

Plein Air Painting with Patrick Saunders

Very Important: This is a suggested materials list only, and nothing is a requirement. I am simply conveying the materials that I use. Every painter is different, and there is no wrong or right way. Use this only as a guide. While I will be demonstrating in oils, students are welcome to substitute acrylic paints. When painting in acrylics, my color choices are the same. Feel free to contact me with any questions. contact@patricksaunders.com

Painting Surfaces

I prefer to work on gessoed masonite or stretched canvas/linen - my current favorite is Centurion Deluxe Oil Primed Linen Panels. These are easy to transport, and the oil primer takes paint very well without the need for additional preparation. Sizes can vary widely, and you are welcome to choose whatever size you feel comfortable with. Keep in mind that painting smaller does not always make it easier!

Oil primed vs. acrylic primed: Most art stores sell acrylic primed surfaces. These work very well, and you should feel free to use any of these available. I personally use oil primed surfaces, but if you are new to painting, you won't notice much of a difference. If you are painting in acrylics, you will NOT want to use oil primed surfaces.

OPTIONAL: Staining

I dislike working on a stark white surface. This can be blinding when working in bright sun, and if I don't cover everything with paint, the white can be overwhelming. I stain the canvas with a very thin wash of a color, such as Burnt Sienna or Burnt Umber. Just put it on thinly and then wipe most away leaving a light stain. When working on an acrylic primed surface, the stain will also provide a bit of chemical adhesion when I start painting. This should be done a day before painting, so that the stain has time to dry.

Brushes

I don't use expensive brushes. The solvents associated with oil painting are extremely harsh, and so is my painting method. Synthetic or bristle brushes by Richeson or Winsor & Newton are extremely effective and inexpensive. Of the different styles available, I prefer flats.

Brights just don't hold a large enough charge of paint for my tastes, and I don't need filberts, because flats tend to become filberts after some use. I only use three sizes – a #12 (1" wide), a #5 or #6 (1/2" wide), and a #1 or #2 (1/4" wide). Keep in mind that the numbers vary between manufacturers and sizes are not consistent.

For cleaning oil from my brushes, I use Turpenoid Natural (NOTE: Turpenoid Natural is not for use during the painting process. It is only to clean brushes after a session. If you use it on a painting, your painting will fall apart.). It removes even dried oil paint from brushes and is nontoxic.

Paints

All brands are definitely not equal. For the student, everything is acceptable so that there are no worries about using too much expensive paint. As you progress, you will want to experiment with different brands.

Premium Brands

Excellent paints, but at a premium price. These have a high saturation of pigment and flow extremely well. Includes brands like M. Graham, Maimeri, Holbein, Old Holland

Midgrade Brands

The most versatile of brands. Without the premium price, you might be less stingy with paint, and that's always a good thing. Includes brands like Richeson Shiva, Rembrandt, Utrecht, Winsor & Newton, Grumbacher Pre-Tested, Gamblin

Student Grade

For beginners, student grade brands are perfectly acceptable. They tend to be a bit stiffer in the way they flow, and the pigment is less saturated. Includes brands like Winton, Grumbacher Academy

My Color Choices

My palette changes constantly as I try new colors, but I always keep a consistent set of warm and cool. Below is my current palette. Please do not feel obligated to purchase all of these colors.

Titanium White

Cadmium Yellow Medium

Cadmium Orange

Cadmium Red Light or Cadmium Red Pale (Richeson)

Alizarin Crimson

Yellow Ochre

Burnt Sienna

Burnt Umber

Prussian Blue

Cobalt Blue

Cerulean Blue

Permanent Green Medium or Cadmium Green

Viridian

Palette Knives

I tend to use palette knives only for surface prep or to remove paint from the surface.

Mediums

If you are painting with acrylics, water is all you will need. For oils, I use Odorless Mineral Spirits. If you prefer a cleaner version, I recommend Gamsol. If you are traveling to the class by air, please know that I will have plenty of mineral spirits available for you to use. It is very important that you have a proper container for your medium. I recommend a stainless steel brush washer. These come in a variety of sizes (the smallest is sufficient), and will last you forever. There are glass versions available, but these tend to easily break.

Palette

I keep it simple and use a Masterson Sta-Wet Palette. This is basically a tupperware container that you can seal your paints inside of so that they stay fresh longer. I've had a piece of glass cut to fit inside, which I can easily scrape clean with a razor as it becomes necessary. Another trick with a glass palette is that you can place a piece of colored paper behind it to match the color of your canvas. If you have a lot of oil paint left over, and know that you will not be able to paint for a number of days, the entire palette can be submerged in a tub of water where the paints will remain fresh until you return.

Rags

Make sure to bring paint rags. I prefer to use old cut up blue jeans, because they don't produce a lot of lint, which can get caught up on your canvas. You can use paper towels if you like.

Easels

I recommend a portable easel, not only for the class, but for home and on location work as well. There are numerous styles and prices to choose from. Many will also hold supplies for easy transport.