How to Paint a Landscape

Arts and Entertainment · about 14 minutes · 2026-11-08

Paint a landscape in oils in a workable order: toned ground, blocked shapes, aerial perspective, and detail only where the eye lands.

Things you will need

- Oil paints (student or artist grade)
- Painting brushes (filbert, flat, and round)
- Palette knife
- Wooden palette or disposable palette pad
- Stretched canvas or canvas panel
- Gesso for canvas preparation
- Odorless mineral spirits (Gamsol)
- Painting medium (Liquin or Galkyd)
- Easel
- Daylight lamp or natural light source
- Reference photo or sketch
- Cleaning rags or paper towels
- Brush soap or soap for cleaning
- Varnish (when painting is fully dry)
- Picture frame

Gathering Your Materials

1. **Choose Your Oil Paints**
   Select a basic set of oil paints to start your landscape painting journey.
2. **Select Your Brushes**
   Choose the right brushes for landscape painting.
3. **Pick Your Painting Surface**
   Choose your painting surface — stretched canvas, canvas panels, or oil paper.
4. **Gather Your Mediums and Solvents**
   Collect the mediums and solvents you need for oil painting.
5. **Set Up Your Easel and Workspace**
   Set up a comfortable and functional painting workspace.
6. **Prepare Your Canvas**
   Prepare your canvas before painting by applying a ground layer.

Preparing to Paint

7. **Set Up Your Palette**
   Prepare your palette before you start painting.
8. **Organize Your Workspace**
   Organize your painting workspace for maximum efficiency.

9. **Create a Thumbnail Sketch**

   Create a small thumbnail sketch to plan your composition before painting.

10. **Plan Your Composition**

    Refine your composition choice using composition principles.

11. **Choose Your Subject**

    Select your landscape subject — a scenic view that inspires you.

Sketching and Composition

12. **Draw Your Underpainting**

    Create an underpainting on your canvas to establish values and structure.

13. **Block In Major Shapes**

    Block in the major color shapes on your canvas.

14. **Paint the Sky**

    Paint the sky first — it sets the mood and atmosphere of your landscape.

15. **Paint the Distant Hills**

    Paint the distant hills next — these elements establish the background of your landscape.

16. **Paint the Middle Ground**

    Paint the middle ground — the area between the distant hills and the foreground.

Painting Your Landscape

17. **Paint the Foreground**

    Paint the foreground with the most detail and contrast.

18. **Add Trees and Vegetation**

    Add trees and vegetation to bring life and texture to your landscape.

19. **Add Details and Textures**

    Add fine details and textures to complete your landscape.

20. **Evaluate Your Painting**

    Step back from your painting and evaluate it with fresh eyes.

21. **Make Final Adjustments**

    Make final adjustments based on your evaluation.

22. **Frame Your Painting**

    Frame your finished landscape painting to protect and display it.

Finishing and Sharing

23. **Apply Varnish**

    Apply a protective varnish to your finished painting once it is completely dry — this usually takes 6-12 months for oil paintings.

24. **Let It Cure**

    Allow your painting to cure completely before displaying it in a way that protects the surface.

25. **Share Your Work**

    Share your landscape painting with others — share it with friends, family, and fellow artists.

26. Start Your Next Painting

Use what you learned from this painting to start your next one.

27. Join an Art Community

Connect with other artists to learn, share, and grow together.

28. Display Your Painting

Display your finished landscape painting in a location where it can be appreciated.

Sources

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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Paint-a-Landscape. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/corrections