

*Traditional skills*

# PREPARING YOUR SKETCH FOR PAINT



Discover a fast way to mount your final sketch to a paintable surface, with help from a printer and accomplished artist **Terese Nielsen**

**T**raditionally, a drawing would be created on tracing paper before the entire sketch was retraced onto the desired painting surface, using carbon/transfer paper. This could take between two and six hours (depending on the intricacy of the sketch), just to be ready to paint.

Nowadays, thankfully, with a scanner and printer, you can print on almost any

surface and be ready to paint in just a few minutes. I use Epson's 4880 Ultrachrome archival printer. These prints can be submerged in water and no bleeding occurs. If you're limited to a regular inkjet printer, seal the print Crystal Clear before wet-stretching the print. When it is stretched and dry, it's ready for paint. If you're using oil, seal it with Clear Gesso or Matte Medium.

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Terese Nielsen**  
 COUNTRY: US



Terese graduated from Art Center College of Design, US, and has freelanced for 20 years, illustrating for comic books, Lucas Entertainment, book covers and gaming art.  
[www.tnielsen.com](http://www.tnielsen.com)

## PAPER CHOICES

No matter what thickness or texture of paper you choose, it's important to use quality, 100 per cent cotton rag, acid-free paper.

### Hot press paper

An even, smooth textured paper that enables paint to dry quicker, this is great for pen and ink as well as washes and pencil drawings. Examples worth tracking down include Strathmore Bristol 500 three- or four-ply plate and Lanaquarelle 140 lb watercolour.



### Cold press paper

This paper has a slightly bumpy texture (medium tooth), so paint has a slower drying time and the texture is subtle enough to paint without losing detail. This enables pigments to settle into the pockets or sit on top, for scumbling technique. I recommend using one of the following papers: Arches 300 lb cold press, Epson Velvet Fine Art Paper or Epson Cold Press Bright.



### Rough paper

This is the most exaggerated texture and has the slowest drying time. This paper can be difficult for small detailed rendering and the heavy texture means it's hard to use in printers, so be careful.

### Canvas

Great for oil or acrylic and there's no need to wet-stretch it. However, the print should be sealed with Matte Medium or Clear Gesso.



## 1 Select the appropriate paper

First of all, you should experiment with many papers to find out what you prefer. I use acrylic, oil and coloured pencils in one painting, so accordingly my surface needs to work well with each medium. I wet-stretch the printed sketch, because I begin each painting by layering in loose washes of acrylic. If the print is not wet-stretched, the surface will warp and buckle – not good.

## 2 Submerge the print in water

Hot water can degrade the paper. So instead use room-temperature water, along with a tray, sink or bathtub. The thicker the paper, the longer it needs to soak. For 121 lb paper give it five minutes, but up to 15 minutes for 300 lb of paper. Remove the print, let the excess water drip off the bottom, and then place it on a flat piece of drywall, wood or masonite panel.

## 3 Staple the print to a board

Drywall works well. That's because it's cheap, easy to cut to any size and standard staples easily pierce through it. Wrap duct tape around the cut, powdery edges to avoid getting it on your clothes. For masonite or wood panels, you'll need a staple gun. Use it to staple one inch in from the outside of the print and every two inches around the perimeter. Then let it dry flat.

