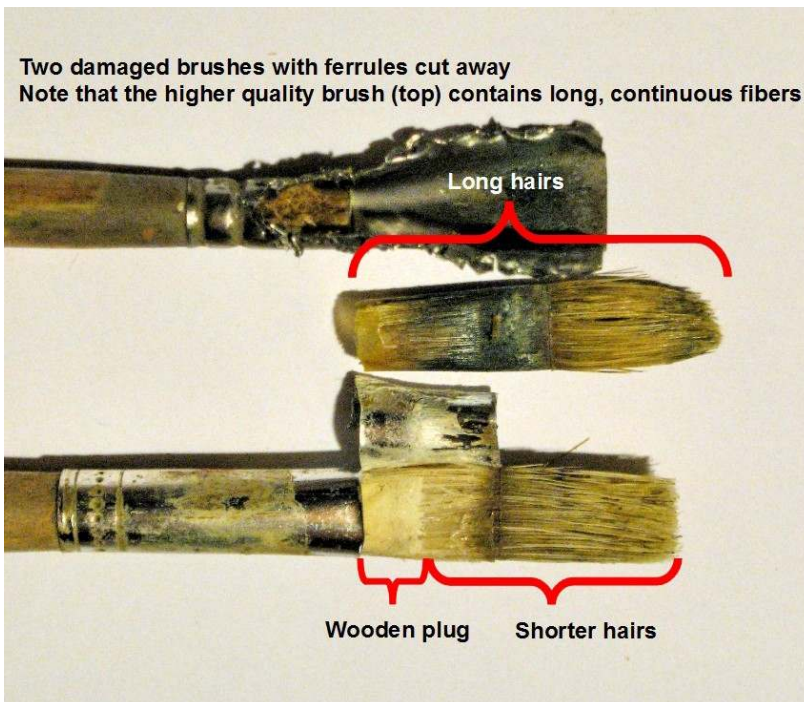




Utrecht Art Supplies
Studio Craft: Restoring Worn Brushes



Nearly every artist has at least a few brushes that have seen better days. Even those transformed by neglect into little more than dirty sticks never seem to find their way out of the brush kit and into the trash. With a little surgery, even the most worn and crusty brushes may be restored to a second useful life. They may never be like new again, but restored brushes are great for scrubbing in color, working on abrasive grounds and any task that might damage or otherwise doesn't require new brushes.



Beneath the Ferrule

Only brushes of better quality can be restored as described here. Better brushes are made using hairs long enough that the ferrule can be clipped back to remove dry paint and lengthen worn bristles. Cheaper brushes are manufactured from short, clipped hairs, sometimes with a wooden plug for bulk; removing the ferrule of an inferior quality brush will usually result in the hairs falling out.



Using a fine metal file, score a line 1/8" back from the top of the ferrule, all the way round. It's not necessary to cut all the way through.



Use small wire cutters to snip straight down to the scored line.



Carefully peel away a strip of metal with the cutters or a pair of needle nose pliers. (This strip can be sharp; use caution.) Use the file or fine sandpaper to deburr and smooth the new edge.



Soak the newly exposed tuft briefly in a brush cleaner that can remove dry paint. Do not immerse beyond the ferrule, or you may remove the lacquer from the handle. When the paint begins to soften, remove the brush from the cleaner.



Use a stiff cleaning brush to break up the paint residue; remove the dry paint by brushing down toward the tip of the paint brush.



Use a brush soap to finish cleaning. Alternate lathering, brushing and rinsing until as much material as possible has been removed. (Some cleaners can be left overnight in the brush to further loosen old paint.)



Once the brush is as clean as possible, apply a small amount of brush soap (this will be left in the brush). Groom the damp brush to its original shape (or as close as possible) and allow it to dry flat. Once dry, the newly restored tool will be useful for roughing in broad areas of a fresh canvas, lifting out color and for any tasks that might damage a brand new brush.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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