

Paint Basics

You have many paints at your disposal as you make your props & backdrops. Generally, the size of the item to be painted will dictate the kind of paint to use. A large backdrop might be painted with house, spray, or poster paint. A small detailed prop could use acrylics, or watercolor, or another "art" paint.

Think about how the audience & appraisers will view the piece. Is it being scored for "artistic effect"? Does it need lots of identifiable figures or lettering, or is it simply being used for overall color? Would it be helpful to use one paint to do the large background, let it dry, & then use another paint for the details on the piece? Do you want to only paint a portion, & then use another technique (paper mache, wallpaper, stucco, wood paneling, etc.) to decorate the rest?

Are you trying to reproduce a picture or drawing? Grids are useful to make them bigger. On tracing paper that fits over your piece, draw horizontal lines that are equal distance apart (for example 1 inch), then draw lines perpendicular to the first set the same distance apart (you should have a checkerboard effect). If you want to make the drawing, say, 4 times bigger, take another piece of paper (brown paper, or poster board, or butcher paper work well) and draw a grid that is made up of 4" squares. Now, lay the tracing paper over the drawing you want to enlarge. Looking at each square on the original drawing, pencil in the same lines for the reproduction on the larger grid. You will probably have to draw a few trial enlargements to get the size & quality you want.

Think about the effect you are trying to make with your painted surfaces. What mood do you want to project? Bright colors are associated with joy, and dark colors with somber feelings. Which props or backdrops are more important to your production? Remember that dark colors will make the object seem further away while bright colors will bring it closer. Blending colors will give your artwork a more sophisticated look. Look around at signs, billboards, pictures in textbooks, any artwork you see. What are the important elements in those pieces and why do you see them? Try to use that insight in your presentation.

Paints are available from several sources. Your parents may have leftover house paint in the garage. Home repair stores (Lowe's, Home Depot), art supply store (Binder's, Michael's), discount stores (Target, Wal-Mart, K-Mart) all have lots of different kinds of paint. Choose your colors & paint type carefully. Paint can get expensive! Be sure to ask your parents permission to take paint from the garage. Show them exactly the paint you want to use for your project.

Brushes can make or break this job. If you are painting a big item, use a large bristle or foam brush (1-3" wide), or roller brush. Remember, painting will sprinkle millions of tiny splashes over EVERYTHING around it (including the wall next to you!), so be very careful to cover anything that is not supposed to be painted. Use a good small art brush to paint a small, highly detailed piece. Don't forget finger painting if that serves your purpose! You don't have to stick with brushes or rollers -- you can also apply paint with sponges (what effect might you get?) or anything else you wish - be creative. You get brushes at the same stores that have paint, and your parents probably have brushes you can borrow. Ask first! If buying the brushes, be sure to not spend too much money on a brush you might only use a few times. Be good stewards of your team budget.

Painting can be VERY messy. Be sure to use newspapers under & around any project getting painted. Close all paint cans & tubes completely so that they don't spill or dry out. Wear

old clothes & shoes & don't get silly while painting. You might get paint in someone's eyes, make a huge mess of a borrowed garage (which the team would have to clean up or pay for), or worst of all- ruin your project. This just isn't the time to play.

To wash paint off anything, start by using a paint that can be cleaned up with soap & water (the label on the container will tell you about this....read it before you use the paint!). As soon as you see the paint (preferably while it's still wet) wipe it up with a wet rag, or newspaper. If necessary, come back with a sponge or rag, & soap & water. Be careful to not smear the paint: take small strokes & use as much time as you need. (Remember we said to use newspaper under all surfaces near the paint area.....it will save you a lot of problems!).

Be sure to clean brushes every time you use them. If they are borrowed, your parents want them back in good condition. If they belong to the team, you owe it to your teammates to have your tools ready the next time they're needed. Take the brushes to an outside water faucet, or kitchen sink. Carefully rinse them under running water, being sure to not drip paint on the house, or foundation, or driveway, or wall, or counter. Put a good amount of soap (dish soap works well) onto the brush and **USING YOUR FINGERS**, squeeze the soap throughout the brush, from the handle down towards the bristles. Be sure to wash all the soap out of the brush. Now, clean up the paint in the sink, or on the driveway, & wash your hands. Store large brushes hanging on a hook so the water can drip out. Be sure nothing important is under the dripping brushes. Dry small brushes with a paper towel & store so that the bristles lay smooth.

Finish by throwing away the newspapers you used in the trash bags that your team bought, rinse out the rags if necessary, & store so that they can dry (they can be used again), Put your supplies away & take the trash home with you to put out with your family's.

ITEMS TO HAVE ON HAND **BEFORE** YOU START TO PAINT

(Have team members assemble these items)

Paint

Brushes

Lots of Newspapers

Old rags & sponges

Dish detergent

Trash bags