



Tips for Traveling with Oil Painting Materials

Many artists contact me with questions about the best ways to take art materials on aircraft. I have been flying with oil painting materials for 25 years. I have logged about 400,000 miles with my paints. Here are some suggestions.

Artists' oil colors contain no solvents so they are not hazardous.

When security asks, "What are these?" never say oil paints. The word "PAINT" is a hot button issue with them. (I have even heard of acrylics and watercolors not allowed on airplanes because they were described as "paints.") Tell them that they are **"artists' colors made from vegetable oil."** Nowhere on our products or in the literature does the word "paint" appear.

1. The US Department of Transportation defines "flammable liquids" as those with a flash point 140 degrees F or below. All art materials manufacturers can provide you with a materials safety data sheet (MSDS) on their products. You can download and print MSDS for all Gamblin Artists' materials from our web site. Product descriptions and MSDS are located in the [Artists Materials](#) section of the web site. Click on the MSDS link below the product description.

If you do not know the flash point of your mediums or solvent, do not plan to take any on board.

Check to see if you can purchase mediums and solvents at your destination. If not, ship art materials ahead by ground transportation. Using the US Postal Service, artists can ship materials anywhere in the world. Remember to specify "ground transportation" service. Insure the package and pay for a delivery receipt.

2. Artists grade oil colors are based on vegetable oil with a flash point above 550 degrees F. THEY ARE NOT HAZARDOUS.
3. Be ready to show the MSDS to prove the flash point if required. Do not travel with solvents and mediums. Gamsol has a flash point of 146 degrees F so it can fly with you if you have a copy of the MSDS.
4. Do not carry your palette knives on board. Put them in your suitcase and check your luggage.

Keep your cool—don't hassle security. Show them the MSDS and explain that you are going on a painting holiday.

Drying Time

Oil painting materials are products of the natural world so they are tremendously responsive to temperature and humidity. In fact, you may find that the set of materials you have been working with successfully during the cool months will not work for you during warmer weather.

Oil colors dry faster in warm weather. Solvents and the solvent in painting mediums evaporate more quickly. A great advantage for those who want to speed up the painting process, heat may be a disadvantage for those who are used to a longer open time.

If you need more working time, and you are using a quick drying medium like Galkyd or Galkyd Lite then switch to a slower drying medium.

If you use a low viscosity medium like Galkyd Lite, try Galkyd Slow Dry. If this still does not give you enough working time, try **the slowest of slow dry mediums**: mix Gamsol and Poppy oil in equal parts.

If you prefer a higher viscosity medium like Galkyd, add 10% Stand oil to Galkyd to increase the working time. If this is still not enough working time, as above, make a medium by mixing Gamsol and Stand oil in equal parts.

Use the Gamblin Interactive Painting Mediums Guide to determine the combination of mediums that is right for you. More information on painting mediums can be found in: [Painting Mediums](#) and [Working with Oil Painting Mediums](#). Information on painting mediums is also available in the brochure "Gamblin Guide to Oil Painting Mediums."

If you want a copy, please send me an email with your mailing address to:

RobertGamblin@gamblincolors.com. All Gamblin Oil Painting Mediums are sold in 2 fl oz bottles so you can try to find the one or combination that is best for your painting style.

Summer Heat

Another issue is the effect of summer heat on oil colors. Many of us travel in cars and leave our paints and supplies in the oven-like trunks. The viscosity of oil colors is much lower (paints are more fluid) when they get hot. Artists' oil colors traditionally throw a little oil over the life of the tube. But storing oil colors in hot cars and trunks will increase the stress on the paints and can cause more oil to separate from the pigment. Keep your paints as cool as possible to reduce separation.

I do not recommend you mix the separated oil back into the paint. Rather blot it up. If the paint feels too dry, add your favorite painting mediums to increase the flow (decrease viscosity).

Shipping Art Work

Travelling with art supplies is one challenge. Shipping fresh oil paintings is another. Here are a few suggestions.

A "fresh painting" is one that has skinned over. Dry to the touch, you can easily smear it with your finger if you press too hard. A fresh painting needs careful handling. Place your paintings face to face with wax paper or with non-stick baking paper between them. You can also place plastic push-pins at each corner of one of the paintings to put some additional space between the paintings. Unpack the paintings as soon as they get to their destination.

If your paintings are larger and you prefer to roll them for shipping

- Roll the paintings with the face of the painting facing out

- Roll the paintings over the largest core you can, 3" minimum. Rule for rolling paintings: the older the painting, the larger the core you need for rolling. Paintings should bend as little as possible. Fresh paintings are more flexible than older paintings.
- Interleave the paintings with a non-stick material if you are rolling more than one together.
- Unroll them as soon as possible.

Ship varnished paintings with nothing touching the surface.

Regularly I get calls from artists asking what to do when their gallery shipped a varnished painting with sheet plastic or bubble-wrap directly on the face of the painting. This is a bad technique because the varnish heats up under the bubble wrap and softens while in transit. Then the pattern of the bubble wrap is pressed on to the surface.

If you [varnished the painting with Gamvar](#), remove the varnish with Gamsol and re-varnish. If the painting is varnished with dammar, it is much more difficult to fix. To remove dammar varnish, you need stronger solvents. Strong solvents can damage paintings. To see if you can remove dammar varnish, dip a q-tip in turpentine. Apply solvent to small area in one corner. If your q-tip turns slightly yellow (the color of dammar varnish), you can lift the varnish. If not, you cannot. Stop immediately if you lift any color.

New Magazine

If you are an enthusiast of outdoor painting then there is a new magazine for you: [Plein Air Magazine](#). The first issue was just published this June.

If you have any further questions about tips for traveling with oil painting materials, please feel free to [contact](#) us.

Sincerely,

Robert Gamblin



Thank you very much for your interest in our Gamblin Studio Notes.

If you are interested in sharing your impressions about Gamblin Artist's Colors, please visit our [Gamblin Artist's Survey](#)

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