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# Selecting a support for painting with oils



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When you think about oil painting, are canvases what pop into your mind? You're right! Nowadays, canvas is the standard support. Here's some advice: don't limit yourself! Many other supports are available for translating your artistic ideas?



## 1. Canvas

While you can find pre-stretched and primed canvases in standard dimensions, you can also acquire canvas in rolls. You then mount it on a frame in the desired format.

### What weave?

The quality of canvas depends in large part on its weave. The tighter it is, the better: it makes canvas easier to prime and it won't loosen while you're working or afterwards.

- The density of the fabric is stated as threads per cm<sup>2</sup>: count 24 to 28 threads/cm<sup>2</sup> for a

tight to very tight weave.

### What kind of material?

- Linen canvas: fine and moisture-resistant? an excellent quality canvas, but more costly! You would be better off practicing on other supports before trying it.
- Cotton canvas: while more affordable, it is less sturdy than linen canvas and tends to loosen. So you need to be meticulous about stretching it on a frame!
- Flax canvas: its fibers are coarser than cotton, but also sturdier and more durable. The perfect support for working with large impastos!



## 2. Paper

Paper designed specifically for oil paint comes as loose sheets, pads or rolls, depending on what you need.

### For whom? What for? Why?

For beginners, paper is less expensive than canvas: you can multiply your attempts without worrying about cost. For amateurs and experienced artists, because its texture is close to linen canvas, it works well for both studies and finished pieces.

- It is easy to carry, light and practical, so take it along to paint outdoors!
- The paper is acid-free and preserves well over time.
- Because of its thick grammage (260 g/m<sup>2</sup>) it works well for applying washes as well as working with impastos.

### Zoom? other supports

Other supports can be used? as long as they are primed.

- **Cardboard:** perfect for practicing and studying new textures.
- **Canvas board:** the painting side is covered with cotton canvas, the ideal support for doing a study.

- **Wood panels** (beech, walnut, poplar or oak), are appreciated for their smooth surface. Consider recycling: an old oak cupboard would work well, once the wood panel is sanded and primed!

### Practical advice: Prepare your support

Because oil paints are corrosive, you need to prime your support. Apply a **gesso**. This white, opaque primer dries fast and creates a matte surface so layers of paint can adhere to better.

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