



Artists' Brush Types

- **Round:** pointed tip, long closely arranged bristles for detail
- **Flat:** for spreading paint quickly and evenly over a surface. They will have longer hairs than their Bright counterpart.
- **Bright:** shorter than flats. Flat brushes with short stiff bristles, good for driving paint into the weave of a canvas in thinner paint applications, as well as thicker painting styles like impasto work.
- **Filbert:** flat brushes with domed ends. They allow good coverage and the ability to perform some detail work.
- **Fan:** for blending broad areas of paint.
- **Angle:** like the filbert, these are versatile and can be applied in both general painting application as well as some detail work.
- **Mop:** a larger format brush with a rounded edge for broad soft paint application as well as for getting thinner glazes over existing drying layers of paint without damaging lower layers.
- **Rigger:** round brushes with longish hairs, traditionally used for painting the rigging in pictures of ships. They are useful for fine lines and are versatile for both oils and watercolors.

Sizes

Artists' brushes are usually given numbered sizes, although there is no exact standard for their physical dimensions. Smaller numbers, smaller sizes. Sizes *000* to *20* are most common.

Handles

Handles can be made from wood or plastic.

Short handled brushes are traditionally for watercolor or ink painting

Long handled brushes are commonly used for oil or acrylic paint.

Bristles

Types include:

- watercolor brushes which are usually made of sable, synthetic sable or nylon;
- oil painting brushes which are usually made of sable or bristle;
- acrylic brushes which are almost entirely nylon or synthetic.

Bristles may be natural — either soft hair or hog bristle — or synthetic.

- **Soft hair brushes** are made from Kolinsky sable or ox hair (sabeline); or more rarely, squirrel, pony, goat, mongoose or badger. Cheaper hair is sometimes called camel hair, although it does not come from camels.
- **Hog bristle** (often called China bristle or Chungking bristle) is stiffer and stronger than soft hair. It may be bleached or unbleached.
- **Synthetic bristles** are made of special multi-diameter extruded nylon filament, or Taklon, multi-diameter polyester. and are becoming ever more popular with the development of new water based paints.



Before you purchase a brush...

Please study the information on this page and the next two pages. We've attempted to answer the most commonly asked questions about brushes to help you select the brush that will produce the most satisfying results.

Brush Hair

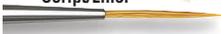
The material used to form the tuft of a brush that picks up and spreads the paint is the most important part of the brush, and determines the performance and the price of the brush. There are distinct advantages of both natural and synthetic hairs.

NATURAL or animal hair is a by-product of the food and fur industries, no animals are destroyed for the purpose of brush making. It has superior paint-holding ability because of tiny, microscopic "scales" along the shaft of the hair. Price and performance of a natural hair brush is determined by the "grade" of animal it was taken from, and the availability of its hair. Shorter-length hair is more readily available, making the longer lengths more expensive. Natural hair may be used alone (pure) or blended with other hairs or synthetic filaments to achieve a combination of performance and price.

SYNTHETICS are man-made of either nylon or polyester filaments. They can be tapered, tipped, abraded or etched to increase color carrying ability. Often, synthetic filaments are dyed and baked to make them softer and more absorbent. The common name for this filament is "Taklon." The advantages to using synthetic brushes are:

- 1 They are less prone to damage from solvents, insects or paints.
- 2 They are easier to keep clean than animal hair brushes because the filaments don't have animal scale structures to trap paint.
- 3 They are less prone to breakage and are durable on many different surfaces.
- 4 They are better suited for painting with acrylics because a synthetic filament will withstand the caustic nature of acrylic paints with less damage.

F.Y.I. For the protection of the hairs, most brushes are treated with a water-soluble sizing. This should be removed by thoroughly washing with brush soap and water or special brush care products before use.

NAME/SHAPE	DESCRIPTION	USAGE	MEDIA	HAIR
 Round	Round ferrule, round or pointed tip. Available in a wide variety of sizes, lengths and price ranges.	Detail, wash, fills, thin to thick lines, scholastic artwork.	All media	All hair Synthetic
 Pointed Round	Narrower than a standard round. Round ferrule, sharply pointed tip. Natural hair holds a sharper point.	Fine detailing, fine lines, spotting and retouching.	All media	Sable Synthetics
 Flat	Flat ferrule, square-ended. Medium to long hairs. Lots of color capacity, easy maneuverability.	Bold, sweeping strokes, on edge for fine lines. Use heavier filling for heavier paint.	All media	Sable Mongoose Bristle Badger Synthetic
 Bright	Flat ferrule, inward curved edge at the tip, short-length hairs, usually set in a long handle. Width and length of brush head is about equal.	Short, controlled strokes. Useful with thick or heavy color.	Oil Acrylic Decorative	Sable Mongoose Bristle Badger Synthetic
 Filbert	Thick, flat ferrule and oval-shaped, medium to long hairs. Long handles. Natural hair is more suitable for blending because the hairs hold together when wet.	Soft, rounded edges, blending, figurative work.	Oil Acrylic Decorative	Sable Mongoose Bristle Badger Synthetic
 Egbert	Flat ferrule, oval shaped tip, longest springy hairs for more color carrying capacity than filbert. Long handles.	Soft, rounded edges, blending, figurative work.	Oil Acrylic Decorative	Bristle
 Fan	Flat ferrule, spread hairs. Natural hair is more suitable for soft blending, and Synthetic works well for textural effects.	Smoothing and blending, special effects and textures.	Oil, Wtrclr. Acrylic Decorative	Bristle Badger Synthetic
 Script/Liner	Round ferrule, pointed, narrow brush with very long hair. Liners are hair. Liners are shorter & narrower. Short handles, round ferrules. Large color carrying capacity.	Delicate lettering, highlighting, outlining, long continuous strokes.	Watercolor Decorative Ink Sign Paint	Sable Ox Synthetic
 Full-bellied Round	Round or triangular ferrule, extra fat for color carrying capacity. Extra long point. Short handle.	Lettering, outlining, long, continuous strokes.	Watercolor Decorative Ink	Sable Squirrel Synthetic
 Detail Round	Round ferrule Shorter in length than all other rounds but holds a lot of color. Short handle.	Detail painting, short strokes.	Watercolor, Oil, Acrylic	Sable
 Wash/Mop	Wash brushes come in varied shapes. The oval wash has rounded hairs, flat ferrules and produces a soft edge, with no point. The square wash can produce varying shapes and widths, and often has a short, "flat-footed" handle for scraping, burnishing and separating watercolor paper from blocks. The mop brush is a round, full version of the wash brush, made of soft, absorbent natural hair.	Laying in large areas of water or color, wetting, absorbing.	Watercolor	Squirrel Ox Bristle Synthetics

BLICK brush size chart

All Blick Economy, Scholastic, Academic, Studio, and Master brushes are manufactured by hand to be uniform in size and approximately match the charts below. Brush width is measured on the hair just above the ferrule and sizes have been rounded to the nearest 1/32". Refer to these charts when choosing Blick brand brushes only.

Round Brush Diameter Chart



Flat, Bright, Filbert, Egbert Brush Width Chart



brush hair



BLICK offers a large selection of natural hair brushes and choosing the hair that best suits your purpose can save you time, money and trouble. One rule that you can follow to avoid disappointment is to **buy the best-quality hair that you can afford.**

kolinsky sable — is not really from a sable at all, but comes from the tail of a species of mink that is a member of the weasel family found in Siberia and northeastern China. It is generally conceded to be the best material for oil and watercolor brushes due to its strength, spring and ability to retain its shape (“snap”). It holds a very fine point or edge. This is considered a professional grade of hair, and if properly cared for, Kolinsky will last for many years.

red sable — is obtained from any member of the weasel family with “red” hair — not at all from the animal known as the sable. It is found in a variety of brush styles for many varied mediums, with quality and characteristics varying greatly. A good-quality pure Red Sable is a good alternative to the more expensive Kolinsky, with similar performance and durability. Often, weasel hair is blended with ox hair to make a more economical brush, but the fine point is sacrificed.

ox hair — the best quality comes from the ears of cattle or oxen. The hair has a very strong body with silken texture, is very resilient, has good “snap,” but it lacks a fine tip. Therefore, it is most useful in medium-grade wash brushes, or flat-shaped brushes. Frequently, ox hair is blended with other natural hair to increase the resiliency of a brush.

fitch hair — a traditional hair for oil painting similar to Mongoose and Sable. Fitch is super smooth, ideal for blending and portrait painting. Sourced in Europe, fitch is a more affordable substitute for Sable and great for detail.

squirrel hair — gray squirrel, most highly in demand for lettering brushes and quills, is native to Russia and nearly always in short supply. Brown squirrel is more readily available, and is used mainly for medium-quality and scholastic watercolor brushes. A very fine, thin hair, taken from squirrel tails, it points as well as Kolinsky, but has very little “snap” (or memory) because the hair is not very resilient. It works best with liquid paints and inks.

pony hair — soft but strong, from mature animals at least 2 years of age. It is primarily used for scholastic-grade brushes, but often blended with other hairs for inexpensive watercolor and touch-up brushes. Pony hair lacks “snap” (or memory) and will not return to a point after a brush stroke.

camel hair — does not come from camels at all. It is found in watercolor and lettering brushes and usually made of squirrel, goat, ox, pony or a blend of several hairs, depending on the desired softness and intended cost of the brush. Camel hair lacks “snap” (or memory) and will not return to a point after a brush stroke.

hog bristle — obtained from hogs in several parts of the world, the most sought-after coming from China. Bristle is unlike any other natural filler in that it forms a V-shaped split or “flag” at the tip and tends to have a natural curve. The best grade has “interlocked” bristles, with the curves formed inward to the ferrule, has a natural resistance to fraying and spreads medium to thick paints smoothly and evenly. A selection of pure hog bristle brushes is recommended for oil, and is a far less expensive alternative to good-quality softer hairs.

how to measure a brush

To be most accurate, measure brushes according to the following:

length — the distance from the edge of the ferrule out to the tip of the hair in the center of the brush.

diameter — the distance of the hair at the opening of the ferrule.

width — the distance across the hair above the opening of the ferrule.

Measure brushes while they are dry. Width is not the width of paint stroke that the brush will make. The width of a brush stroke will vary according to the amount of pressure used, the angle at which the brush is held, the media used and the flexibility of the brush hair.

The charts should help you to determine the size brush you need to purchase. If you would like to measure a brush you already own, use the charts this way:

- 1). Lay your brush on the line so that the line is just above the edge of the ferrule. Use vertical line to measure width or diameter, horizontal line to measure length. Check each side to be sure it lies straight.
- 2). Do not apply pressure or tilt to the brush. Brush hair should not be spread.
- 3). Follow the line over to read the measurement, or, if it falls between two lines, move on to the next chart with smaller increments until you find the exact measurement.

