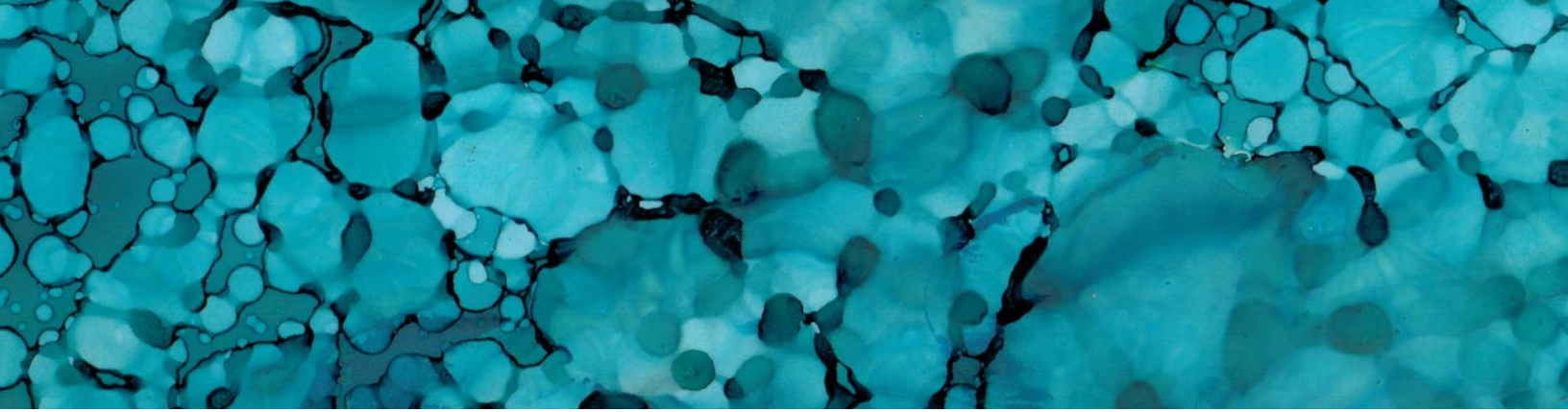




ALCOHOL INK:

A QUICK ESSENTIALS GUIDE for BEGINNERS



ALCOHOL INK ART

Learn, create & share art.

community

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Alcohol Ink: A Quick Essentials Guide for Beginners

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Alcohol Ink: A Quick Essentials Guide for Beginners

WHAT IS ALCOHOL INK?

Alcohol ink is quickly becoming a popular medium among artists of all levels. They offer a unique opportunity for artistic individuals to create amazing artwork. Alcohol inks offer techniques and solutions for artists of all levels, from simple abstract backgrounds to intense, classic realistic art.

Alcohol ink is an acid-free, vibrant, alcohol-based dye that is liquid, translucent and fast drying. It is best used on non-porous surfaces. Alcohol inks come in bottles. Distress inks, acrylic inks, and India inks are NOT the same alcohol inks and will not produce the same effect.

The main ingredients in alcohol ink are dye and ethanol alcohol, but even within the same brand, the percentages of those ingredients differ. Alcohol is what causes the ink to move; dye is the pigment that remains after the alcohol evaporates. An ink with a higher alcohol content will move more when applied, while one with less alcohol will move less.



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HOW TO GET STARTED WITH ALCOHOL INK

There is a wealth of information and instruction available for learning alcohol ink of all levels. Most enthusiasts start with YouTube and search videos. A quick search for “alcohol ink techniques” will yield an overwhelming number of videos and instruction. No matter what “style” of alcohol ink art you want to take on, there are how-to videos and presentations to watch.

The [Alcohol Ink Art Community has a YouTube channel](#) with lots of helpful videos with new techniques and demonstrations added regularly, so be sure to subscribe and turn on notifications so that you are notified when we share something new!

Most alcohol ink artists start out using a tile or a synthetic paper. I recommend starting by dropping a few drops of ink and rocking the tile or paper to get a feel for the flow. You'll be amazed at what sort of abstract art you'll be able to create right away!

The best way to get started is to get yourself some basic supplies (see supplies list below) and practice. You will soon discover the fun... and probably get addicted really quick.

Many people do get frustrated or discouraged at first. If you try to control the ink too much when you are just a beginner, you may get frustrated. Alcohol Ink has a mind of its own. If you get started with that in mind, you will soon discover the joy that thousands of other creators have! Watch some videos and give practice a little.

This is one of my very first creations with alcohol ink... and I still love it today!





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ALCOHOL INK SUBSTRATES

Below is a list of the most-used substrates with alcohol ink. Basically, alcohol ink can be used on any non-porous surface. That includes surfaces that are natively non-porous or that have been prepped to create a non-porous surface.

POPULAR SURFACES

- Glossy Ceramic Tile
- Synthetic Papers
- YUPO® Paper
- TerraSlate
- NARA Synthetic Paper
- Grafix® Dura-Bright®
- Ceramic Tile Paper (CTP)
- Premium Glossy Photo Paper (back-side)
- Modeling Film
- Acetate
- TerraSkin
- Canvas (prepped with Gesso, Kilz2 or glossy medium)
- Metal
- Melamine Board
- Clayboard
- Wood Panel (prepped with Gesso, Kilz2 or glossy medium)

ALTERNATIVE SUBSTRATES

- Dominoes
- Cabochons
- Light Switch Plates
- Musical Instruments
- Glass Ornaments / Bulbs
- Corian®
- Shrink Film (Shrinky Dinks)
- Gourds
- Silk
- Plastic Containers
- Glass

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ALCOHOL INK ON CANVAS OR POROUS SURFACES

Our creative team gets asked at least once per week if you can use alcohol ink on canvas. Although it does not behave the same way that it does on gloss or “slick” surfaces, you can paint on canvas (and wood). Adding alcohol ink directly to a canvas or any non-porous surface, you will quickly see that the ink absorbs into the substrate making it impossible to get that lovely flow that we love so much with alcohol ink. In order to use alcohol ink successfully on porous surfaces, you simply need to prep the surface first. You can add an extra coat of gesso or a gel medium to the canvas to achieve a non-porous surface.

The most suggested method for prepping canvas involves using Kilz2®, applying at least two coats in opposite directions to ensure the canvas has been sufficiently covered. Once that is dry, you are good to go.



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ALCOHOL INK BRANDS

- Ranger Tim Holtz®
- Jacquard Piñata®
- Brea Reese®
- T-Rex®
- Copic®
- Maribu®
- Kieley Ink™



ALCOHOL INK MARKERS

Alcohol ink markers can be used to create alcohol ink too. They are also often used to add to or enhance artwork created with alcohol ink bottles. Additionally, many of the refills for markers come in bottles and are used as alcohol ink. The most popular marker refills are Copic® and Spectrum Noir®.

Many popular markers on the market such as Sharpie® and Bic® are alcohol-based markers. There are also a growing number of manufacturers of alcohol ink markers.

Popular Brands of Alcohol Ink Markers

- Copic®
- Prismacolor®
- Spectrum Noir®
- Chameleon®
- Sharpie®
- Bic®

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ALCOHOL INK BLENDERS AND INSTIGATORS

Alcohol ink can be diluted, blended, reconstituted, and instigated using blenders and solutions. In fact, when creating art with alcohol ink, these solutions are a “must-have” because the alcohol in the ink evaporates quickly and as this happens the “flow” of the ink slows and/or stops completely.

Common blenders that are used include:

- Isopropyl Alcohol
- Tim Holtz Blending Solution
- Jacquard Claro Extender

These solutions are applied in a few ways:

- Dropping directly onto the canvas
- Dispensing with a blending pen (refillable or pre-filled)
- Dispensing with an eyedropper or pipette
- Applied intentionally with a brush, cotton swab or cotton ball





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MANIPULATORS

Alcohol ink is a high flowing medium. Adding Blending Solutions or Isopropyl Alcohol will produce organic flowing and blooming effects without any additional effort. However, as you grow more comfortable with the medium, there are some tools you can use to help you “manipulate” the ink to create interesting textures and intentional marks.

Some of the more common ones include:

- Brushes
- Felt
- Sponges
- Cotton Swabs / Cotton Balls
- Palette Knife
- Old Gift Card or Credit Card
- Fantastix or Dental Tools
- Blending Pen
- Eye-dropper or Pipette

BLOWING TOOLS

One of the most popular techniques for creating with alcohol ink involves blowing the ink to create beautiful designs such as florals. Some of the most popular tools for blowing ink include:

- Ranger’s Tim Holtz Ink Blower
- Airbrush Compressor
- Canned Air / Compressed Air
- Hair Dryer

NOTE: Some people use straws for blowing alcohol ink. I do not recommend it because its unsafe because you would consume the toxins from the fumes, but also because it adds a level of condensation/moisture and humidity that does not play well with alcohol ink.



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ALCOHOL INK SAFETY

Alcohol inks are alcohol based. Prolonged or intense exposure to alcohol can be toxic. The same goes for many household cleaners, sanitizers, and beauty products. Because they can be toxic and therefore, dangerous to your health, it is especially important to take precautions when you know you are being exposed to alcohol.

- Work in a well-ventilated area/room or outdoors. Use fans and air purifiers to filter the air around your work area.
- Wear gloves. Nitrile gloves are considered best for protection.
- Wear a respirator with filters that are rated to protect against organic vapors, as well as safety goggles to protect the eyes.
- Limit your creative sessions to under two hours at a time.

Some people (and animals) are more sensitive to the fumes than others. Our bodies are built to filter some toxins as we are exposed to some every day in various environments. However, inhaling large amounts of isopropyl alcohol or ethyl alcohol can cause adverse symptoms and impact your health. Some symptoms of over-exposure include:

- nausea,
- vomiting,
- dizziness,
- irritation of the nose and mucous membranes,
- throat irritations,
- difficulty with breathing

If you experience these symptoms when working with alcohol ink, stop using it immediately. If symptoms do not resolve after removing yourself from that environment, seek medical advice as soon as possible.



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PROTECTING YOUR ALCOHOL INK ART

Once you have completed your masterpiece in alcohol ink, it is important to protect it. There are two main reasons why you need to protect your work.

1. The first reason is that you need to “fix” the alcohol ink in place. Because the ink is solvent-based, it can be reactivated by solvents such as alcohol or any material containing alcohol. To prevent this from occurring, you need to spray or brush on a water-based varnish. You will need to be careful that the fixative you use does not include a solvent. Otherwise, your ink will move, and your art may be ruined.
2. The second reason is to protect your art from fading. Alcohol ink is dye-based, which means it is NOT lightfast. Prolonged exposure to the sun and ultraviolet rays will cause your colors to fade. To help prevent this from occurring, it is recommended to spray your art with an UV protectant. Of course, the UV protectants are solvent based, so it is important to “fix” your art, as described above.

It is also important to note that most art mediums are not lightfast. Lightfastness has been a concern in the art industry for centuries. Even renown artists like Vincent van Gogh struggled with the issue of lightfastness in his paintings. Van Gogh was obsessed with pigments and had a very thorough understanding of composition and chemical makeup of his paints. He also had a good understanding of the vulnerabilities to fading of some of his favorite colors, especially reds... yet he could not resist!

In a message to his brother, van Gogh shared:

“Paintings fade like flowers, all the more reason to boldly use them too raw, time will only soften them too much.” – Vincent van Gough

Below are the most popular steps used to protect your alcohol ink artwork.

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HOW TO SEAL ALCOHOL INK ART

Several coats of UV protectant are highly recommended to help combat fading. But applying the UV protectant directly to alcohol ink will cause the inks to activate and move. This is because many UV varnishes and protectants contain isopropyl or acetone. For this reason, it is essential to apply a sealer that will not reactivate the inks. In my trials (and I've tried a lot of them), I have found that Krylon's Kamar® Varnish works great in "setting" the alcohol ink. It is important to note that Kamar® Varnish is UV stable, which means that it is not broken down by UV exposure. However, this does not mean that the art behind Kamar® is UV protected... hence the need for the second step of UV protectant.

Alternatives to Krylon Kamar Varnish

Unfortunately, Kamar is not available in many countries. If you are unable to acquire Kamar Varnish, some alternatives may be available in your area. Some products that have been recommended in the community include:

- Varathane
- Ghiant H2O spray

Step 1. Krylon Kamar® Varnish.

Allow artwork to dry at least 24 hours or more for best results. In a well-ventilated area (preferably outdoors), spray artwork with 2-3 light coats, about 12-14 inches away from subject, allowing 30 minutes to an hour of drying time between layers. After final coat, allow Kamar® to dry completely before proceeding to the next step. If you are spraying outdoors, consider bringing the artwork indoors afterwards where the humidity level is less after a couple of hours. Also, it is recommended to cover the artwork during drying time, with a plastic bin or lid that does not touch the artwork, to prevent the accumulation of dust and lint particles in the air.

Step 2. UV Protectant (Krylon® UV-Resistant Clear Coating, Golden® Archival Varnish with UVLS or other)

Outdoors or in a very well-ventilated area, spray 2-3 light coats, allowing an hour drying time between layers. Humidity will play a role in drying time.

Step 3. Finishing (optional)

If you are working with tile or artwork on board, you may want to finish the art with a gloss medium to add shine and additional protection. Some common choices include Americana® Triple Thick Gloss Glaze, Krylon Preserve It® Spray, Gloss Finish and Art Resin™. Make sure that the artwork has had sufficient time to dry and cure after steps 1 and 2 before applying a finish. NOTE: Art Resin & Preserve It® Spray offer additional UV protection.

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GROW AS AN ARTIST WITH ALCOHOL INK

If you are really into learning about alcohol ink art, we recommend joining the Alcohol Ink Art Community Facebook group ([Alcohol Ink Art Community](#)), which currently has over 50,000 members. It has become the “go to” forum for asking questions, learning, and sharing techniques. The community is welcoming and full of valuable information that you will not find anywhere else! It is a complement to our website where we host and organize useful resources and news relating to the world of alcohol ink.

Finally, I must mention the [Alcohol Ink Art Society](#). The Society is our “inner circle” of alcohol ink artists. This is an amazing resource. Society members receive access to over one hundred exclusive presentations, video lessons and resources. Members get access to our team of experienced and skilled alcohol ink instructors who are always more than happy to lend a helping hand and provide useful advice! In our exclusive, members only Facebook group, we provide INKsmART™ LIVE lessons each month, plus at least one live paint-along session where we create together! It is SO much fun. Plus, Society members receive major discounts on our annual events such as the Alcohol Ink Art Conferences and Workshops. Annual and lifetime memberships are available.



LEARN ALCOHOL INK ART

Want to take lessons? Learn from our team of artists in the community and Society or you can also consider individual lessons and courses from our amazing instructors in the [Create SmART Academy](#).