

These are the 5 elements that make any studio functional and inviting.

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TIERED CART

1) The first thing I recommend setting up is some kind of tiered cart. This can be as tall or tiny as you need it to be, but a place to store your paints, brushes, and any other medium you use is essential. Having the cart on wheels is especially helpful if you are working in a space that doubles as a living area or guest room, and your studio needs to be consolidated or tucked away regularly. If you need help choosing the paints, tools, and materials to stock your cart, check out my [Materials Guide](#).

TABLE

2) The second element of a functioning studio is a table. I use a stainless steel table which has plenty of room for my palette, most frequently used paints, a few brushes, and whatever small painting I'm working on at the time. If you're carving out a space at home, try setting up a card table you won't worry about getting messy, or if you don't have the space, spread a canvas or vinyl drop cloth over your kitchen/dining table and roll your paint cart right up next to you when it's time to get to work.

CHAIR OR STOOL

3) Third, you need a chair or stool. I use a stool when I'm painting larger canvases since I'm roughly the same height sitting on a stool as I am standing, and can easily transition between the two depending on how much physical movement is required for the actual painting process. This might sound ridiculously obvious, but I've had studios without an actual chair in it, and there's something that's an inherent bummer about getting tired and having to sit directly on a concrete floor (that may or may not have wet paint on it) instead of on a chair.

These next two are optional depending on the scale of your paintings. If you only paint small and on paper, you might not want an easel, and likewise if you are limited on space, there's no need to set up a shelving system.

EASEL

4) If you paint on canvas or panel and have the space, I recommend using an easel. Easels can be small, one foot tall [tabletop easels](#), or they can be eight foot tall pieces of furniture requiring a space of their own. The key benefit is that they elevate paintings to eye level so you're not constantly straining your neck. In that first apartment corner, my "easel" was two level nails in the wall I hung canvases on to paint. One fateful day I stumbled into the Blick store on 7th and Peachtree and in the back of the dimly-lit sale section was the nicer version of the easel I wanted but was too expensive at the time, heavily discounted and ready for immediate sale. I've been using that easel ever since.

SHELVING

5) Lastly, if you have a space carved out for your creative practice that is relatively stable (not something you have to break down and put away after each painting session), shelving is a simple element of a studio that will immediately make you ten times more organized. I have a set of wire utility shelves from Target that store all my packing envelopes, pads of paper, small canvases, extra paints, power tools, canvas scraps, you name it. These are the things that accumulate as you develop a more regular painting practice, but can make your space feel cluttered and distracting. Just a set of utility shelves (small or tall) to store it all works wonders in keeping your studio organized.