classes in my studio for over 10 years and the Blickrylic Economy Acrylic Polymer has never failed me. Of course there are other brands out there, but if you are planning to make your own colors I would encourage you to stay away from the "craft" paints and look in the art section of your store of choosing. Color choice does matter. phthalo blue mixed with chrome yellow will look totally different than ultramarine blue mixed with cadmium yellow for instance.

Paints that come in tubes do not necessarily mean they are a better quality, although many are. Keep your purchases to minimum and try the paints I stated above in the mixing color set. You will have plenty of paint and never run out of colors!

I will not claim to have tried them all...or even very many.

**What I will tell you about are the ones that are my
absolute favorites.**

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QUESTION

4. How do I make all the different shades and tones of color when we just use only five colors of paint?



How do you get different tones? How do you get different shades? How to you create brighter colors? All of this from only 5 paint colors? Think of your primary colors, which we know are red, yellow, blue....then add black and white. When you put yellow and red together, you're going get orange. You put yellow and blue together, you're going get green. You put red and blue together, you're going get purple. It sure doesn't stop there!

If you want lighter shades you add white. If you want darker, deeper tones, you add black. I have specific videos that I have done that show you exactly how to mix these colors together. In fact every thing I teach is immersed in color mixing!

**You just do it. You just start making colors. Fall in love
with playing with paint!**

I have taught myself how to make all of my own colors by just doing it.

Don't be afraid. Get a canvas that doesn't matter, or canvas paper or whatever and start playing!

Here are a few tips:

-  Save paint and money, do not mix a puddle of paint on your plate. Instead, Take a small amount of first one color on your brush, then dip in a little of another and paint it onto your surface. Try some white...then some black. Or a third color. What does yellow with a little black make? What do you see?
-  It dries quickly, and so you can change it as you're painting. So just put a little bit on your brush, learn the colors as you practice, you'll begin to know how much of each, maybe you want more of a blue violet or red violet..grab a little bit more on your brush. Start with little bits and you can always add more.
-  If you colors are looking all the same or a little muddy, clean your brush out and start making more colors!

How many shades of blue can you make?

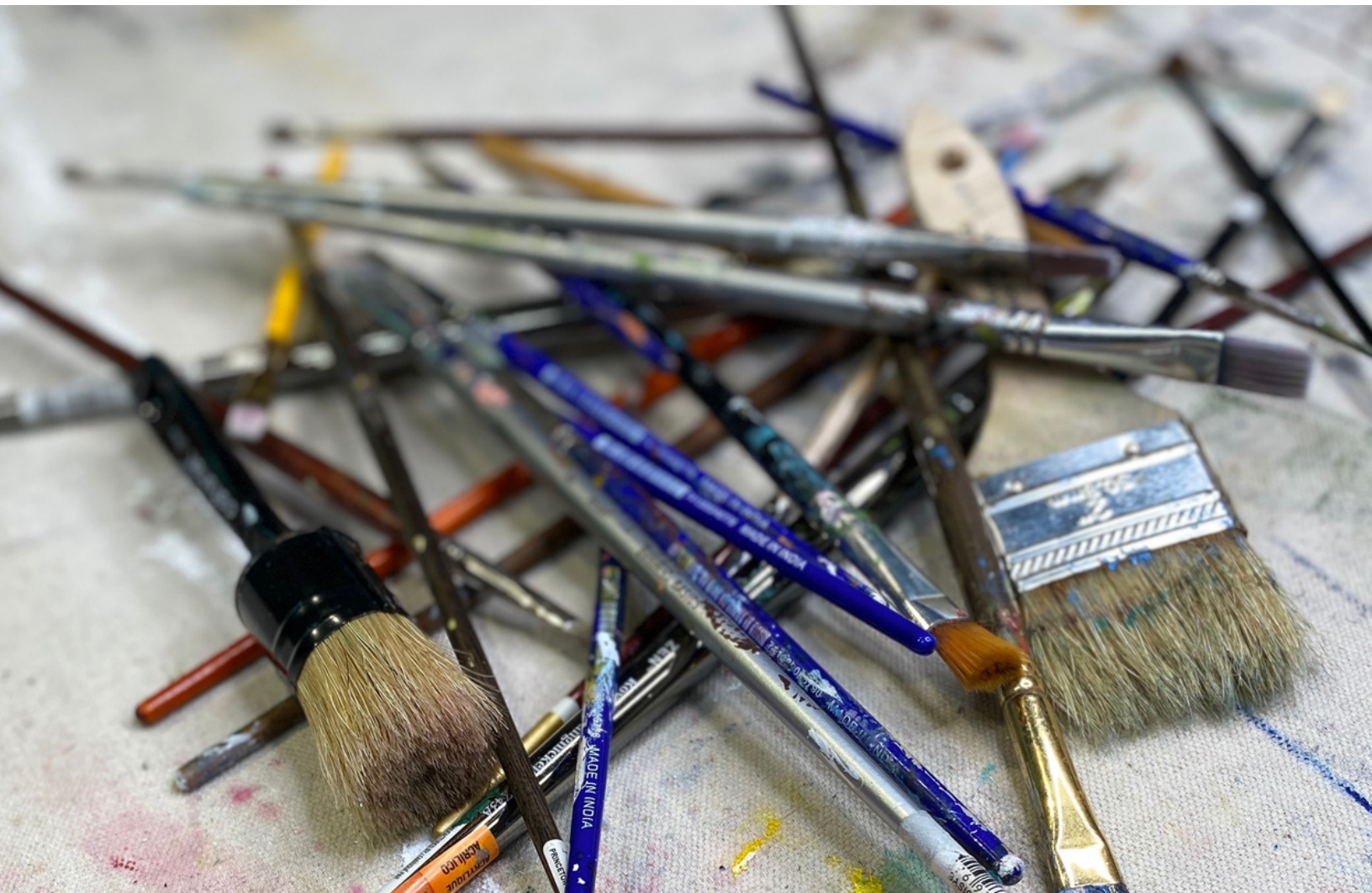
Don't forget to try ti with a little yellow...and then a little red.

How light can you make your colors...or dark?

Want to see me in action mixing colors? You can watch me [HERE](#)

QUESTION

5. What kind of techniques or tools could I use to create texture in my painting?



ANSWER

Texture is just the way you use your brush or whatever other tool you're using. It's the way it shows up. Sometimes if we blend it really smooth, there's not really any texture. What if we want to have a tree full of leaves or some layers of flowers? You will want to add some texture to it. Texture doesn't always mean that you can feel it. It also is how you see texture. And so one thing I encourage my painters is to let your brush strokes show.

How you use your brush...the direction you do your brush stroke...those are ways to create texture. Using your fingers often will create texture. I love adding a little finger work to my painting to create some texture.

Palette knives, definitely need a little bit heavier body paint for that to work really well. But that will create texture. Toothpicks, pens, sticks, fabric, old credit cards...anything you can come up with will create texture.

Again, become playful with your paint and you'll learn so many unique ways to create texture.

**Letting different colors show rather than blending them
creates texture.**

Let your brush strokes show.

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QUESTION

6. How do I clean my brushes?



So important. I cannot count how many paintbrushes I ruined in my life, even as an adult. I have a bunch of paintbrushes and many of them are ruined because I did not clean them properly.

You don't have to buy any specialty soap for paintbrushes, but one thing I found that works wonderful is a mixture of Murphy's Oil Soap and Dawn Dish Soap.

You don't have to buy any specialty soap for cleaning paintbrushes

I mix together about half Murphy's Oil Soap and half Dawn Dish Soap. It is not important and the exact quantity. Often I will even mix a lot more Murphy's than Dawn soap.

Here are a few cleaning tips:

-  Have a mixture already made in a empty bottle on hand to use when needed...after EVERY time you paint.
-  If a brush gets overlooked and your acrylic paint is dried, coat with Murphy's oil soap and let soak over night. (Make sure all the bristles are covered in it. Gentle work the paint out by repeating soap and water.
-  Clean your brush by laying the bristles on their side in the palm of your hand rather than pushing them straight down and causing them to spread out. Try to maintain the shape of the brush as much as possible when you are cleaning it.
-  Lay your brushes flat to dry, reshaping them first. Do not set upright in a container or leave them in your rinse water bristles down. (the tip of the bristles will curve)

QUESTION

7. How do I slow down or speed up the drying time of acrylic paint?



ANSWER

The first thing to consider is the temperature of the room of where you're painting. Paint dries faster in warmer than cooler areas. High humidity slows down drying time as well.

Be mindful of the more layers of paint you have on that didn't dry before you added more, the longer it's gonna take to dry. Sometimes you'll find that the top layer dries and then you paint on it and you're thinking it's dry, but it was so thick that you break through like a skin...like a blister. You'll uncover wet paint underneath and then all of a sudden that paint starts blending into whatever you're painting. And then you may end up with a mess. Depends on what you're trying to do. So it is important to, depending on the painting, to control the drying time. If you want it to dry faster for you, do thin layers and build it up gradually.

You'll learn how to work with acrylic and build your confidence as an artist the more you play with paint.

When you paint with me, you'll learn how I move through some things pretty quickly, not fuss about details at first, so I can work with it as it's wet.

There are mediums that you can add to your paint to slow the drying time. You would look for an acrylic medium, retarder gel.

It slows down the speed at which your acrylic paint dries, if you want to work with it wet a little bit more,

There are different brands you can get. I personally do not have a favorite as I do not use them,

QUESTION

8. What paint brushes do I need?



Does the brand matter, how many different ones do I need? What sizes? There's so many different shapes, so I'm going, again, just like the paints, tell you the ones that are my favorite and let you decide what you like by playing with them.

Two brushes is plenty for starting out!

All my paintings have mostly been done with the two small brushes pictured...occasionally I will use the big chippy brush to get a background on quickly.

 One is Liquitex Basic, and it's actually called a bright similar to a flat brush. Mine is size 8. I often tell people just get a half inch flat brush.

I could paint almost everything I want to paint with this one brush aside from something really small. But it's amazing what this one brush will do for your painting!

 The other favorite brush that I have is a Blick Scholastics Wonder White, size 4 round brush. You can make a really nice, very fine tip on the end.

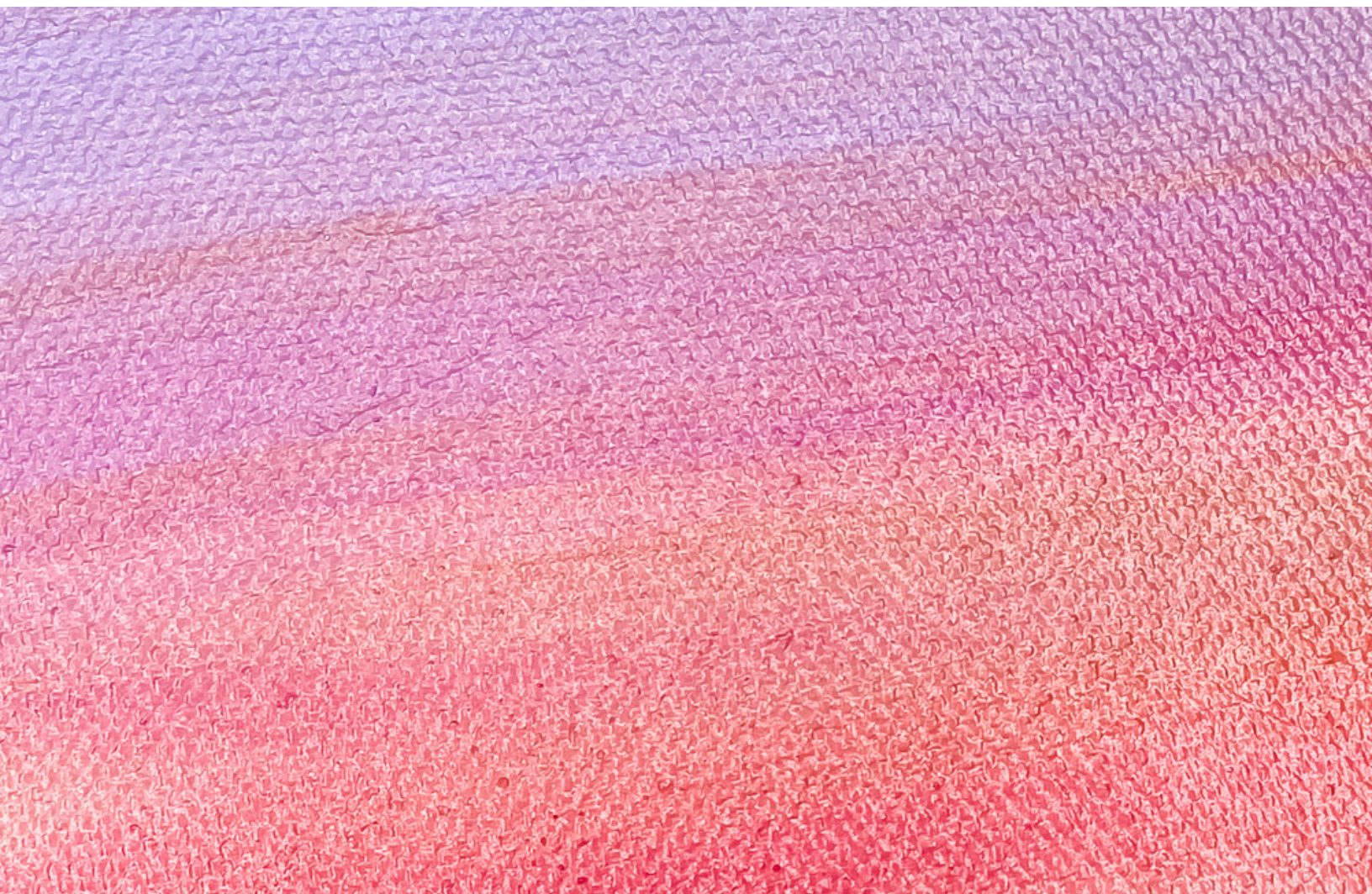
Really small, thin lines with a brush takes practice. Most of us do not start out making really good lines. It just comes with doing it over and over and over.

 Another brush not pictured is just a 2 inch chippy brush I get from a hardware store.

You're gonna get a recurring theme here. You need to paint often, even if it's just 15 minutes here and there, you'll get better every time you do it. It may seem like you're learning more of the ways not to do things, then you are learning how to do things, but those build on your ability to paint beautifully and become more confident as an artist.

QUESTION

9. How do I create smooth even brush strokes?



ANSWER

"How do I blend my paint? So there's no...you know...brush marks?"

Many artists think they don't want to see any brush strokes.

Learning the right amount of paint to have on your brush will come with practice. Typically we don't have enough paint. If it's drying quicker than you're getting it blended add more paint to your brush. You want your paint to slide...like butter...yet not so thick you can scoop it off.

Too much paint is difficult to manipulate your color. It will tend to blend back into the same color.

Using long brush strokes with enough paint the it reaches from one side of the canvas to the other helps eliminate brush marks. Start with a smaller canvas to practice. Adding a very small amount of water to your brush helps too. Be careful it's not too wet or you will have thin watery paint dripping down your canvas.

**You want your paint to slide...like butter...yet not so thick
you can scoop it off.**

If you are going for a subtle transition between one color to the next, for a sunset for instance, start with the lightest colors first and sweep all the way across your canvas. White with yellow as you move your way up...or down add small amounts of yellow and red, adding a little white as you go. Move into more red still using some white. If you are seeing harsh lines between the colors take white and your lightest color you used and paint across the line like it's an eraser. The key is doing this while the paint is still wet, so moving quickly is important. Once you have gotten away from any yellow in your mix you can start adding blue to your red and white mix. Remember to clean your brush out before adding blue if you still have yellow in it...your sky will soon be green! Perfect for a tornado!

Here is a short video tutorial all about blending your colors...you can watch it [HERE](#)

Two things to remember...more paint OR a tiny bit of water will stretch your paint and practice is the BEST teacher!

QUESTION

10. What are some common mistakes that I can avoid when starting to paint with acrylic painting?



Recapping a few things that I went over is, one, you do not need all the paint. You don't need all the brushes. Start with something simple. A few colors, if you're wanting to learn mixing,

Check out the links that I shared for the brand of my favorite mixing colors. It does matter what brand you use, and it does matter what colors you use to make your colors.

Otherwise, just pick your favorite colors and then use those to see if this is something you really like....you will!

**Keep it simple with just five paint colors and two brushes,
and not go crazy with all the stuff.**

All my paintings have mostly been done with the two small brushes pictured...occasionally I will use the big chippy brush to get a background on quickly.

-  Show up with expectancy rather than expectation. Expect to learn, to make mistakes, to have so much fun. Do not expect to have a perfect painting that looks just like what you saw or imagined. It takes practice and trying things that you will find won't work...but in the process you will find things that will. It will be a beautiful surprise at times!
-  Another common mistake would be thinking you're gonna paint every single day. Life gets in the way. Don't start out with remodeling a room into a studio. Keep it simple and handy. Find you a small area that you can easily put your stuff away. You don't have to have an easel to paint with. If you want an easel, get a tabletop or a little corner one that can stay put.
-  Starting with too big of a canvas can be discouraging. Start small. I love painting on a 6x6" canvas that I can do in less than an hour...and even repaint as many times as I want! Getting all the playfulness you can out of painting will make you a happy artist!

Have grace for yourself. Don't aim for perfect. Enjoy the process.
Enjoy the fun. Enjoy the mixing the colors. Enjoy the textures that you make.
Let's paint!

BEFORE YOU GO...

Are you afraid of that blank canvas...that you'll mess it up somehow?

FIND OUT WHAT 5 COLORS,

A FEW BRUSHES, AND A CANVAS CAN DO FOR YOUR HEART!

Join us online 3 times a month for exclusive heART Club paintings! Laurie teaches LIVE online and the replays are always available for members to access at any time.

Meet new friends and enjoy painting from your home, wherever you live! Have fun with painting that is therapy for your heART! Come join us in the studio... online!

And now...

mini-heART Club...our brand new club for the busy artist who wants to keep the brush handy!

Both clubs will be opening their doors soon for new members!

Get on the waitlist today so you can be first to know when the doors open!

[TELL ME WHEN THE DOORS OPEN!](#)



Subscribe to the Pieces of My Art Newsletter with Laurie Rothwell!

Get expert painting tips, upcoming classes and
tutorials both on-line and in studio.

