

Paint Brushes – A Quick Guide

Choosing the right size and type of paint brush is crucial for a frustration free, successful creative experience. Here is a quick rundown of popular brush types often used in educational settings to help you make the right choices for your students.

Hog Hair

A versatile, natural brush ideal for classroom use due to their durable nature.

- Durable, natural hair brushes feature a coarse, irregular bristle texture
- Each bristle features splits ends which enables large quantities of paint to be held, ideal when needing to paint large areas of colour
- Naturally hard wearing and hold their shape, perfect for high volume classroom use
- Ideal for creating expressive, impactful mark making due to the textured bristles
- Use with thick, heavy paints i.e. acrylic paint, oil paint, Tempera paint blocks (due to the durable nature of the bristles) and ready mixed paint
- Use on textured surfaces e.g. canvas or to create a textured style/effect like impasto
- Available in different brush sizes, tip shape and handle width and length to match age, mark making effect, skill level and paint



Hints & Tips

Holds and moves around thick paint, ideal for impasto, dry brushing and scumbling techniques adding/removing paint to create layered and textured effects

Use for gluing and craft projects where thick consistencies of PVA & paint are being used

Perfect for big outdoor art activities where large spontaneous mark making can be explored freely

Cleaning/Storage

Natural brushes need to be cleaned thoroughly use a brush soap or mild shampoo/hand soap

Reshape the bristles once clean to protect the bristle shape and properties, dry flat



Golden Nylon

A durable brush often used as a man-made alternative to natural hog hair bristle. Also referred to as 'Golden Taklon'. Suitable for use by a range of ages and abilities.

- Durable, synthetic paint brushes that generally have firmer bristles than synthetic sable brushes
- Versatile and economical, use with thicker bodied paint e.g. acrylic, oil but also perform well with powder colours, ready mixed paint and PVA glue
- Due to having smoother bristles, they may hold a little less paint than hog hair brushes, but they offer similar shape holding abilities and bristle 'spring' supporting good control of the brush
- Smoother bristles produce less visible brush strokes and therefore a smoother, flatter paint finish can be achieved
- Ideal for painting large flat areas of colour
- Durable, hard wearing and economical ideal for high volume use in nurseries, schools or educational settings



Hints & Tips

Dampen the brush upon first use to prevent dry bristles holding too much paint initially

Don't overload the brush with paint dipping only 1/3 to 1/2 way up the brush to prevent overloading making the brush harder to clean and stopping paint/PVA from drying in the bristles

Never use hot water to clean synthetic brushes as this may damage the bristles causing them to splay and loose their shape

Cleaning/Storage

Never leave brushes soaking in a water pot for extended periods of time as this can lead to permanently bent bristles

Clean brushes with cold/lukewarm water and brush soap (or mild shampoo) to clean them thoroughly, reshape brush tips when still damp using your fingers

Dry the brushes horizontally on a towel/paper towel. Placing them upright when wet can loosen the glue in the brushes ferrule

Synthetic Sable/Sable Substitute

Quality paint brushes that durable, affordable and designed to replicate the qualities of pure sable brushes. Suitable for use by a range of ages and abilities.

- Synthetic sable brushes are designed as a man-made alternative to natural sable brushes
- Unlike natural bristles synthetic sable bristles don't absorb water and therefore hold their shape well and maintain their 'spring' therefore offering the softness of natural hair but synthetic durability
- Available in a range of sizes for a range of mark making and painting activities
- Hardwearing, versatile and economical, they are best for use with water-based mediums including watercolour, gouache, acrylics and inks
- With smoother bristles, they may hold slightly less paint or water than natural sable/hog hair brushes, but their shape holding abilities support detailed painting, blending and applying thin, smooth layers of paint
- Smoother bristles produce less visible brush strokes and therefore a smoother overall finish
- Easier to clean than natural hair brushes making them ideal for high volume use in schools or educational settings



Hints & Tips

Don't overload the brush with paint dipping only 1/3 to 1/2 way up the brush to prevent overloading making the brush harder to clean and stopping paint from drying in the bristles

Avoid damaging fine tipped brushes through harsh pressure that causes bristles to splay in different directions such as dry brushing

Cleaning/Storage

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Nylon

Budget friendly classroom favorites. Perfect for achieving a smooth, stroke-free finishes. Durable, affordable and resistant to wear and tear. Ideal for beginners.

- Slightly more budget than synthetic sable brushes the bristles are slightly stiffer, ideal for use with heavier bodied paints e.g. acrylics and oil paints
- Nylon is a resilient material that will stand up to repeated use whilst maintaining its shape and 'spring' therefore perfect for educational use
- Available in a range of sizes and brush shapes essential for learning to make a range of marks and textures including bold expressive strokes, fine lines and detailing
- The smooth bristles, are designed to hold significant amounts of paint enabling large areas to be covered efficiently
- Smoother bristles produce less visible brush strokes and therefore a smoother overall finish
- Reducing clean-up time nylon brushes release paint residue easier than natural bristles
- Suitable for primary and secondary use



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