

Plein Air Painting

Materials Guide

Plein air painting is truly a joy - but it is not without challenges!

Start out in a comfortable place, close to home and in good weather conditions. It can be awkward at first, but soon you will be painting and sketching outdoors with confidence. Maybe you'll branch out and hike a bit farther or paint in less than ideal weather. You never know where it will take you once you get hooked!

You may not need all the supplies in this guide.

Pick and choose according to your circumstances.
As you progress, branch out and add new favorite supplies.

This guide is for all types of plein air painters, but tends toward oil painting.

I have in-depth and expanded materials lists for oil, acrylic and gouache painters at classroom.sarahfburns.com/materials.

Happy Painting!

— Sarah

General Supplies

Backpack. Choose one with a large opening.

Outdoor Wagon. Totally optional, but great if you can't carry all your stuff.

Water. Definitely bring water to drink and maybe a snack.

Hat. A hat will protect you from the sun and it also will help focus your vision by limiting your scope. This is helpful when painting.

Sunscreen. Use it. You might lose track of time and be outside longer than you realize.

Long-sleeved Shirt. I'm a big fan of the long-sleeved shirt in summer to protect my skin from the sun, and of course in the winter to stay warm.

Windbreaker. Designate an old windbreaker or rain shell as your painting jacket. Mine is covered in paint after 15 years of use. Layer, layer, layer and you can paint in any weather.

Good Shoes. Always dress for the conditions! Depending on where you go-be prepared for mud, snakes, thorns, and who know what else!

Fingerless Gloves. These are great if you tend to get cold.

Bug Spray.

Hiker's Bathroom Kit. (tissue, hand sanitizer, hiker's poo shovel)

First Aid Kit. Safety first! Include a whistle if you'll be alone.

Battery Pack to Charge Your Phone. Download maps to your phone so you can figure out where you are if you lose cell service.

Portable stool or Thermarest Seat. (I don't tend to use a stool. I like the small thermarest seat pad. It provides padding that turns a rock, tree stump or log into a chair.)

Sarah f. burns

Sketch Supplies

If you are new to plein air painting, consider just sketching for your first time out. This way you will get comfortable with the challenges of making artwork outdoors, without having the added work of dealing with paint!

When you are ready to paint, include sketching supplies in your plein air kit so you can test your ideas by making thumbnail sketches of your compositions.

Sketchbook. A million options! Choose one that is a comfortable size, with paper you like. Think about what materials you will bring. Will you bring ink? Then you need paper that will handle wet media. Will you use white chalk along with darker pencil or charcoal? Then choose a toned paper.

Pencils. Again - SO many options! The world is your oyster. I like mechanical HB pencil. That way I don't have to bother with sharpening. But you might like to use pens, charcoal, chalk, ink wash. Experiment until you find what works for you.

Kneaded Eraser. I love these things! They're so versatile. Essential for use with pencil, charcoal and chalk. Not so helpful for wet media.

Pencil Pouch or Case. Keep your stuff easy to find and tidy! I keep my eraser in with the pencils. Easy to find in the backpack.

One of the benefits of sketching is you don't need to bring an easel. But if you'd like to use an easel to sketch, bring a small drawing board and tape a piece of paper to it so you can draw with ease. It's pretty tough to use a sketchbook with an easel. It's easier to tape paper to a board and place that on the easel. A lot of times I'll tape a piece of paper to the back of my painting panel. This saves space and is less to carry.

Sarah f. burns

Paint Supplies

If you *know you are going to paint*, I assume you know what *kind* of paint you plan to use. **This list is geared toward oil painters**, so you will need to adjust this list if you plan to paint with acrylic or gouache. **If you are undecided** about which type of paint to use, **visit classroom.sarahburns.com/materials**. There you'll find a quiz that will help you choose materials that best fit your goals and lifestyle.

Plein Air Painting Easel. Tons of options. You can get one that has a built in palette and way to carry wet paintings. I like the Easy L from ArtworkEssentials.com. See my blog post all about easels at classroom.sarahburns.com/blog.

Wet Panel Carrier. (You'll need this if you don't have an easel that will handle wet paintings.) Raymar makes excellent wet panel carriers. These are great if you need to travel with wet paintings. They carry up to 6 panels.

Medium. Oleogel by Rublev is great for plein air oil painting.

Palette Knife.

Brushes.

Brush Carrier. These keep your brushes from getting munched.

Brush Washer. This can be kept in the car, or you can make sure to clean your brushes right away when you get home. Don't forget!

Painting Surface. Usually fairly small panel. Choose one that fits well with your easel. I like Raymar Panels.

Rags or Paper Towels.

Disposable Gloves. optional

Small Trash Bag. For carrying out your used rags and gloves.

Tongue and Groove Pliers. For opening stubborn paint tubes.

Sarah f. burns

Paint Colors

You can get these pigments in oil, acrylic or gouache.

Good plein air easels are designed to transport wet globs of oil paint safely. Before you go out into the field, load up your palette with fresh paint. Only carry tubes of colors you might run out of. I carry titanium white, cadmium yellow light and cerulean blue. Sometimes cobalt or yellow ochre. The rest I leave in the car.

Essential Plein Air Pigments

Titanium White
Cadmium Yellow Light
Cadmium Red Light
Quinacridone Magenta
Cerulean Blue
Cobalt Blue
Ultramarine Blue
Ivory Black
Raw Umber
Burnt Umber
Burnt Sienna
Yellow Ochre

Helpful Additions.

Indian Yellow
Cadmium Orange
Perylene Red or Naphthol Red
Dioxazine Purple
Viridian
Sap Green
Phthalo Green
Prussian Blue

You may notice there are not a lot of greens on this list. I like to mix my greens. If you plan to paint flowers, you will need to bring the extra reds to mix chromatic pinks and purples.

Sarah f. burns