

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR *Oil Painters*



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S T U D I O

Table of Contents

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR OIL PAINTERS.....	2
<i>Brushes</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Paints</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Solvents and mediums.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Painting surfaces (substrates).....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Other important tools</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Don't forget.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Resources.....</i>	<i>10</i>

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR OIL PAINTERS

If you're new to oil painting, or you're looking for ideas and tips, my goal with this guide is to provide you with my best recommendations based on my own experience. There are so many options to choose from, so everything included within are my current personal preferences. Of course, these may change as I try new things.

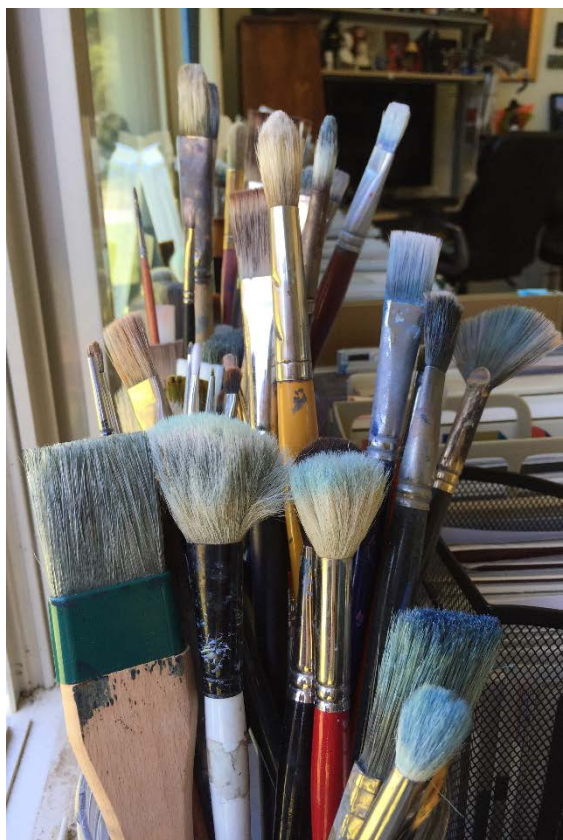
You can also visit [my art supplies page on Amazon](#). There you can find many of these supplies, and more. (Some of the links below may be affiliate links.)

Brushes

I've used a wide variety of brushes over the years, from inexpensive to high-end. And my preference has evolved during that time, as well. For instance, I never used filberts until a few years ago, and today, they're one of my favorites. I also tend to favor stiffer brushes now than I used to.

For most paintings, I use a variety of brushes. In the end, any brush that gives you the desired effect is good. Just remember, there is no "magic brush" that can give you an advantage over many hours of practical experience.

I encourage you to try different types of brushes. Each person will have their own personal preference, from soft to stiff, from short to long-handled and all the various shapes and bristle types. You'll learn the most by experimenting.



A few tips:

- Start a painting with your larger brushes and paint with them as long as you can. Painting with larger brushes helps prevent you from detailing too early.
- As you work on larger canvases, the size of the brush will get larger accordingly.
- In my experience, I've found I use stiffer brushes for the early to mid-stage of a painting. I may switch to softer bristles later in a painting when I'm detailing. Large soft bristle brushes also good for overall blending.

I've been on the lookout for some time for a brand of brushes that I could wholeheartedly recommend to other artists. So when Princeton Artist Brush Co. approached me about being a brand ambassador, I was very interested since I've used their brushes for years. After trying their current line, I'm pleased to say their quality is excellent and a pleasure to paint with. Plus, I discovered a few new brushes I hadn't tried before and now really like.








If you're looking for a line of quality brushes, I'm delighted to be able to highly recommend **Princeton Brushes**. Check out all their brushes at www.princetonbrush.com. I've also included a selection of brushes in [my art supplies page on Amazon](#).



While I personally have accumulated a large collection of brushes over the years, the following brushes are what I primarily use and what I use them for.

I recommend you have these shapes in a variety of sizes in your collection, too.

(Note: the size number will vary from brand to brand.)

Brush		What I use for
Filbert		Blocking in and detailing clouds; also portraits. Filberts are one of my favorite brushes.
Flat		Blocking in; good blending brush. A general overall good choice.
Script Liner		Painting details, especially tree limbs and grasses. (Also known as a Liner or Rigger.)
Fan		Painting grasses (an old damaged fan or with custom adjustments).
Mop		Blending & softening. Must be used with caution to not over blend.
Round		A general use brush; good for portraits, clouds, general blocking in. Old ones, or custom adjusted, are great for foliage textures.
Chip		Inexpensive hardware store brush used for blocking-in on large canvases; also good for grass textures.
Palette knife		Mixing paint, texture and pulling straight lines (e.g. dead grasses and sticks). Also good for adding impaste straight line highlights.

Paints

Like many artists, I have my favorite go-to colors. These form the basis for mixing most colors I need, for most landscapes.

I'm an advocate for using the best quality paints that you can afford. You really do get what you pay for with paint and it's harder to get good results with cheap paint. So I recommend you use professional grade paints and avoid student grade (which include more fillers and less pure pigment).

Currently, my favorite brands of oil paint include (in no particular order): Williamsburg, Old Holland, Michael Harding, Gamblin, Winsor & Newton, LUKAS, Grumbacher, Georgian and Charvin.

On the following page are some of the basic colors I use along with a few convenience colors that help speed mixing and which vary with the specific painting. For example, a nighttime scene might have a very different palette.

The list of convenience colors can get long. I believe it's much better to keep your palette more limited, especially if you're still learning. Color mixing is something that's important to learn and there is no better way than K.I.S. (Keep it simple!) All you NEED is a blue, a yellow, a red, and a white. You can mix almost anything for painting from those.

You'll also notice I don't include black on my palette. I haven't used black now for several years and I haven't missed it at all. When I was using black I found my color mixing choices became lazy and lacked subtlety. Instead, I prefer to mix whatever dark color I need to create rich shadows. So these days I often use Ultramarine Blue and Cassel Earth to achieve beautifully rich shadows. Other combinations like red-green pigment combinations can yield good results as well for earth tone shadows.

PRO TIP: Remember, you can tone down bright colors, but you can't brighten dull colors.

My basic palette includes:		My go-to convenience colors:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cadmium Red Light – Cadmium Red Medium – Cadmium Yellow Light – Cadmium Yellow Medium – Cobalt Blue – Ultramarine Blue – Titanium White 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alizarin Crimson – Cadmium Yellow Deep – Cadmium Orange – Chromium Oxide Green – Pthalo Green – Sap Green – Pthalo Blue – Cobalt Violet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Burnt Sienna – Burnt Umber – Raw Sienna – Raw Umber – Cassel Earth – Van Dyke Brown – Yellow Ochre 	

PRO TIP: I personally prefer the Lukas 1862 brand of Cassel Earth, which has a unique, purplish cast. I like to use it mixed with Ultramarine Blue and Titanium White for cloud shadows. If you can't find this brand, you can mix Van Dyke Brown with a bit of violet and white to achieve something similar.



Solvents and mediums

This last year I made a significant change in my studio practice.

For many years I used the same solvent for cleaning my brushes and thinning my paint. But after suffering with daily headaches for many months (that the doctors couldn't solve), I began looking at other options. That's when I tried Chelsea Classical Studio's products. For all the stages after the imprimatura, I now use Chelsea's Lavender Brush Cleaner. And the headaches are gone! (I still use odorless mineral spirits, but *only* during the short imprimatura stage of my paintings.)

I also use more mediums in my daily painting. This ensures good pigment bonding in each layer. Today I mix my paints using the Lean and Fat Mediums from Chelsea.

If you're not familiar with mediums, here's an excellent explanation from Gamblin: "All painting mediums affect oil colors from the tube in the following ways: they modify the working properties of the paint, influence drying rates, increase transparency and alter the surface quality..." [of the painting].

Here are the solvents and mediums I currently use and what I use them for.

Solvents & mediums	I use for
Gamsol by Gamblin	Odorless mineral spirits (OMS), used for thinning oil paint during the imprimatura stage.
Walnut Oil by Chelsea Classical Studio	Used to ensure there's sufficient oil for pigment bonding in my oil paint wash during the imprimatura stage.
Lavender Brush Cleaner by Chelsea Classical Studio	An alternative to petroleum-based solvents, used for rinsing brushes.
Lean Medium by Chelsea Classical Studio	Used in the early stages to mix the paint and increase flow.
Fat Medium by Chelsea Classical Studio	Used in later stages of a painting to mix the paint and increase flow.
Liquin by Winsor & Newton	An alkyd medium, used to speed the drying time of oil paints.
Artists' Painting Medium by Winsor & Newton	A linseed stand oil, used for oiling out dull areas of "sunken" color; it returns oil into areas that need it.

Painting surfaces (substrates)

I currently prefer painting on stretched linen. Why? I like the organic texture and the surface variation. It's just a pleasure to paint on. But you can also choose from gesso primed cotton canvas or panel (and other variations).

PRO TIP: If you're buying pre-primed canvas or panel and prefer a smoother surface, consider adding another couple coats of gesso and sanding in between until you get the texture you prefer.



Other important tools

- Palette: I've used a glass palette for many years because, quite frankly, I find it the easiest to keep clean. I also add something underneath that's a mid-tone gray so the glass is a neutral color (better to gauge color).
- Mahl stick: this is an indispensable tool! The [Mahl Stick](#) has been used by artists for hundreds of years to keep your hand steady when painting details, as well as keeping your hand off the wet paint.
- Easel: there are a wide variety of easels available. Choose one that meets your needs. If you have space limitations, I've added a [multi-function easel](#) to my own collection that's very versatile.
- Drawing: for transferring my drawing to the canvas I typically use Conte sticks or pencils. You can also use vine charcoal, pastel sticks / pencils, or graphite sticks / pencils. Once you transfer your drawing, you'll need to fix it with a workable fixative spray before you start painting so your lines don't dissolve. Alternatively, you can also create your drawing lines on the canvas using thinned down acrylic paint (no need to use spray fixative).

Don't forget

- Sealed container for solvent
- Disposable gloves for working with solvents
- Brush holder of your choice
- Workable fixative spray for sealing your drawing before you paint
- Paper towels or old rags for cleanup

IMPORTANT:

Use caution with solvent soaked rags or paper towels. Please read [Gamblin's Studio Safety guidelines](#) for important information.

Resources

You can find most of these art supplies on [my recommended art supplies](#) page on Amazon, or through the art supply store of your choice.

Learn about my online courses at <https://layne-johnson-studio.teachable.com/>

To keep up with what's happening in my studio, I invite you to [subscribe to my newsletter](#).

And if you haven't yet, be sure to connect with me on Instagram [@laynejohnsonstudio](#).



About the author

With hundreds of thousands of followers on social media, plus hundreds of students in his online courses and live workshops, Layne Johnson is a very popular artist and painting instructor. An award winning lifelong painter and professional artist, Layne's art career includes graphic designer and illustrator for top name brands, children's book artist of more than 20 books, and fine art painter.



These days he's best known for his oil paintings of expansive and dramatic cloudscares.

Layne's paintings have been described as a blend of Luminism and Classical Realism with a touch of American Impressionism. His work is available at The Good Art Company in Fredericksburg, TX, and Dutch Art Gallery in Dallas, TX. He's also a member of Oil Painters of America, National Oil & Acrylic Painters' Society, and Artists of Texas.



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