



Utrecht Art Supplies

Studio Craft: Disposing of Paint Waste



Ask the Expert: "Is it OK to throw out empty paint tubes with the trash? Also, after painting can I just wash up at the sink?"

A: The Federal EPA doesn't regulate household waste as hazardous materials, so normally it's permissible for individual artists to dispose of spent tubes and soiled rags with ordinary trash. Individual states may have more strict guidelines, so artists should consult the appropriate authorities regarding how any paint waste is handled. Above all, consult the product label and MSDS for information about safe handling.



The majority of artist's colors present no significant health risk. Non-toxic colors bear the AP seal of the ACMI on the tube. This symbol is used to designate products that are safe for all ages. The CL (Caution Label) seal appears on products that require special handling and precaution for safe use. The CL label must be used on paints containing lead and may by choice be used on other products. The Prop 65 symbol appears where required by The State of California on products containing chemicals that have been shown to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm. The warning is required even if only a trace amount of such substance is present.

For those who want to further reduce release of paint residue, washing brushes in a pan or bucket rather than in the sink might be a good choice. This allows solids to be separated by gravity in closed containers (away from children and animals) then bagged as wet paste for later disposal. (The local waste disposal authority is any artist's best source for information about getting rid of stored household paint waste. Most municipalities have scheduled drop off dates in the community or have some location where such materials can be delivered.)

Artists who are averse to washing brushes with bare hands can wear nitrile gloves. Water on top of solids can be poured down the drain after settling in a closed container.