

Paint brushes come in various shapes, sizes, & materials, each designed for specific techniques and mediums

The Ultimate Guide To Brushes





1. Types of Paint Brushes

The type of bristle (or hair) used in a brush affects how it holds and applies paint.

Bristles can be categorized into natural hair, synthetic fibers, or a blend of both.

Natural Hair

Brushes Natural hair brushes are made from animal hair and are favored for their ability to retain liquid and pigment efficiently. They are generally softer and more flexible, making them ideal for detailed work and smooth blending.

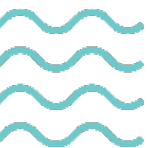
Sable Hair Brushes – Traditionally made from the tail hairs of the Kolinsky sable, these are among the finest and most expensive brushes available. They provide superior softness, spring, and precision, ideal for watercolor, ink, and fine oil painting.

Hog Bristle Brushes (Bristle Brushes) – Made from hog hair, these are stiff, coarse, and durable, making them well-suited for oil and acrylic paints. They hold thick paint well and create bold, textured strokes. Squirrel Hair Brushes – Very soft and absorbent, squirrel hair brushes are primarily used for watercolor painting. They hold a large amount of water and create smooth, even washes.

Ox Hair Brushes – Ox hair is coarser and less expensive than sable or squirrel but offers good durability and a firm stroke. Often used in flat brushes for oil and acrylic painting.

Camel Hair Brushes – Camel hair brushes are not made from camel hair but rather a mix of various natural hairs, often squirrel, goat, or ox. These brushes are inexpensive and used for less detailed work.

Goat Hair Brushes – Very soft and absorbent, goat hair brushes are commonly used for large washes and blending in watercolor and ink painting.



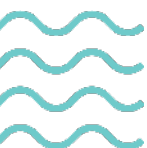


Synthetic Brushes

Synthetic brushes are made from nylon, polyester, or other artificial fibers designed to mimic the properties of natural hair while offering additional durability and affordability. Nylon Brushes – Smooth and firm, ideal for acrylic and oil painting, as they resist fraying and are easy to clean. Taklon Brushes – A high-quality synthetic alternative to sable, Taklon brushes are soft and responsive, making them suitable for watercolor, acrylic, and detailed work. Polyester Brushes – Similar to nylon but often firmer and more resilient, making them useful for rougher painting techniques.

Hybrid Brushes

(Natural-Synthetic Blend) Some brushes combine natural hair with synthetic fibers to create a balance between softness and durability. These hybrid brushes retain pigment well while offering more resilience than pure natural hair brushes, making them suitable for a variety of mediums.





Here are the most common types:

Flat Brushes

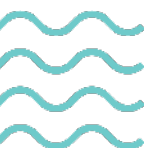
- Description: These brushes have a rectangular shape with long or short bristles.
- Best For: Broad strokes, filling in large areas, and creating bold edges.
- Common Uses: Acrylic, oil, and watercolor painting.
- Additional Tip: Use flat brushes with varying pressure to create both thick and thin lines, adding versatility to your strokes.

Round Brushes

- Description: Round with a pointed tip, offering versatility in stroke thickness.
- Best For: Detailing, controlled washes, and thin-to-thick line variation.
- Common Uses: Watercolor, ink, and fine detail work in acrylic and oil painting.
- Additional Tip: Keep the bristles damp while working with watercolor to maintain smooth, fluid strokes.

Filbert Brushes

- Description: Flat brushes with rounded edges, creating a blend of flat and round characteristics.
- Best For: Soft edges, blending, and curved strokes.
- Common Uses: Oil and acrylic painting.
- Additional Tip: Ideal for portrait painting, filbert brushes allow for seamless blending of skin tones and soft transitions.



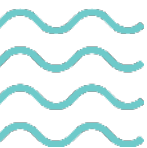


Fan Brushes

- Description: Fanned-out bristles for delicate blending and texturing.
- Best For: Creating foliage, clouds, and feathering effects.
- Common Uses: Oil, acrylic, and dry brushing techniques.
- Additional Tip: Use a dry fan brush to lightly dab on paint for natural-looking textures, such as fur or grass.

Angle Brushes (Angular or Slanted Brushes)

- Description: Slanted bristles that allow for precision and dynamic strokes.
- Best For: Sharp lines, curves, and controlled blending.
- Common Uses: Acrylic, oil, and decorative painting.
- Additional Tip: These brushes are excellent for creating floral designs and precise edges in decorative painting projects.





Detail Brushes (Liner Brushes)

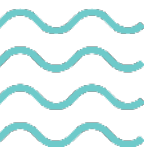
- Description: Long, thin bristles designed for intricate details and fine lines.
- Best For: Calligraphy, signatures, fine details, and precise work.
- Common Uses: Ink, watercolor, and acrylic painting.
- Additional Tip: To get the finest lines, thin the paint with a little water or medium to improve flow.

Mop Brushes

- Description: Large, soft, and fluffy brushes that hold a significant amount of water and paint.
- Best For: Large washes, blending, and soft backgrounds.
- Common Uses: Watercolor and soft blending in other mediums.
- Additional Tip: Perfect for wet-on-wet techniques, mop brushes allow for seamless color transitions in watercolor painting.

Resable Brushes

- Description: A unique blend of natural goat hair and synthetic "ReSable" fiber.
- Best For: Watercolor, gouache, and poster paint applications.
- Common Uses: These brushes hold a generous amount of pigment while maintaining control for both fine details and broad strokes.
- Additional Information: The "ReSable" hair offers a balance of softness and spring, providing flexibility and precision. ReSable brushes are known for their excellent water retention, making them ideal for fluid painting techniques.

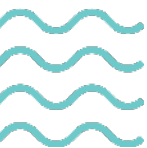




2. Paint Brush Bristles: Natural vs. Synthetic

Choosing the Right Bristle Type

- If working with oil paint, natural bristles provide a smoother, more even application.
- For acrylics, synthetic brushes maintain their shape and are more resistant to the harsh chemicals in acrylic paint.
- Watercolor artists may prefer natural hair for its superior water-holding ability, but high-quality synthetic brushes can also perform well.
- Mixed media artists often find synthetic brushes more adaptable for switching between mediums.



3. Choosing the Right Brush for Your Medium



Natural (Sable) Bristles

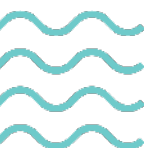
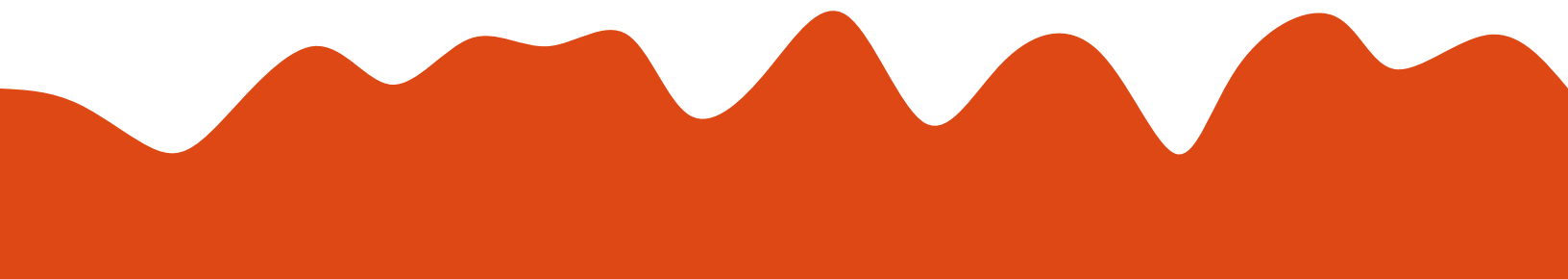
- Made from animal hair, such as hog, sable, or squirrel.
- Ideal for oil painting as they have a natural ability to hold and distribute thick paint smoothly.
- Great for watercolor brushes that require excellent paint and water retention, like squirrel hair brushes.
- More delicate than synthetic brushes and require extra care to maintain their longevity.
- Typically more expensive due to their high-quality and natural origins.

Synthetic Bristles

- Made from man-made materials like nylon, polyester, or a blend of both.
- Ideal for acrylic painting as they do not absorb water and can withstand the acrylic texture without damage.
- More durable and easier to clean than natural bristles.
- More budget-friendly than natural brushes, making them a good choice for beginners.
- Often designed to mimic the feel and performance of natural bristles while being cruelty-free.

The type of bristle plays a significant role in how a brush performs and interacts with different types of paint.

Remember: Choosing the right brush depends on the medium you are using and the effect you want to achieve!





Oil Painting

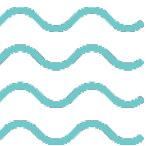
- Best Bristle Type: Natural bristles, such as hog hair, are ideal due to their ability to hold thick oil paint and create smooth strokes.
- Recommended Brush Shapes:
 - Filbert brushes – Great for soft blending and curved strokes.
 - Flat brushes – Useful for bold, broad strokes and impasto techniques.
 - Round brushes – Ideal for finer details and controlled application.
- Additional Tip: Choose long-handled brushes for better control when painting on canvas, as they allow for looser, more gestural strokes.

Acrylic Painting

- Best Bristle Type: Synthetic bristles work best, as they resist acrylic paint's fast-drying nature and are easier to clean.
- Recommended Brush Shapes:
 - Flat brushes – Suitable for covering large areas and creating crisp edges.
 - Round brushes – Perfect for detailed work and fluid lines.
 - Angle brushes – Help with sharp lines and precise strokes.
 - Fan brushes – Useful for texture and blending effects.
- Additional Tip: Acrylics dry quickly, so clean your brushes immediately after use to prevent paint from hardening in the bristles.

Watercolor Painting

- Best Bristle Type: Soft natural bristles, such as sable or squirrel, offer excellent water retention and smooth application.
- Recommended Brush Shapes:
 - Round brushes – Versatile for washes, detailing, and line variations.
 - Mop brushes – Hold large amounts of water for broad washes and soft gradients.
 - Liner brushes – Ideal for fine details and calligraphy-style strokes.
- Additional Tip: Synthetic watercolor brushes can be a more affordable alternative while still offering good water retention.





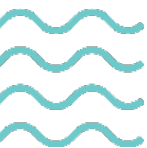
Gouache Painting

- Best Bristle Type: Soft natural or synthetic brushes that provide good pigment control.
- Recommended Brush Shapes:
 - Flat brushes – Excellent for layering opaque colors smoothly.
 - Round brushes – Provide control for both broad strokes and fine details.
 - Angle brushes – Help achieve clean edges and sharp transitions.
- Additional Tip: Since gouache can rehydrate easily, use brushes with soft bristles that won't disturb the underlying layers.



Mixed Media and Decorative Painting

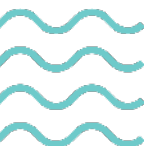
- Best Bristle Type: Synthetic brushes are preferred due to their durability across various mediums.
- Recommended Brush Shapes:
 - Stencil brushes – Ideal for stippling techniques in decorative painting.
 - Fan brushes – Useful for adding texture and special effects.
 - Filbert brushes – Great for soft blending and shading.
- Additional Tip: When switching between different mediums, clean brushes thoroughly to avoid cross-contamination of paint types.

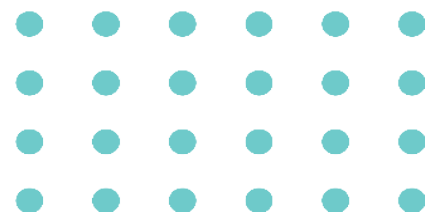




4. Brush Care Tips for Longevity

- **Cleaning:** Always clean brushes immediately after use to prevent paint from drying in the bristles. Use water for water-based paints and appropriate solvents for oil-based paints.
- **Deep Cleaning:** For a thorough clean, use mild soap or specialized brush cleaners to remove residual paint and restore bristle flexibility.
- **Drying:** Gently reshape the bristles after washing and let them dry flat or with the bristles facing downward to prevent water from seeping into the ferrule.
- **Storage:** Store brushes upright in a jar or case to maintain their shape and protect them from dust and damage.
- **Avoid Overloading:** Avoid using too much paint on brushes, as excessive buildup can damage bristles and make cleaning difficult.
- **Brush Conditioning:** Occasionally condition natural bristle brushes with linseed oil or a specialized brush conditioner to keep them soft and extend their lifespan.
- **Protecting the Ferrule:** Never submerge the ferrule (metal part) in water for extended periods, as it can weaken the glue that holds the bristles.
- **Rotation:** Rotate between brushes to prevent excessive wear on a single brush and prolong their usability.





Conclusion

With so many paint brushes available, selecting the right one can elevate your artistic endeavors. Whether you're painting broad strokes with a flat brush, adding intricate details with a liner brush, or blending with a filbert, understanding the function of each type allows you to create the desired effect effortlessly. Invest in quality brushes, take care of them properly, and let your creativity flow onto the canvas!

Contact Arbust for any of your brush requirements today!



**A paintbrush is more than a tool;
it is the extension of an artist's
soul, translating thoughts into
color & vision into reality**

