



**Utrecht Art Supplies**

## **Customizing Factory-primed Supports**



Pre-stretched, acrylic primed canvases are unbeatable for convenience and reliability, but sometimes you want something a little closer to handmade. Adding an additional layer of priming or different type of ground is a great way to get the time saving advantage of pre-stretched with a custom ground that meets your specific standards.

### **Start Clean**

While this step is not necessary with Utrecht brand canvases, when using unfamiliar or generic pre-stretched supports, it's a good idea to clean the surface before priming or painting. Some factory-primed canvases are prepared with a drying agent that can cause problems with adhesion if not removed. Denatured alcohol or acetone can be used to remove this residue before applying additional gesso or paint. Acetone works quickly but needs to be wiped away promptly to prevent softening of the ground. Alcohol takes a little longer to lift the coating but is less prone to affect the primer.

(Make sure to work in an adequately ventilated space away from flames when using solvents.)

### **Inspect the surface**

Before applying additional acrylic-based primer to a factory-prepared surface, take a minute to check the surface for flaws or slubs. Knots and loose threads can be picked out at this stage, and irregularities in the priming can be sanded or shaved off at this stage. (If you plan to use an oil-based primer, take care not to expose any canvas fibers while grooming the surface.)

### **Choose your ground**

There are several options for top-coating a primed canvas. The lightest and simplest treatment is a thin imprimatura, a very light coating of color that helps unify subsequent colors. Artist's acrylic colors can be used for an imprimatura that can quickly be ready to accept oils or acrylics. Oil paint can also be used for imprimatura; make sure to select lean colors, and add alkyd medium to support fast drying.

Acrylic Gesso is the ideal choice for artists who want to add a customized ground to ready-made acrylic primed canvases. Acrylic-primed pre-stretched canvases are 100% compatible with acrylic gesso, so it's easy to achieve a strong, durable bond between the original and subsequent priming.

Acrylic Gesso can be tinted to create brilliant tinted grounds with ideal texture and absorbency. Use Fluid Acrylics instead of thinned tube colors to ensure homogeneous mixture without excessive dilution.

Use Pumice Medium to add a sandy, fresco-like texture that will not shed particles later. Modeling Paste can be used to build textures in high relief, creating the illusion of thick impasto without using large volumes of slow-drying paint.



Collage elements and special textural treatments can also be incorporated during the priming process. This approach leverages the binding power of acrylic gesso to adhere and seal inclusions before paint is applied.



Oil priming is also an option with pre-stretched canvas. For best results, add a small amount of alkyd medium to speed drying, enhance adhesion and support flexibility.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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