

FABRIC PAINTING BASICS

by Sharilyn Miller

Very few art or craft activities offer more opportunities for creative expression than painting on fabric, especially for wearable art. The textile paints formulated today are available in a wide array of brilliant colors; they're also water-based, nontoxic and perfectly safe for even young children to use under adult supervision. And children love to paint on fabric. If you're stumped for ideas, just bring in your kids (or borrow a neighbor's child!) and set them loose in the studio. Soon you'll have yards of beautiful, hand painted fabric to use in your next art-to-wear project.

CHOOSING & PREPARING FABRICS

You can paint on just about any textile, and experimentation with various materials is always encouraged, but here are some suggestions for selecting fabrics to paint:

For the smoothest application of paint, choose tightly woven materials. For looser applications, wetinto- wet techniques, or painted designs that don't require precise designs, loosely woven fabrics (with warp and weft threads clearly visible) are perfectly acceptable.

Some artists prefer to paint on silk, while others favor quilter's quality muslin or 100-percent cotton with a high thread count. Still others like to paint on velvet, rayon, polyester, and other materials. The choice is really up to you.

Try obtaining samples of different textiles in various weights and thread counts to make a swatch notebook. Mail-order fabric-supply companies will often provide these swatches free or for a nominal fee. Apply paint to the swatches and store them dry in a notebook where you can also note how much of what type of paint was applied to each swatch.

If you're just getting started, try using 100-percent cotton fabric with a high thread count, and expand your horizons from there. And remember that many painting techniques are suitable for dark or black fabrics, as well as white.

To prepare cotton or muslin fabric, you may prewash it in hot water and dry it on the hottest setting to remove any sizing on the fabric and to pre-shrink it— or you may choose not to pre-wash at all. It's entirely up to you.

Silks must be treated differently and it is advisable to consult an expert before pre-washing; discuss this with the storeowner where you purchased your fabric or with mail-order fabric-supply companies, which are often staffed by knowledgeable fabric artists.

CHOOSING PAINTS

The sheer number of waterbased paints suitable for fabric painting can be overwhelming to the beginning artist. There are sheer, translucent paints, opaque paints, metallic, interference and pearlescent paints, acrylic paints and paints formulated specifically for textiles. And if you can't find textile paint in the color of your choice, you can always mix a little textile medium in any acrylic to create textile paint.

Acrylics are available in jars, tubes, and bottles; they can be mixed to create new colors or diluted with water or with acrylic or textile mediums. Applied straight to fabric they will dry stiff, so I recommend mixing in a little textile medium first to create a paint that will dry with a soft finish.

Textile paints are made specifically for fabric painting (although they can be applied to other surfaces as well). If you're just getting started, I recommend trying textile paint. Jacquard's Textile, Neopaque, and umiere paints are excellent choices for beginners and professionals alike, as is Dr. Ph. Martin's ReadyTex paint.

For "on the surface" 3-dimensional techniques, applicator-tipped paints such as Tulip, Plaid and Jones Tones are fantastic.

PAINTING TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

You really don't need lots of expensive tools or equipment for fabric painting—in a pinch you can even finger-paint! But it is helpful to have at hand a few tools for experimentation.

- Paintbrushes: both flat and round-tip, in various sizes
- Foam brushes: inexpensive, for smoothest application
- Sponges: manmade and sea sponges
- Toothbrushes: for spattering on paint
- Plastic buckets: for rinsing out brushes and sponges as you work
- Plastic covering: to protect the work surface
- Apron: to protect your clothing
- Plastic or Styrofoam plates: for disposable painter's palettes
- Spray bottle
- Paper towels
- Brayer
- Kosher salt

PREPARING TO PAINT

Don protective clothing and/or disposable gloves and cover the work surface (and surrounding floor) with plastic. Pre-wash fabrics as needed, and fill two buckets with fresh water. Place all tools and paints nearby, ready to use. Tear the fabric into pieces or lay out yardage on a plastic-covered table.

PAINT APPLICATION

Paint may be applied to fabric in numerous ways. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

Wet the fabric with a spray bottle, spread it out on a work surface, and drop various colored paints in a random pattern for a wet-into-wet technique. Allow the painted fabric to dry naturally or speed up the process with a hair dryer.

Wet fabric with a spray bottle, apply layers of textile paint to the fabric with foam brushes or damp sponges, and sprinkle the surface with kosher salt. Allow the fabric to dry

completely before brushing off the salt and ironing.

Apply lots of textile paint to wet fabric, and then cover the fabric with plastic wrap, pressing wrinkles into the plastic. Allow the fabric to dry for several days before removing the plastic wrap. On dry fabric, apply layers of textile paint with sponges. Pour out small puddles of paint onto a Styrofoam plate and dip soft sponges into each puddle before “stamping off” onto the fabric. Take care not to apply too many layers, or the fabric may stiffen.

On dry or wet fabric, apply thick textile paint with a brayer: Roll the brayer in paint until it’s quite “gloppy,” and then roll the brayer over the fabric in long strokes. Allow the fabric to dry naturally.

Fill a bucket with water, add a small amount of paint, stir, and submerge fabric for several hours or a few days. Remove the fabric, squeeze out the diluted paint, and allow the fabric to dry undisturbed in a tight ball for one week. Open the fabric ball and iron flat; note the lovely wrinkle patterns. This technique also works with strong black tea or coffee.

HEAT-SETTING & FABRIC CARE

Acrylic paints are permanent once dry; hence the need for wearing old clothes or an apron while painting! There is no need to heat-set acrylic paint. But textile paint must be heat-set with an iron for permanence, and some manufacturers recommend waiting at least 24 hours after the paint has dried before washing the fabric.

After painting, some fabrics should be washed by hand, while others may be machine-washed. Consult the manufacturer’s instructions on paint labels for specific instructions regarding the care of handpainted fabrics.

CLEANUP

If you covered your work surface and surrounding floor with plastic, cleanup should be a snap. Simply wipe down the plastic with a damp sponge to remove any spills, dry the plastic, and store it for later use. Discard used paper towels. Wash out all brushes and sponges with warm water and mild detergent and rinse them until the water runs clear. Store brushes flat or with the tips up. Squeeze out the moisture from your sponges. Rinse out your buckets and store them for later use

By Susan Miller This acrylic medium turns any acrylic paint into a fabric paint which can be brushed, airbrushed, or screen-printed onto fabric. It leaves the fabric soft and, if heat set, can be washed as normal.

[Buy Direct](#)

Pros

- Turns any acrylic paint into fabric paint
- Fabric paint created leaves fabric soft
- Various ways to heat set the fabric paint

Cons

- Must be heat set in a well-ventilated area (read health warning on label)
- May not be available in smaller art shops
- Not recommended for use by children

Description

- GAC900 is manufactured by Golden Artist Colours, Inc.
- A white 'acrylic polymer emulsion' which you mix 1:1 with acrylic paints to create fabric paint.
- 8oz container has a handy nozzle, but also available in larger containers.
- Can be heat set in four ways. The easiest is probably by ironing for 1 to 2 minutes.
- Heat set by curing in an oven for four minutes at 250F or one to two minutes at 300F.
- Heat set by blowing with a hair dryer for four to seven minutes.
- Heat set in a domestic clothes dryer set on high for 40 to 50 minutes.
- Warning: Must be used in well ventilated area as releases low levels of formaldehyde during setting.

Guide Review - Turn Your Acrylics Into Fabric Paint

As anyone who's ever got some acrylic paint on their clothes knows, acrylic paint doesn't wash out easily but it makes the fabric hard. The GAC900 Medium from [Golden Artist Colors](#) solves this. Mixing it in with an equal quantity of acrylic paint turns your acrylics into fabric paint that leaves the fabric soft and pliable. If heat set, it can be washed as normal. It can be used with any brand of acrylics, not only Golden. If you store the fabric paint you've created in small, airtight containers, it'll stay usable for quite some time. So not only can you now use any of the huge number of acrylic colors available as fabric paints, but you needn't buy separate fabric and acrylic paints. If you work in both acrylics and fabric paints, it's indispensable.

Fabric Paints Come in Many Varieties

[Fabric paints](#) have been improved over the years. It is now easier than ever to change your wardrobe, embellish a lampshade, or create a magnificent pillow. You are not limited to just the standard fabric paints anymore. Manufacturers have created a huge assortment of paints and dyes to allow you to create whatever you can imagine.

Just a few of the products available are:

[Spray fabric paints](#)

Dimensional paints

Spray on glitter paint

Spray on dye

Preparing to Paint on Fabric

Washable, natural fibers and blends are the best fabrics to paint on. Always test the paint on a hidden area of the fabric before starting your project to make sure the paint and the fabric work together. For example, many people are disappointed when working with textured fabrics because the paint colors may appear different than expected, or the coverage may be unsatisfactory.

Always wash and dry your fabric before beginning your project. This will remove the sizing. Be sure not to use [fabric softener](#) or dryer sheets because this may cause the garment to repel the paint.

Place cardboard between the layers of fabric and pin the fabric to it to make it smooth. This will give you a good surface to paint on. There are special shirt forms that you can buy specifically for this purpose. However, cardboard, poster board, or waxed paper work just as well.

Now, transfer the design onto your fabric. For light colored fabric, you can just slip the design underneath the top layer and trace it with a special sewing marker. These have disappearing ink and are made especially for marking fabric. For darker fabrics, you can transfer the design to a piece of tulle. Do this by placing the design under the tulle and tracing it with a black permanent marker. Next just place the tulle on your project and trace over it with chalk. The chalk will go through the tulle and leave the lines on the fabric.

Tips for How to Paint on Fabric

While learning how to [paint](#) on fabric is not difficult, there are a few things that will make it easier and more fun.

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[Fabric Spray Paint](#) - Find great deals and save! Compare products, prices & stores.
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Making Lines and Outlining

Hold the paint bottle as you would a pen. Move it gracefully along the pattern, following the lines as you squeeze out the paint. You need to keep the applicator tip against the fabric and drag the paint bottle along. This will allow the paint to soak into the fabric and create a good bond.

Long lines of paint have many stress points and they tend to crack and peel over time. To combat this when you are outlining a large pattern, just make three inch lines. You will leave only a tiny space between each of them, maybe only a few threads. This will create areas that allow the line to move and still look like it is continuous.

Air bubbles in the paint can be a problem. Always store your fabric paints upside down. Before you start painting, firmly tap the bottle on a surface to remove any air. Now, squeeze out a few drops of paint before you begin work on your project. This should keep the air bubbles out and give you smooth lines.

If you want raised lines around your pattern, hold the paint bottle a little higher and move slowly, allowing more paint to come out. Flat lines are created in the opposite manner, by holding the bottle closer to the surface and letting less paint come from the tube.

Painting Effects

You can use many different techniques to create different effects on your projects. Sea sponges create a [sponge painted](#) look that is good for [design](#) backgrounds. Squeeze the paint color out onto a plastic palette or foil. Add a little water to thin the paint out. Wet the sponge, squeezing out the excess water and press into the paint. Press gently on paper towel to remove the excess and then gently press against the fabric to great the desired look. If you like, you can add other colors to give it a mottled effect. Always use a clean sponge for each paint color. To soften the look, just go over the area with a clean, damp sponge.

Splatter painting is a popular technique that is quite simple. To paint on fabric, you will need a brush and paint that has been mixed with equal parts of water. Protect your craft area with painter's plastic. Load the brush with paint and tap against your index finger, causing the paint to splatter onto the fabric. You can use as many colors as you like.

A combed design can be created by brushing the paint onto the fabric and then running a combing tool across it. You can use straight lines, squiggly lines, or zig zags. If you want the design to be raised, use a thicker paint.

Caring for Your Painted Items

Allow the fabric paint to dry for a day or two before touching and at least 72 hours before washing. Always wash your painted [garments](#) inside out on a gentle cycle. Using warm water may help the paint not to crack. Line dry out of direct sunlight..



FABRIC PAINTING

APPLICATIONS & TECHNIQUES

Liquitex Professional Grade Acrylic Colors are the most permanent paints for fabric. Available in two viscosities, they offer the largest assortment of pure pigments of any professional quality acrylic paint. Their exceptional quality, durability, adhesion and lightfastness allow artists to:

- Achieve permanent colors without heat setting, steaming or chemical fixing.
- Stencil, watercolor, airbrush, marble, stamp, silk-screen, dye or stain.
- Paint on cotton, cotton-poly blends, woven, knitted, felt, terry cloth, silk, velvet, velveteen, corduroy, flannel, suede, leather and most synthetics.

Liquitex Professional Grade Medium Viscosity Concentrated Artist Color

- Ideal for most fabric painting techniques, especially lightweight or textured fabrics.
- Colors dry to a smooth, even surface with good leveling and few brush marks.
- Use for flat large area coverage, fine line detail, airbrush, stencil, watercolor, staining, dying, silk screen, calligraphy and marbling.
- Creamy consistency allows for mixing easily with water and mediums.

Liquitex Professional Grade High Viscosity Artist Color

- A heavy bodied paint that has an exceptionally smooth, thick buttery consistency.
- When dry, retains brush strokes and palette knife marks. Excellent for impasto.
- Flexible when dry, allowing built-up surfaces to remain free of cracks and chips.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Pre-wash new fabric to remove sizing, which interferes with paint adhering to fabric.
- Loose fabric weave allows more of the color to penetrate the fibers.
- Do a test piece to ensure the compatibility of the fabric and your technique. Each fabric has a different absorbency, which affects how color spreads on fabric.
- Place cardboard, plastic or wax paper under fabric to protect and prevent the fabric from sticking to work surface. Stretch sweatshirts with cardboard for proper paint application.
- Applying thick paint to large areas will tend to stiffen fabric.
- Iron on low synthetic heat setting. Use a pressing cloth or iron on reverse side of fabric.

LIQUITEX MEDIUMS and ADDITIVES

For more information, refer to Part I: [Liquitex Acrylic Mediums](#) and [Liquitex Additives](#)

Liquitex Fabric Medium

- Enhances workability of acrylic paint and eliminates stiffness of dry acrylic paint on fabric.
- Prevents uneven application of paint to rough textured fabrics and controls color bleeding.

[Flow-Aid Flow Enhancer](#)

- A flow promoter and wetting agent that improves flow, absorption and blending of colors.

[Liquitex Gloss Medium & Varnish](#)

- Mix into colors to increase transparency, gloss and to add flexibility and adhesion to paint.

[Liquitex Matte Medium](#)

- Creates a matte or dull, non-reflecting finish when added to acrylic colors.

[Iridescent/Pearlescent Tinting Medium](#)

- Produces an entire palette of iridescent or metallic colors when mixed into acrylic colors.

[Liquitex Gloss Gel Medium](#)

- Mix into colors to add gloss, flexibility and adhesion to paint, use for dimensional line work.

[Liquitex Matte Gel Medium](#)

- Mix into high viscosity colors to add dullness, satin sheen flexibility and adhesion to paint.

[Gloss Heavy Gel Medium](#)

- Mix into high viscosity colors to add gloss, thickness, flexibility and adhesion to paint.

Liquitex Slow-Dri Fluid Retarder

- Increases drying time, aids color blending, keeps paint in silkscreens from drying.

Gel Retarder

- Similar to Slow-Dri Fluid Retarder in a gel formulation. Use in silkscreen and color blending.

Liquitex Blending & Painting Medium

- Improves flow of paint and extends drying time.

Liquitex Marble Ease Marbling Fluid

- Add to Medium Viscosity Color to produce the proper spread and control of colors when floated on top of a marbling "size", such as liquid starch, gum tragacanth, Irish Moss, etc.

Airbrush Medium

- Thins colors to a sprayable consistency and decreases clogging and paint buildup.

DRYING TIME

- Drying time will vary from fabric to fabric. Liquitex Acrylic Paints will dry to touch in 5 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the type of fabric and how much paint has saturated it.

WASHING FABRIC

- After paint fully dries, wait at least 4 days before washing the fabric.
- Hand wash and drip dry is best. Do not presoak or use hot water. Wash items inside out.
- Machine wash fabric in warm water. Use permanent press/gentle cycle.
- Dry cleaning machines that spin-dry fabric at room temperature are recommended. Dry cleaning suede is acceptable. Spot cleaning solutions should be avoided or used sparingly.

FABRIC PAINTING TECHNIQUES

Airbrush and Spray

Paint: Liquitex [Medium Viscosity Colors](#)

Medium or Additive: Liquitex Airbrush Medium.

1. Mix 1 part Medium Viscosity Colors with 1 part Airbrush Medium.
2. Add more Airbrush Medium as needed to achieve desired consistency.
3. Colors must permeate cloth and be seen as ghost image on reverse side to be permanent.

Refer to Part 2 Applications & Techniques: [Airbrush](#), for more information.

Blockprinting

Paint: Liquitex [High Viscosity Colors](#)

Medium or Additive: Slow-Dri Gel Retarder

1. Coat a linoleum or wood block with waterproof varnish.
2. While the varnish is wet, sift finely shredded fabric (flocking) onto the varnish. When dry this absorbent surface will hold paint for application.
3. Thin High Viscosity Artist Color with up to 25% Slow-Dri Gel Retarder and spread paint onto the block with a soft foam roller.
4. Wet the fabric and place the block face down onto the cloth pressing firmly and evenly.
 - o Stretch the fabric on a padded surface to help facilitate printing. Use fabric that are absorbent and medium-to-heavy in weight without deep texture.

Brushwork

Paint: Liquitex [Medium](#) or [High](#) Viscosity Colors.

Medium or Additive: Liquitex Slow-Dri Fluid or Gel Retarder, Fabric Medium.

- Mix Medium Viscosity colors with Fabric Medium for a softer feel to finished painting.

Drawing

Paint: Liquitex [High Viscosity Artist Color](#)

Medium: Liquitex [Gloss Gel](#), [Gloss Heavy Gel](#) or [Matte Gel Medium](#)

1. Screw a plastic cake decorator tip onto a 2-oz. tube of High Viscosity Artist Color. Squeeze apply.

2. Mix paint with Liquitex Gel Mediums. Squeeze apply with cake decorator to produce thick lines.
3. Use absorbent fabric. Hand wash.

Dyeing and Staining

Dyeing and staining fabric and raw canvas can only be done with acrylic emulsion paints such as Liquitex Acrylics. Acids in oil paint will attack and destroy fabrics and canvas over time.

Paint: Liquitex [Medium Viscosity Concentrated Artist Colors](#)

Medium or Additive: Liquitex [Flow-Aid](#) Flow Enhancer

Dyeing

1. Wash fabric to remove any starch or sizing.
2. Mix Flow-Aid Water (1 part Flow-Aid to 20 parts water) with Medium Viscosity Concentrated Artist Color. Refer to Additives: Flow-Aid Flow Enhancer.
3. Start by mixing 1 part color and 3 parts FlowAid Water (FAW). Add more FAW to increase transparency and decrease color intensity.
 - Transparent and translucent colors work best and dry with a softer fabricfinish.
 - For hard edge dyeing, do not pre-wet fabric. For soft edge, pre-wet fabricwith FAW.
 - Tightly woven cotton and silk will achieve richest colors (weave is closetogether).
 - A hot wax resist may be used for hard edges.
 - Remove wax resist by dry cleaning.
 - All colors are permanent and need no heat setting. Wet colors will dry lighter.
 - Titanium White, Iridescent and Interference colors may stiffen fabric.

Staining

- Follow dyeing directions.

Marbling

Refer to Part 2 Application & Technique: [Marbling](#), for detailed instructions.

Silk-screen

Paint: Liquitex [Medium](#) or [High](#) Viscosity Colors

Medium or Additive: Liquitex Slow-Dri Fluid or Gel Retarder, Gloss

Medium & Varnish

1. Mix up to 25 % Slow-Dri Fluid Retarder into paint to slow drying.
2. Squeegee paint through screen. Wash screen with water immediately after use.
 - Viscosity of paint to be used depends upon fabric selection and personal choice.
 - For heavyweight fabric use Medium Viscosity colors.
 - For lightweight fabric use High Viscosity colors.
 - Gloss Medium & Varnish can be used as a permanent screen block solution. Apply directly to screen.

Stamping

- Paint stamp with either Medium or High Viscosity Colors.
- Place painted side down onto surface. Press evenly on fabric. Paint must penetrate fiber.

Stenciling

- Use either ready made stencils or cut from heavy paper, oak tag, acetate or self adhesive frisket films. Use spray stencil adhesive if necessary,
- Apply paint with polyurethane foam dauber, rag or stencil brush.
- Do not force paint under the edge of stencil.
- Thinning paint may cause it to spread.

Watercolor

- Use Medium Viscosity Concentrated Artist Color, thinned with water to desired consistency.
- Multiple applications can be painted over once dry without picking up underlying colors.
- Lightweight fabrics allow paint to spread quickly.

LEATHER

Leather is a difficult surface to achieve long-term paint adhesion. Leather can vary in surface, thickness, fiber structure, oil content, dye type tendency to stretch. These factors will influence long-term paint adhesion. Always do a test sample, prior to painting.

Surface Preparation

For maximum adhesion and longevity, the paint should penetrate into the leather. Deeper penetration will achieve greater adhesion.

1. Any protective coating must be removed (abraded or sanded) for paint

- adhesion.
2. Remove surface oils by wiping with rubbing alcohol, denatured alcohol or acetone. Apply solvents only to those areas where paint will be applied.
 3. Shiny and smooth leather can be prepared by sanding with fine sandpaper or emery cloth.

Painting Techniques

- Before applying paint, flatten and adhere leather to a stable surface.
- For achieving bright, light colors on dark leather first apply [Medium Viscosity Titanium White](#) thinned with 25% water to the painting area.
- Follow any of the above Fabric Painting Techniques.

Cleaning

- Wipe with water dampened cloth or small amount of mild soap and water.

Care

- Most leather will stretch beyond the binding capability of acrylic paint. Liquitex) Acrylics are extremely flexible and durable and offer superior results on this type of surface.
- Acrylic paints can crack if bent at temperatures below 45 F

For a small outlay on a few colours and a suitable brush, fabric painting opens up endless opportunities for transforming your wardrobe and your home. It enables you to create one-of-a-kind pieces of wearable art (t-shirts are the most common) or to design some special cushion covers, curtains, or a wall hanging.

Fabric Painting Tip 1. Will Anything Less Than 100 Per Cent Cotton Do?

Purists say the best fabric for painting on is 100 per cent cotton with a tight weave (an off-white or cream fabric will dull the paint slightly). But good results can be obtained with rayons and silks too. The best is to try a sample square to check the results.

Fabric Painting Tip 2. Tight is Bright

If a fabric is loosely woven, paint tends to seep through the threads before it's dry. This tends to reduce the intensity of the colours. A finely woven fabric is also easier to paint detail on than a loosely woven one.

Fabric Painting Tip 3. To Prewash or Not to Prewash?

The reason for prewashing fabric before painting on it is to remove any sizing added during manufacture which may prevent the paint from adhering to the surface. It also gives it a chance to shrink, if it's going to. To test whether a piece of fabric really needs prewashing, drop a little bit of water on it. If it beads up on the surface, it needs washing. If it sinks in, so should paint.

Fabric Painting Tip 4. Skip the Softener

If you do wash a fabric, don't add fabric softener! You're trying to get rid of chemicals, not add new ones.

Fabric Painting Tip 5. Get Rid of Wrinkles

Take the time to iron the fabric well. Wrinkles can create havoc on a design.

Fabric Painting Tip 6. The Heat is On

The easiest way to set fabric paints is to iron it for a few minutes (check the manufacturer's instructions). If you iron on the wrong side of the fabric, the paint will still set fine and you don't have to worry about it rubbing off onto the iron or the colors bleeding into each other. Alternatively, use a press cloth. Allow the paint to dry thoroughly before ironing – at least 24 hours. If you've a large project, you may want to try your tumble drier – tumble a sample piece on high for half an hour, then wash it to see if your drier was warm enough. If you're really brave, you can try setting it in your oven.

Fabric Painting Tip 7. Go With the Flow

Wetting the fabric with clean water before painting it encourages colours to flow into each other, like in a watercolor. But don't add too much water, as it'll dilute the colors; the fabric should be damp, not soaking.

Fabric Painting Tip 8. Tread Softly

Stamping and stenciling on fabric work best if you're working on a lightly padded surface – an old towel works well. Or if you don't want to sacrifice a towel, cover a sheet of thick card with waxed paper (so it can be wiped clean).

Fabric Painting Tip 9. Bleached-Out Colors

Bleach can be used to remove (discharge) the dye in a fabric, with unexpected and unpredictable results (do a test square!). Use a cheap brush to apply bleach, as it'll quickly ruin it, and wear gloves so you don't get bleach on your skin. Obviously it works best with dark colors. To stop the action of the bleach, wash the fabric. (If you've read about stopping the action of bleach by rinsing the fabric in a bucket of water into which you've mixed a cup or two of white vinegar, be cautious. Ensure you don't mix undiluted vinegar and bleach directly, as this [releases chlorine](#) which is poisonous!)

Fabric Painting Tip 10. One-Sided Designs

Remember when painting a t-shirt to insert something – a few sheets of newspaper, a bit of card or plastic – inside the shirt so the paint doesn't seep through onto the back of the shirt.

How to Get Started Painting on Fabric

Easy Ways to Add Color and Texture to Almost Any Textile

Oct 13, 2009 [Christine Mann](#)

Fabric painting is a simple way for quilters, sewers, scrapbookers, and other artists to embellish and alter clothing, quilts, home decor, or just about any fabric item.



With just a little imagination, a few inexpensive supplies, and a sense of fun, you can use fabric paints to start a whole new creative adventure with fabric.

Types of Fabric Paint

There are several different paints that work well on fabric:

- *Regular acrylic paints* are inexpensive and easy to find. To be made permanent on fabric, they need to be heat set either by running them through the dryer or with an iron after painting. Some acrylic paints may leave the fabric stiff after they dry.
- *Acrylic fabric paints* are formulated especially for painting on fabric. Some need to be heat set or steamed to be permanent, but others don't need any fixing at all. Acrylic fabric paints are available in different colors, thicknesses, and levels of transparency. There are acrylics specially formulated for painting on specific fabrics, such as silk. There are also paints designed optimized for specific techniques, such as screen printing or marbling fabric. You can also find glow-in-the-dark paints, 3-D paints that can be used to write words or outline shapes. All acrylic paints clean up with soap and water, which is a real advantage for anyone concerned about exposure to toxic chemicals.
- *Shiva Paint Sticks* are fast-drying oil paints that can be drawn on fabric like crayons, then blended with a fingertip or a brush before they dry. They need to be cleaned up with turpentine or mineral spirits.

Which Fabrics Can You Paint?

There are many different kinds of fabric that take paint well:

- Cotton
- Cotton/poly blend
- Cotton knits
- Canvas
- Flannel
- Linen
- Organza
- Rayon
- Silk
- Most synthetic fabrics
- Terry cloth
- Velvet
- Velveteen

You can also use fabric paints on a number of non-woven surfaces:

- Interfacings such as Timtex®
- Leather
- Lutradur® (a non-woven fabric that is used by mixed-media artists and takes paint very well)
- Quilt batting
- Suede

With any surface you haven't painted on before, it's always a good idea to test the paint you plan to use on a small area before starting a complete project.