



Essential Alla Prima Plein Air Techniques Materials List

Everything on this list is necessary unless otherwise stated. Add more stuff if you wish, but be sure to bring what is found below to this workshop. Personally, I operate on the principle of less is more and try to reduce the amount of stuff I have to haul out from the car.

Paint

I appreciate that it can be expensive but please stock up on Artist-grade paint. Anything else is likely to make your mixing more difficult and this workshop less fun...

REQUIRED MINIMUM COLOR PALETTE:

	Approx. Quantity:
Titanium White or Titanium/Zinc White (preferred)	(1) 150 ml tubes
Cadmium Yellow Lemon or Cadmium Yellow Light	(1-2) 67 ml tubes
Cadmium Red Medium	(1-2) 67 ml tubes
Alizarin or Alizarin Permanent or Quinacridone Red	(1-2) 67 ml tubes
Ultramarine Blue and/or Cobalt Blue	(1-2) 67 ml tubes
Manganese Blue HUE or Cerulean Blue HUE	(1-2) 67 ml tubes

Optional, but highly recommended hues:

Cadmium Yellow Medium
Viridian Green
Iron Oxide Red or Transparent Earth Red or Burnt Sienna

Additional hues which are also helpful:

Raw umber
Yellow Ochre or Iron Oxide Yellow
Dioxazine Purple

If you bring **ALL** the hues found above you should be able to mix (almost) every color we see. If you bring just the minimum palette you may run into a color you cannot mix. This is acceptable because there are work-arounds if this happens.

Oil Paint Quality:

Please purchase **Artist-Grade** paint, not **Student-Grade**, or any so-called 'discount' or 'studio' option. (Many manufacturers have caught on to the fact artists are now savvy about the term 'student-grade' and now use other categorical names.) Student-grade paint is adulterated with a higher proportion of fillers, wax, and stearates to compensate for there being less pigment. So student-grade paint represents a false economy because more paint is required.

Brand of Oil Paint:

Any brand is acceptable as long as it is an artist-grade paint. Mixing various brands is okay.



Flying with Oil Paint

If you plan to fly with your paint please refer to the appendix at the end of this document.

Solvent:

I generally paint without solvent. If you plan to paint with a thinner then Odorless Mineral Spirits (OMS) only please. No turpentine. If you wish, bring one liter/quart of OMS to this workshop.

Brushes:

Bring a variety of brushes between 1/8 and 1.5 inches in width. I recommend a mixture of Flats, Filberts, and Rounds. If you like hog hair bring them. If you like using softer brushes, such as a synthetic nylon or mongoose hair, bring them along as well. (I paint with all of them.) You will be happier with your brushwork if your brushes are new or in good condition. At the end of the day you can clean your brushes using cheap vegetable oil and dish soap, or OMS. You do not need to buy ultra-special, vegan/gluten-free/artisanal and ethically-raised free-range brush soap. Soap is soap.

Painting Supports: Canvas and/or Boards

I do not recommend painting on stretched canvases. They take up a lot of space and are cumbersome to carry about. I suggest you paint on standard sized primed boards or canvas/linen panels. Stick to these sizes: 8 x 10, 9 x 12, 8 x 16, 11 x 14, with 12 x 16 inches being the maximum. (All of which may be packed into a carrier listed below.) If you are new to painting outdoors I suggest you stick to the smaller sizes.

Bring at least of 6 panels for this workshop, with 9 or 10 being even better. Mix and match different brands if you wish to test them out. Choose either an acrylic 'gesso' or an oil primed ground on a smooth surface, or panels with pre-primed cotton or linen adhered. If you buy el cheapo bargain panels off the bottom shelf then consider applying a few more coats of acrylic gesso to minimize the weave and oil absorption. You will be happier.

I also suggest you bring a panel carrier for your wet paintings. One inexpensive option is to buy a couple of Raymar panel carriers in different sizes. They can be purchased here:

<http://www.raymarart.com/Wet-Painting-Carriers-Wet-Panel-Carriers-s/21.htm>

Another (moderately more expensive) option is Artwork Essential's ezPort Panel Carrier. It's primary charm is the way it can be configured to carry different sized panels simultaneously. I use this carrier myself:

<http://www.artworkessentials.com/products/ezport/index.htm>

Two Rolls of Paper Towels or a bag of Lint-free Cotton Rags

Plus a few plastic bags to transport your waste home. You are responsible for disposal.

A Reservoir to contain Solvent

If you choose to paint with OMS your reservoir can be as simple as an empty **PLASTIC** mayonnaise jar with a tight fitting lid. I found that the standard two-part jam jar lid with the red gasket seal fits



tighter than the original mayonnaise jar lid. Or, you can purchase a medium or large Holbien Metal Brush Washer such as the ones you find here:

<http://www.dickblick.com/products/holbien-metal-brush-washers>

If you purchase a metal solvent reservoir confirm the gasket seal is made of black rubber. It should not be white or clear. OMS will cause that kind of seal to leak in short order. Usually in your car as we drive about.

Also, if you decide to paint with a solvent, bring a second reservoir of equal size from home. (again, a plastic mayonnaise jar is fine.). You can pour your used OMS into it at the end of the day and it will settle out by morning. You can then pour the solvent into your painting reservoir and use it the next day.

Required: Outdoor Easel

I either own or have personally field-tested the following easels. If an easel isn't listed here then I can't recommend it. There are a lot of poorly designed field easels out there and I don't want you to waste your money on any of them. All these easels are available online. (Google the names to locate the websites.)

OpenBox M™	What I use most often. I have two different sizes.
The Strada™	Bomb-proof, made of aluminum. If you paint small consider the mini.
Alla Prima Pochade™	I don't have one but many of my friends love them.
Soltek™	Some folks love them. Not me. The legs and friction joints can be finicky.
Easy-L™	Similar to the OpenBox M, but not quite as bomb-proof.
Guerilla Pochade Box™	Awkward to use but bomb-proof. If you already have one it will work.

Note: Excepting the Soltek, you will also need a sturdy tripod. Good tripods can be pricy. But quality tripods with all metal ball head and quick-release plate won't shake 'n' break.

Required: Palette Knife

Bring a metal knife with an off-set handle. (As shown right) The most all-encompassing painting knife is wedge-shaped, about 1 inch across at the base and is around 3 inches in length. The width at the base helps mix a lot of paint quickly. A pointed tip is helpful if you wish to paint with it. You will use this knife to mix color, scrape your painting, and clean your palette at the end of the day. Don't skimp on it. Break the bank and spend a whopping six or seven bucks on it.



Optional: A Shade Umbrella and/or a Collapsible Chair

An umbrella is a nice perk on a hot day but it presents a danger when a gust surprises you. Especially along a ledge or cliff. I rarely paint with one myself and prefer to wear a big floppy hat instead. I may look like a doofus but then my easel doesn't blow down very often either.

If possible, I prefer you stand while you paint because it makes it more likely you will step back and view your work at a distance. But if standing is not an option then please sit while you paint.



Clothing, Apparel, and Miscellaneous Stuff:

Dark, Neutral-colored, Long-Sleeve Shirts and Lightweight Pants

It's your choice, but cover up as much as possible as we'll be outdoors most of the day. Be prepared for temperatures between 40° to 85° F. Even if the sun is out it can be a tad cool. (Although I will do my best to keep everyone comfortable.) Also, wear dark or neutral colors so the light you bounce into your painting doesn't bias the color. If you must wear a strong color, blue is best.

Wide Brim Hat

Preferably, a hat with a generous dark rim underneath. Ball caps are handy but they leave your ears and neck exposed. A full brim is better. I wear a river rafting hat. Again, goofy, but comfortable.

Sunblock and Insect Repellent. And Anti-histamine, should you need it

I recommend something along the lines of "SPF 5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000". Maybe higher. And slather it on. I am not your mother but it only works if you put it on.

Bugs 'n Stuff:

IMPORTANT: If you have an allergy to bee or wasp stings please provide me with a current EpiPen™ during the workshop. In fact, if you have **ANY** significant health concern please inform me prior to this workshop. The information will be kept confidential. Safety is my first priority.

Plenty of Water and Food

We will paint in the morning after breakfast, and again in the afternoon following lunch. Lunch will be up to you but I expect we will mostly picnic together as a group. Or, we may find a restaurant and sit down together. If you need to snack between meals please do so. And no, you don't have to share unless it is chocolate...

Daypack, or Duffel Bag to Carry your Gear

We won't do anything strenuous but you will be expected to carry your own gear and the group may walk as far as 200 yards out from our cars. Please test-pack your equipment before you leave home. Don't do it for the first time in the parking lot. Verify that everything fits – and just as important – that you can pick it up.

Recommended Reading:

If you would like to preview much of what we will cover during the week then check these books out. Both are affordable and still in print:

["Carlson's Guide to Landscape Painting"](#) by John F. Carlson

["Fill your Oil Paintings with Light & Color"](#) by Kevin McPherson

And Finally:

If you have any questions at all please email me at thomas@thomaskitts.com and I will be happy respond. I look forward to meeting and working with each and every one of you!



Flying with Artist Colors

Many people ask me what is the best way to fly with artist colors or other artist materials. If you plan to fly with them here is what you must do to keep anything from being impounded.

Important: Even though the following conforms to TSA's own rules and regulations it is still possible for your artist colors to be impounded if you pack them incorrectly or act inappropriately.

First, if a TSA security person at any point stops and asks you, "What are these?" do not say 'oil paints'. Those words are hot buttons for the TSA. Even water-based acrylics and watercolors have been impounded because they were identified as "paints". If asked, politely inform the TSA representative they are **"artists' colors"** and if possible, avoid mentioning the word **"oil"** at all as it too is a trigger word.

The US Department of Transportation defines "flammable liquids" as anything with a flash point of 140° F or below. (60° C on the European continent.) Every paint manufacturer you buy from should post an official **Materials Safety Data Sheet (aka, MSDS)** for each color they sell. **You must download and print out an MSDS sheet for each color you plan to check in your carry-on or you will run the risk of that color being impounded.**

After you have printed out the necessary MSDS sheets follow these instructions. They are EXACTLY what I do myself.

- 1. First, wrap your paint tubes in a way that a bottom corner will not puncture any other tube next to it.** I also recommend you pack your artist colors in a tupperware-like container with leak-proof lid so if a puncture does occur everything else in your suitcase will not be affected. (Your suitcase will go into an unpressurized compartment.) Packing your artist colors in a neat way will engender goodwill from the TSA agent who opens your suitcase to check. *And a TSA agent will open your suitcase. I guarantee it!*
- 2. On each data sheet, highlight the manufacturer's contact information, flashpoint of your artist color (which must be higher than 140° F), and the place where the data sheet states the artist color is made from 'vegetable oil' and is not hazardous.** I use a yellow highlighter myself.
- 3. If you have an artist business card staple it to the sheets or write your contact information on the top page.** Where it can be immediately seen. Include your cell phone number if you have one.
- 4. Staple all the highlighted MSDS sheets together and lay the document on top of your artist colors where a TSA agent can immediately find it.** Again, if you make it easy for them they will make it easy for you.
- 5. Oh wait, I forgot something very important here! Do not attempt to carry-on your paint. Pack it into your carry-on luggage.** Well, technically you can carry-on but I have never succeeded at doing so. Do not try to circumvent this or it becomes almost a certainty your paint will be impounded at the first security check-point you encounter. TSA agents are nervous about things they can't see through, like tin tubes full of mysterious gooey substances. So don't even try.



Mediums or solvents: Do not attempt to take any medium or solvent in your carry-on. Do not pack any inside your checked luggage. Just don't. No mineral spirits or linseed oil will make it past the TSA agent responsible for checking your luggage. So instead, check the internet to see if it is possible to purchase your mediums and solvents at your destination.

Miscellaneous:

Do not attempt to carry a palette knife on board. I have had several impounded at security check-points even though they were dull enough to run along my thumb without cutting the skin. All the TSA agent hears is " Knife! Knife!" So pack them with your paint in your suitcase.

Clean all the paint crud out of your solvent container. It doesn't have to be clean enough to eat out of but there shouldn't be anything that looks suspicious inside. Before flying, I pull the screen out of my Holbein brush washer, wipe the can out with a rag, and let everything dry, and then stuff the pieces into a clear (new) zip-lock bag with the lid off so the TSA agent can immediately see nothing is inside.

And finally, if you are approached by TSA about your painting gear keep cool and for goodness sake, don't hassle them! They are there to do a job. Again, present the MSDS sheets and explain that you are going on a painting holiday. Stress holiday. You can choose to argue with a TSA gate agent but I guarantee you won't win. They are given wide discretion in deciding what is or is not acceptable on the spot so your best strategy is to be prepared, looked non-threatening, be pleasant, and conform to their expectations. Smile and thank them. They have a tough job.