



Get Started Silk Painting



What You'll Need

To get started with silk painting, you only need a few basic materials, many of which can be found online or at UK art and craft retailers like Hobbycraft, Jackson's Art Supplies, or Fred Aldous:

- **Silk fabric** – Lightweight silks such as *Habotai* (also known as Pongee) 8–10 momme are ideal for beginners. Available pre-cut or by the metre.
- **Silk paints or dyes** – Look for iron-fix silk paints like *Pebeo Setasilk* or *Marabu Silk Paints*—easy to use and widely available in the UK.
- **Gutta or water-based resist** – This is used to draw outlines that stop colours from spreading. Available in tubes with applicator nozzles.
- **Soft brushes** – Watercolour brushes in various sizes are perfect; synthetic or squirrel-mix brushes work well.
- **A frame or stretcher bars** – You can use an old picture frame, canvas stretcher bars, or adjustable silk painting frames.
- **Pins, silk clips or bulldog clips** – To stretch the silk taut over the frame without damaging it.
- **Protective covering** – Old newspaper, a plastic tablecloth, or a craft mat will help keep your surface clean.
- **Water pot and paper towel or cloths** – For cleaning brushes and blotting.

First Steps

1. **Set up your workspace**

Choose a clean, flat surface with good light. Cover your table with newspaper or a wipe-clean cloth. Organise your materials so everything's to hand.

2. **Stretch your silk**

Pin or clip the silk to your frame. It should be evenly stretched like a drum—tight enough to avoid sagging, but not strained.

3. **Plan your design (optional)**

Lightly sketch your design using a pencil or a *Frixion* pen (commonly sold in UK stationery shops). Keep it simple and bold to start with—think flowing lines, leaves, abstract swirls or floral shapes.

4. **Apply the gutta/resist**

Trace over your lines using the gutta. Let it dry completely—this can take about an hour, depending on the room temperature and humidity.

5. **Begin painting**

Use soft brushes to gently apply paint inside the gutta lines. The paint will flow with the silk's weave, creating rich, watery blends. You can sprinkle salt while the paint is wet to create starburst textures, or add small drops of surgical spirit for diffusion effects.

6. **Allow to dry and set**

Once finished, let your work dry fully. Then fix the colours by ironing the back of the silk on a low-medium setting (check your paint brand's instructions—most iron-fix paints only require a few minutes).

7. **Enjoy or display**

Your finished silk can be sewn into a cushion, framed behind glass, used on a card, or worn as a scarf. It's your unique and personal piece of art!

