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TIPS FOR PAINTING AT HOME

1. **Proper ventilation is essential.** Work in a space with a window, if possible. Consider opening window(s) as you work and/or using fans to circulate air, like a box fan in a window. (When you're at the point of establishing a professional studio, a portable air purifier [like this](#) is a smart investment for your long-term health.)
2. **Use safer solvents, mediums, and proper tools.** NEVER use turpentine from the hardware store as your solvent; it has not been formulated for use with fine art materials, and the fumes are very dangerous. Gamsol odorless OMS or [Eco House Mild Citrus Thinner](#) (not cleaner) are recommended solvents, but note that they are simply *safer*, not safe, and you should still be cautious.

Don't leave jars of solvent open while you work (it is a lot different than a cup of water when you're working with watercolors, for example); keeping solvent containers closed will minimize the time you (and everyone you share a space with) is breathing it in. Open the lid when you need it, then put the lid back on again.

Working in a small space without any air circulation is unsafe. Opening a window and using a fan helps, but you might consider cutting back or even working without solvent or mediums. [Gamblin's line of solvent free mediums](#) are a good place to start.

If you're working with spray paint, you should work outside, and always wear a [respirator](#).

3. **Always wear [gloves](#) while you work.** Whether you are working with oils or acrylics, you should wear gloves. Reuse them for multiple work sessions until they break. Be vigilant about washing your hands, especially before you eat or drink, so that you are not consuming pigment and other nasty stuff.
4. **Expect that paint will get everywhere.** Paint will splatter, it will drip, you will get a spot of oil paint on the bottom of your shoe and you will track it through your space. Cover your workspace with plastic sheeting, drop cloths, [builder's paper from the hardware store](#), or trash bags (cut them open and spread them out). Baby wipes are helpful to have around. Consider having a pair of shoes that you use when you work in your designated work space, then leave them on your covered floor area before you enter back into your living space.

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5. **A glass palette is best if you're working with oil, but disposable palettes are very helpful, either as an alternative to glass or when you need more palette space.** You should be able to find a piece of glass at a hardware store. I suggest taping the edge of the glass with neutral-colored tape to avoid cutting yourself. [Covered palettes are also handy.](#)
6. **Be very careful with how you store oil, solvent, and paint-soaked rags and paper towels.** See this helpful info: <https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showdocument?id=16299> Rather than use 100 paper towels per painting session, which is wasteful anyway, you can use and reuse rags cut up from old t-shirts or dish cloths—just make sure you drape them over an easel or pin them up when you're done so that air is circulating and they can dry thoroughly.
7. **Do not clean your brushes in the kitchen sink!** Keep toxic pigment, mediums, and solvent far away from where you eat and do your dishes. If you don't have access to a utility sink, use the bathtub/shower faucet.

Oil residue will be left behind in any sink you use, so clean up after yourself—it is far easier, and faster, if you spend a minute to clean up each time you clean your brushes; just a little bit of spray cleanser should do the trick—I like Murphy's Oil Spray.

Remember to clean your brushes thoroughly with Murphy's Oil Soap and/or solvent before even getting to soap and water, drawing as much oil out of your bristles as you can. Once that's done, move to warm water and a bar of soap. I suggest having a pair of sturdy dish-washing/cleaning gloves for brush washing, since you should really work that soap into bristles (and you don't want to work pigment into your skin). A tip: keep a designated studio dish towel—not one you will also use in your kitchen—for the purpose of drying brushes. If you work with both oil and water-based media, have one for each. The towel(s) will dry between sessions and you can use and reuse them to cut down on waste.