



Utrecht Art Supplies Preparing synthetic canvas



Ask the Expert: "I ordered a roll of synthetic (polyester) canvas and would like some advice. Since it's synthetic, can I work directly on this canvas with oils or acrylics, without gesso?"

A: If synthetic canvas is factory-primed, it's ready to use. If it's unprimed, however, we recommend preparing polyester canvas with both synthetic sizing and a primer (oil, alkyd or acrylic-based).

While polyester canvas is not susceptible to the destructive effects of linseed oil like natural fibers, unprimed fabric generally does not provide the correct absorbency, stiffness and texture for paint to attach durably and achieve its best appearance.

There are important advantages to working on primed fabric instead of untreated. One advantage is economy: it takes a lot of paint to cover unprimed fabric. Priming significantly reduces the amount of paint needed to achieve

coverage. A well-primed support also improves the appearance of colors.

Another reason we recommend sizing prior to priming synthetic canvas, even with acrylic gesso, is that synthetic sizing provides a transitional layer between support and ground for better, more uniform adhesion.

Another important function of sizing is to impart stiffness so the canvas remains flat, better supporting paint as it ages. Sizing also stops primer from passing through openings in the weave to the back of the canvas.

We recommend an acrylic-based product like Utrecht Acrylic Sizing for use with Acrylic Gesso on poly canvas. Acrylic Sizing provides a strong acrylic-to-acrylic bond with gesso, and will not induce crazing, as can sometimes happen when acrylic gesso is applied over PVA.

When priming with oil or alkyd, either PVA or acrylic sizing can be used. Some artists have reported that PVA and acrylic sizings can bead up on slick fabrics. GAC 200, recommended for promoting adhesion on non-porous surfaces, is a good option for fabrics that won't easily accept other water-based sizings.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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