

Altenew Guides for Paper Crafting

The Complete Guide to Gouache Paints for Beginners

Are you looking for a new exciting way to add vibrant color and texture to your paper crafting projects? Gouache paint is an excellent choice that offers unique possibilities! With its versatility and bright colors, gouache paint sets are quickly becoming the medium of choice for passionate cardmakers, crafters, and artists.



Artists' Watercolor Brushes - Round

Whether you're experienced with traditional watercolors or just starting your artistic journey, this complete guide will provide everything - from helpful advice and basic information about gouache paint to inspiring projects you can create with it. So if you're ready to explore your creative potential, read on and get ready to dive into our gouache painting 101: the definitive source on all things related to gouache paint!

What Is Gouache?

Gouache, pronounced as "gwash," is a water-based paint medium. It produces a matte finish and is commonly used for illustrations, designs, and prints because of its versatility and vibrant colors. Gouache paint can be applied in thin layers for a transparent effect or in thicker layers for an opaque look, and it can be easily reworked and corrected when wet. It can also be varnished when dry to create a glossy effect if desired.

It is also often used in combination with other media, such as pen and ink, and can be applied to a variety of surfaces, including paper, canvas, and wood. However, the best kind of paper to use gouache on is still watercolor paper because of its similar properties to watercolors.



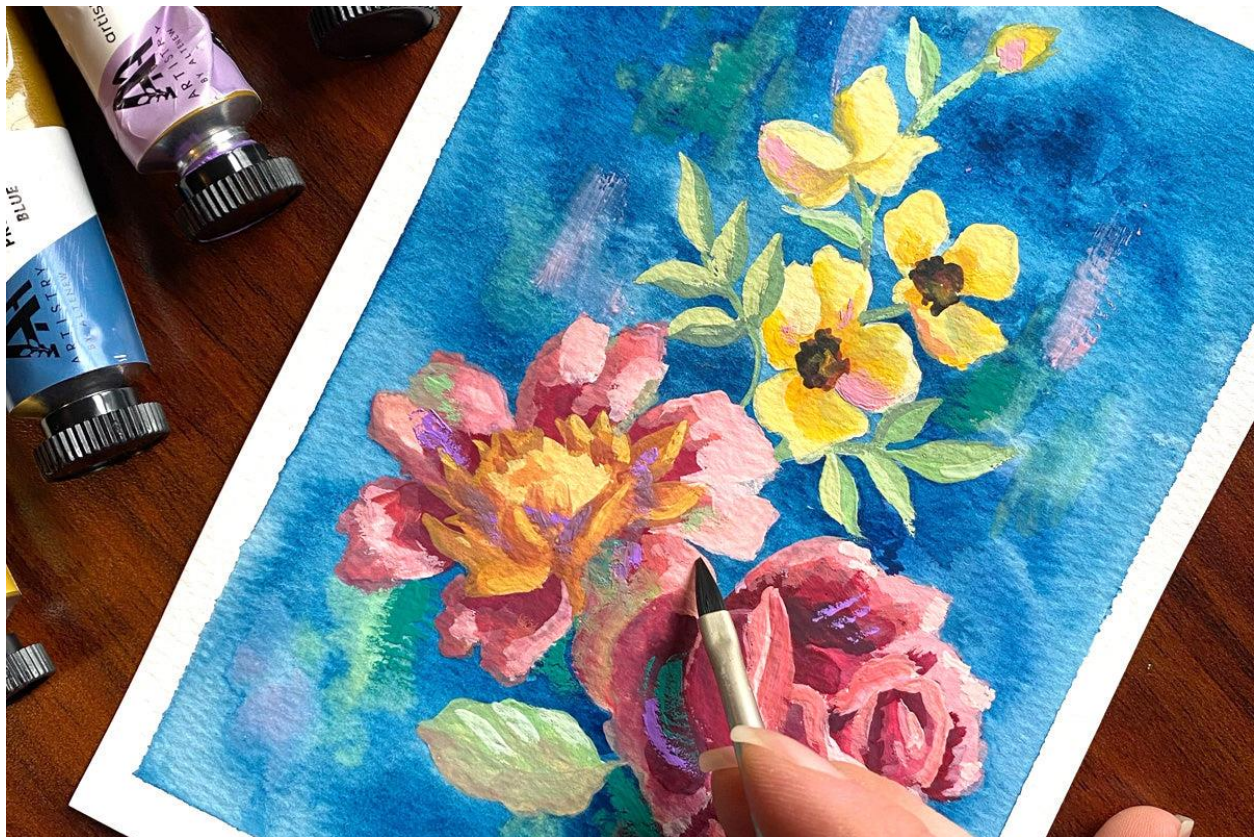
Artists' Gouache Set - Strolling Through New York

What Are the Two Types of Gouache?

There are two types of gouache paint: **regular gouache** and **acrylic gouache**. Regular or traditional gouache paint behaves like how watercolors do - this means that even when the paint dries, you can easily reactivate it again with water. Because of this feature, working with traditional gouache makes it easy to make corrections and adjustments. Like watercolors, traditional gouache is made from natural pigments, a binder (usually gum Arabic), and water.

On the other hand, acrylic gouache is made from pigments suspended in an acrylic polymer emulsion. It's still water-based, but its polymer elements give it a more durable and water-resistant finish when dry. Unlike traditional gouache, acrylic gouache dries quickly, and once dry, it cannot be rewetted.

When using acrylic gouache, you can layer colors without bleeding, create texture, and paint on more surfaces. This is why acrylic gouache is used for more mixed media projects because you can use it on glass, wood, or even fabric! Additionally, acrylic gouache also tends to have a more vibrant and intense color than traditional gouache.



Watercolor Paper Set (A2 Loose Sheets)

Overall, traditional gouache is a water-based paint that is easy to work with, like watercolors. In contrast, acrylic gouache is more permanent, dries quickly, and has more intense colors.

So, what type of gouache should you get? Well, it would depend on what types of surfaces you want to work on, how critical rewetting techniques are for you, and what kind of techniques you want to do.

However, if you're a beginner who wants to try gouache painting ideas or you're an artist switching from watercolors to gouache, we recommend using traditional gouache first. Regular gouache is more forgiving and flexible than acrylic gouache, allowing you to experiment and play around as a beginner.

Shop the Best Gouache Paint Set for Your Projects
Today!

What Is the History of Gouache Paint?

There is a bit of a mystery regarding the origin and invention of gouache. Until now, historians cannot pinpoint the exact inventor of gouache, only that its prevalence stems from different periods, with the earliest use of gouache dating to 40 000 BC. Isn't it fascinating to think that gouache was one of the earliest paints used by humans?

Back in ancient times, humans used charcoal and iron ore to make pigments and used water, animal fat, and human saliva as binders. They used these paints to create cave paintings that tell stories of their daily lives and even the plants and animals they interacted with.

Eventually, even ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptians and Greeks, used water-based paints for their frescoes, burials, and decorations. They mainly used egg yolk and honey as their binders. During the Middle Ages, paint was used on illuminated manuscripts by monks who used pigments with gum Arabic and egg whites as binders.



Soothe and Smooth Watercolor Paper Bundle

In the 14th century, tempera painting techniques became popular among European artists. From tempera painting, gouache bloomed around the 16th century in Europe when they started using oil to varnish their tempera paintings and give them a matte finish. Gouache painting was especially popular among rococo artists in the 17th century. However, it wasn't until the 18th century that the term "gouache" sprang forth in France, with gouache being the Italian word for "mud."

Did you know? *One of the famous artists that gave popularity to gouache was Henri Matisse, who used gouache paints in his series of Blue Nudes paintings.*

Since then, artists of all ranges and fields have been using this versatile and easy-to-work-with medium. Now, we're using it, too, in the world of paper crafting!

How Is Gouache Made and Manufactured?

Gouache paint is made by mixing water and pigments with a binding agent, typically gum Arabic or dextrin. Gouache and watercolor have the same ingredients, except that gouache uses more white pigments or chalk-like pigments to create paint that is opaque and has a matte finish.

The manufacturing process for gouache paint typically involves these steps:

1. Pigments are selected and ground into a fine powder using a mortar and pestle or a mechanical grinder.
2. The ground pigments are mixed with a binding agent, such as gum arabic, to create a paste. However, some gouache paint manufacturers use other types of binders, such as honey, casein, or an acrylic emulsion for acrylic gouache.
3. Other elements are added, such as anti-microbial, plasticizers, opacifiers, and matting agents, but it depends on the manufacturing processes of brands and companies.
4. The paint is then poured into tubes or pans and allowed to dry.
5. After drying, the paint is then ready to be packaged and shipped to stores.



Watercolor Palette Bundle

What Is Gouache Paint Used For?

The main reason why so many artists love using gouache is because of its unique properties. Do you know that when a gouache brand is labeled as "designer gouache," it means that it was formulated to be non-lightfast, making them perfect for photos and graphic reproduction? The idea behind designer gouache is you create gouache art to be reproduced and preserved digitally, making it ideal for graphic designers and illustrators. On the other hand, "artists' gouache" is meant for fine artists whose work needs to emphasize permanency rather than being picture-perfect. Artists' gouache is more permanent and lightfast compared to designer gouache.

Gouache is used in many fields and areas, such as illustration, architecture, graphic design, fine art, and even animation. Some of the purposes of gouache include:

1. **Illustration:** Gouache paint is often used by illustrators and commercial artists for its non-lightfastness, opacity, and bold, matte colors.
2. **Fine art and paper crafting:** Gouache paint is a popular medium for arts and crafts. You can apply it to various surfaces, such as paper, canvas, and wood, and it dries quickly, allowing for unique layers and textures for your projects.
3. **Graphic design:** Gouache paint is also used in graphic design, where it is often combined with other media, such as ink and colored pencils, to create dynamic illustrations and designs. This is because you can draw directly onto gouache without the paint clogging up your pens or pencils.
4. **Animation:** Animators use gouache paint as the final medium for creating animation cells.
5. **Design & Architecture:** Since gouache can be used for digital art, architects use it for renderings, illustrations, and mockups.

Learn the Basics of Gouache Painting in 30 Minutes or Less!

How Do You Paint with Gouache?



Crafting 101: Getting Started with Gouache

If you're looking for an easy way to get into gouache painting, you'll need to start with the essential tools:

- A [gouache paint set](#)
- [Brushes](#)
- A [palette](#) for mixing colors
- A container with water
- Paper towels or cloth
- [Watercolor paper](#)

To start painting with gouache, here are some general tips you can follow:

Swatch Out Your Gouache Paint Colors

When you get your first gouache paint set, you should do a paint swatch of all the colors. You can draw thick black lines on a piece of watercolor paper and slowly swatch

your paint on these lines to see how opaque they are. Try experimenting with the amount of water you use to see how their colors shift with more or less water and how different the colors look when they dry.



Mixed Media Painting: What is it?

Start by Preparing Your Surface

Gouache can be applied to a variety of surfaces, including paper, canvas, and wood. Make sure your surface is clean and smooth before you begin painting.

Mix Your Paint on a Palette

Gouache paint is typically thicker than watercolor paint, so it's important to mix it with water to the desired consistency. You can use a palette or a mixing tray to mix your paint. You can also use the palette to mix and blend your own gouache palettes.

Use a Good Quality Brush

Gouache requires a good-quality brush that can hold a lot of paint. Synthetic or natural hair brushes are both ideal, but you should avoid using brushes that have a lot of split ends, as these can cause the paint to become uneven.

Apply the Paint in Layers

Acrylic gouache paint dries quickly, so it's best to work in layers. This will allow you to build up the color gradually. If you're working with acrylic gouache, your colors won't mix if you let the layers dry in between applications. You can use this as a technique to make unique looks or use it as a caution to paint fast if you want to blend colors.



Watercolor Palette - Medium

Work From Light to Dark or Vice Versa

Gouache paint is opaque, which means that you can paint over light colors with dark colors without any issues. You can play around with midtones and paint from dark to light colors or from light to dark colors. Because of this, you can also use gouache paint on black cardstock. How cool is that? This is a feature that you can't have with watercolors.

What Is the Difference Between Gouache vs. Watercolors?



Watercolor 36 Pan Set for Working with Gouache

Gouache and watercolors are very similar, but there are some key differences between these two paint mediums. Gouache is an opaque watercolor, meaning it has a thicker

consistency and can be used to create more solid vibrant colors. On the other hand, watercolor is a translucent paint, which means it is more transparent and creates softer, more delicate effects.

Gouache	Watercolor
Opaque, forms a thicker layer of paint on paper	Transparent, allows the paper to be seen through the pigment
Can produce thick, creamy, matte finishes	Can produce soft, luminous, watery looks
Needs more water to blend colors smoothly	Easier to blend colors
Dries quicker, perfect for building layers	Drying time depends on how much water is loaded with the pigment
More flexible, can paint from dark to light colors	Limited to painting from light to dark colors

However, just because they are different, doesn't mean that you can't use them together. In fact, you will find out that using both gouache and watercolor together gives a more beautiful and richer artwork.

Beginners may not know this, but most watercolor paintings are actually infused with gouache. Artists commonly use gouache to create astounding highlights in watercolor paintings. How cool is that?

Find the Best Watercoloring Tools and Supplies!

Other Tips and Tricks for Gouache Painting

Painting with gouache can be an enriching and enjoyable experience, especially if you learn how to use it effectively. If you want more tips and tricks for gouache painting, check out these helpful recommendations for making the most out of gouache paint:

- Use a tissue or cloth to blot out excess water at the bottom of your brush when working with gouache.
- Work with complementary colors. Gouache paintings can be very striking with a limited color palette, as they can create a cohesive and harmonious look.
- Apply a thin layer of varnish if you want a shinier finish to your gouache painting.
- To prevent your painting from smudging, use a fixative spray after the gouache paint has dried.
- Because gouache is generally thick, thin layers work best for gouache painting. This allows for less pigmentation and prevents your artwork from becoming overly heavy and chalky.
- For a more seamless blending of colors, keep your gouache colors moist to prevent stark color contrasts.
- Make impasto techniques with acrylic gouache with round brushes and palette knives.

If you want to see how gouache works and what it looks like on black cardstock, watch this engaging video below:

We hope you learned a lot about gouache from this blog post! Stay tuned for our other guides on gouache, such as gouache painting ideas, gouache art supplies, and other gouache projects to inspire you!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

What surfaces can I use gouache on?

You can use gouache on various surfaces, including watercolor paper, thick drawing paper, cardboard, illustration boards, and wood.

How do I clean my brushes after using gouache?

You can easily clean your brushes with soap and water after painting since gouache paint is a water-based medium, like watercolors. This feature is why gouache is convenient and easy to use because while it has some properties of acrylic, it's less messy to clean!

Can gouache be used in conjunction with other mediums?

Yes, gouache can be used in combination with other mediums, such as watercolors, colored pencils, pastels, or markers, to create unique effects.

Can gouache be rewetted after it has dried?

Yes, because gouache is water-based, it is easily reactivated by water. That's good news for the leftover gouache paint on your palette- you can use it again!

Is gouache lightfast?

Gouache can fade over time if exposed to direct sunlight, so storing your gouache artwork in a place with low light exposure is essential. You can also apply spray varnish or wax medium to preserve your painting.

Where can I buy gouache paint?

Gouache paint is widely available at art supply stores for both offline and online channels. You can purchase a [high-quality set of gouache paints](#) at Altenew, too!