

Introduction

My name is Emil Sennholz. I graduated Slippery Rock University with a degree in Art in 2012. I had of course had art lessons and been interested in art long before that as well. I'm a person of many interests, and I love to learn from a variety of fields, art just happens to be one of those fields that interest me. I did some traveling to Germany and Taiwan, learning their cultures and artistic styles before returning to the United States. Since my return, I have been working hard on my artistic endeavors, building a reputation locally and globally. I have learned many things in my search for artistic enlightenment.

While I was unsure of my path, I had several artist friends encouraging me, even going as far as giving me free canvases. I naturally needed brushes and paints to begin my adventure, I made mistakes, and also discovered many things that may help other artists not fumble around like I did.

In this short article, I'll be teaching you the different uses and effects of brushes so that the artists can make informed decisions about what brushes or other tools they need for painting, or even drawing.

There are many tools and brushes that can be used for art. Some that can be used only for painting, some that can be only used for drawing, and some that work for both. We'll begin with brushes and work into palette knives, pens, blenders, and even erasers.

Getting the right brush really depends on the purpose or effect you want in your paint. Different shapes of brushes can be used differently and can be used to fit a form perfectly, or to make a pattern, or even to mix colors with different consistencies! Not only do you have to consider the shape, and density of the hair bristles in your brush, but you also have to consider the hairs themselves!

Nylon bristles are a flexible hair, making blending easier, or make smooth transitions and wavy textures. Of course, Nylon bristles can be used for heavy textures, but it is not easily controlled for detailed oriented work.

Natural bristles are firm hairs, allowing more controlled and deeper textures to be used. Because of how strong and thick natural bristles are, they can make an uneven texture when applying paint, making a rougher effect, which looks more outdoorsy.

Wall paint brush would be a good brush to use for large surfaces, and for landscapes. A natural bristle brush would be ideal for leaves and textured highlights.

Large flat paint brushes are the universal brush, good for virtually any painting, of course they aren't very precise, but they cover the canvas with paint quickly. Easily usable with thick or thin paints, preferably thick.

Filber paint brushes are good for making slightly rounded stroke, but can't make the reverse shape without extreme precision and practice. The Filber brush is better used when being precise, otherwise it's just like a flat brush. Usable with any kind of paint, thick or thin.

Pointed round paint brushes are a fine and thin brush, made for detailed work. Make dots or exact lines, or even writing words. Best used with thin paints, but thick paints can be used as well without too much difficulty.

Fan brushes are good for making unique textures, smoothing, or even blending colors. The fan brush can be used for either detailed work, or for larger works, but is best for making large light strokes, making it the perfect cloud making tool. Can be used with any type of paint, thick or thin.

These are the brushes all beginners should have, anything more like the "angular flat brush" "round brush" or even the "bright brush" are virtually unnecessary. Next I'll explain several different palette knives and what they are used for.

There are many different kinds of palette knives, and I personally have found that not many of them have any purpose. Obviously, there are certain palette knives that are designed for a more specific shape or purpose, but for general use, I would only select two kinds. Also pay attention to whether the knife is stiff or flexible, it can make a difference in its use.

Flexible palette knives are better for mixing colors to make them uniform. They also are good for making textures by pushing firmly into the paint.

Stiff palette knives are great for making straight lines, or even making uneven patterns if used lightly on a painting. A stiff palette knife is generally better for precision work.

There are many different shapes of palette knives, and with those different shapes, different uses. Some may be called 'detail knives' while others called 'spatulas'. One of each would be ideal, but

getting the wrong stiffness with the wrong knife might make trouble later.

Blick is a large distributor of palette knives on the internet, and they number the shapes of the knife. According to their numbering system, I recommend a stiff style 109 palette knife, and a flexible style 62 (or 63 for lefties) palette knife.



Both knives are good with flat shapes, but the style 62 knife is good for a smaller scale. Because of its shape, the style 62 (or 63) is good for blending paints together, creating textures on the side edges, or front edge of the knife. Having a point allows for better detail if necessary, and can easily pull paints for desired (or undesired) effects in the painting.

Style 109 is better for larger, longer, shapes on the canvas. This palette knife makes easy work of landscapes, but is good for every style of painter who needs a straight edge, or to dig through the paint to the bare canvas behind.

With this setup of brushes and palette knives, pretty much any painter is set to go, but what about someone who doesn't paint? What if you draw with graphite, charcoal, or ink?

Tools used for charcoal can also be used with graphite as well, and ink is similar enough to paint that brushes can be used. Of course the brushes will hold a lot of ink and possibly drip when least convenient. With that said, smaller brushes are better for ink, unless you are looking for a dripping effect.

Round brush is a good brush, smaller than some other brushes, but large enough to cover a large area if needed. Remember to only dip the end of the brush into the ink and not the whole brush. The round brush also holds a lot of ink, but is easy to use with ink because of its long hairs. Nylon bristles might be best when using with ink because they won't absorb as much ink as a natural bristle brush might.

A pointed round brush might work well with ink also for smaller shapes. However, using this brush may be frustrating because of how little ink it holds, and you'll have to dip it into the ink pretty much after every stroke.

Never underestimate the usefulness of a fan brush! It truly is one of my favorite brushes because of its wide variety of uses. The fan brush can hold lots of ink without dripping, but everything has its limits. Shake any drips off once or twice before using. Either natural bristles or nylon bristles work, but keep in mind the natural bristles are stiffer so they may make lines instead of a solid color.

An eyedropper can be a good tool with ink as well. The eyedropper may only have one way of applying the ink, but it's good at the dripping affect. If you want a more precise line (downward) use a butter knife or something to dig into the paper a path for the ink to go, or just set the paper down on a flat surface before using the eyedropper.

Brushes may be something to use on charcoal for blending, but generally speaking there are better tools for such a task.

The blender is a good tool for detailed blending, however I prefer to use my fingers for blending. Masterfully detailed and exact works can be made with a blender, in either charcoal or pencil. It's easy to use, and depending on the kind you get, either easily cleaned, or has layers that peel off, allowing you to start fresh.

An eraser is valuable, even if you don't want to remove something completely. A very rubbery soft eraser is preferred, because it blends and removes pencil or charcoal easily. The eraser can be cleaned with soap and water, or by simply rubbing the end off.

The tools I've covered should be for any level of artist, whether they are just starting, or whether they are more advanced, or even if they just wanted to diverge from their preferred medium to become more diverse.

Learn more about the processes of artwork! Read more of my "how to" articles, or if you want personal lessons, that is an option as well! Thank you for reading! Enjoy making art!