



Utrecht Art Supplies Studio Craft: Reusing Canvas

Inevitably, some paintings just don't work out. Most artists have at least a few false starts in the studio hidden in storage or waiting to be tossed. It's often possible to re-purpose old canvases for a second chance at the easel. To get stable, permanent results, however, it's essential to use the right method and materials.



First, it's necessary to determine the medium with which the original was executed. An old acrylic painting will normally accept a second priming with acrylic gesso. Texture in the original paint layer will persist through subsequent priming, so it may be necessary to sand first to yield a flat surface. (Do not sand any colors that carry warnings about airborne particles; always wear adequate respiratory protection when sanding.)

It's important to note that acrylic gesso can't be used over oil paint. Oil paintings can, in some cases receive oil priming for a new ground but texture and some colors may show through. The best approach is to remove canvas from the stretchers and either sand down to the original priming layer or flip the fabric over and prepare the unused reverse side.



Use a nail puller to remove tacks and staples without gouging fabric. When removing staples, lift with the nail puller and remove using needle nose pliers.



Make sure all staples/tacks are removed. Inspect the back of the canvas for flaws or damage.



If you plan to apply a new ground over the front of the picture, place the canvas on a flat surface and sand to remove paint. If you will be priming the reverse of the fabric, this step may be omitted.



Place the canvas on a flat surface and sand to remove paint. (See cautions above)

Sand to reveal the original priming layer.



Clean with denatured alcohol to remove particle residue.



Make sure stretchers are in square. If sizing and priming the unused reverse side, turn fabric over and align with stretchers.



Use bias stretching method to ensure good placement and even tension.



Take care to align creases with the edges of the stretcher frame.



Take particular care to align corners.



If any wrinkles or scallop-shaped puckers occur at tack points, pull and reinsert tacks/staples as needed.



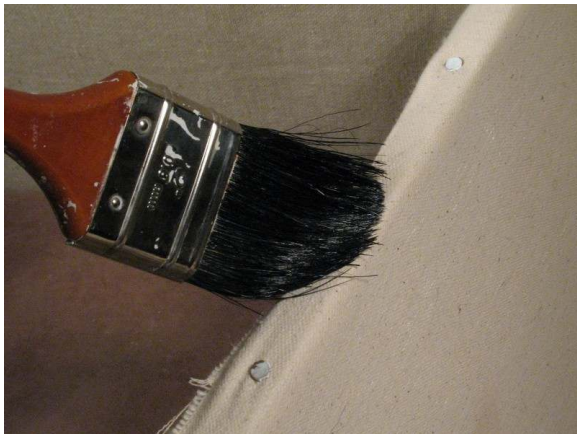
Tack excess fabric around back of frame.



Pick out any slubs or knots from canvas; remove lint with masking tape. Apply Acrylic Canvas Sizing to improve tension, stiffen and isolate fabric.



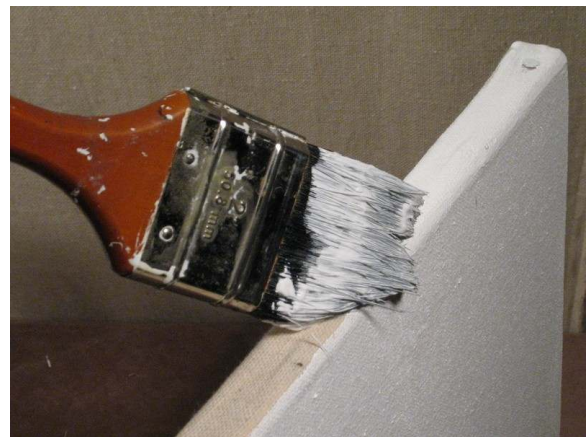
Acrylic Canvas Sizing is compatible with both acrylic and oil-based primers.



Make sure to coat all sides as well as the front.



When sizing is dry, prime as desired.



Prime sides as well as front.



If desired, apply acrylic gesso to cosmetically cover the previous image still visible on the back.



Canvases primed directly over old oil paint should be reserved for sketches and studies. Canvas that has been reversed and primed on the unused back can be used for permanent art.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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