

Illumination Techniques and Materials for Beginners

Paper:

1. Any water color paper will work well.
2. Legion Parchtone Paper - 25" x 38", Gold, Single Sheet, Item#: [10220-4070](http://www.dickblick.com/products/legion-parchtone-paper/) (<http://www.dickblick.com/products/legion-parchtone-paper/>) It is very similar in appearance to the Pergamenata, but much thinner. It still handles water pretty well. At less than \$2.00 a 24" X 18" sheet. You get four 9" X 12" sheets, still a good size for scrolls, for **less than 50 cents each**. This is a great paper to use for students to introduce them to using pergamenata, without all the expense. I have used this for scrolls. Not my favorite, but good for beginners who want to keep costs down.
3. Pergamenata paper, (a replica parchment) easily found at John Neal Books (http://www.johnnealbooks.com/prod_detail_list/paper-packs) is my favorite for scrolls. It looks very period, and is heavy, which means it won't warp if a lot of water is applied (compared to other papers) and it is easy to correct errors on. It is sold by the large sheet you have to cut yourself, or in a pack of 10, pre-cut to a good scroll size. It is my favorite for many reasons, one of which is the ability to correct errors on it that you cannot do on the other papers.

It is not inexpensive, **about \$2.00 a piece** for the precut paper.

Paints: Gouache is the standard for doing illuminations. It is very reminiscent of medieval paints, although others were used, this is the most readily available.

1. Koh-I-Noor Watercolor Wheel Set, Item#: [00381-1001](http://www.dickblick.com/cart/) (<http://www.dickblick.com/cart/>). This can be found at many art stores, but this is the best price I have found so far... I like this paint set since it is priced well (\$4.92 at Dick Blick, is about half the cost elsewhere). It flows pretty well, and has pretty good coverage.
2. Reeves Gouache, available at most art stores like Michaels or Joann's etc. Walmart sells a basic set for \$6.89. Again, not too expensive, but not my favorite. It does not cover as well as the Koh-I-Noor, so often a second or third layer is needed, particularly in a larger area. Another thing I don't like about it is its consistency. It reminds me a bit of honey. It does not flow well, and can be difficult to paint in a small pointed area, like the tip of a leaf.
3. Windsor and Newton Gouache – can be found at any good art store on line, great coverage and consistency, but rather expensive. My favorite, but I used Reeves for several years before moving up. If I had known about Koh-I-Noor, I would have used that. It is the better student grade gouache, in my opinion.



- 4. Gold – Fine Tec gold watercolor paint is great. There are many others out there, but I like this one the best. This is the best price I have found so far, I have seen the exact same set go for three times as much at some stores.

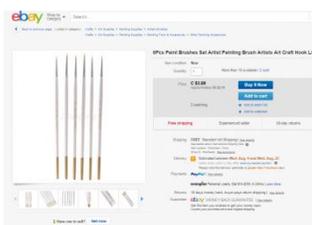


https://www.artistsupplysource.com/product/18919/finetec-artist-mica-watercolor-paint-6-color-set-multi-pan-watercolor-model-m600-price-per-set/?origin=google_product_ads&gclid=Cj0KCQjwwvLBRCGARIsAKnAJvcOjsRbsg2Wrf71LihVpaJCasmW8FyCee0Y7U2xB01EYsE6w9yV3MaAvAeEALw_wcB

As you progress, you will probably want to replace the gold paint with applied gold foil, called gilding.

Brushes:

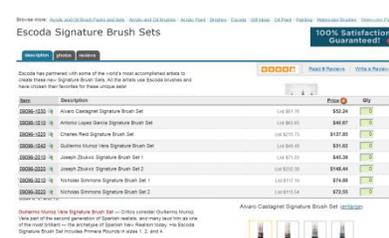
- 1. First I will tell you what NOT to get. Packages of paintbrushes. I have NEVER found even one good brush in a packaged set of brushes, either in a store or on-line, at any price. SAVE your money!



Ebay
Nope



Walmart
Nope



Dick Blick
Nope

Brushes are covered in a seize that makes them look like a perfect point, in th4e packaging. Unfortunately when they get wet for the first time they often slay out, or have fly-away-hairs – bug no-no’s for illumination painting. If you are using a heavier paint, such as oils or acrylics, sometimes that heaviness is enough to make them usable, but with water based gouache they will be a disaster.

2. You will need to get round, watercolor brushes. How do you get a good, inexpensive brush? It's not too hard. I would avoid Walmart or Target though. Go to Michael's or some other art store, look at their watercolor brushes. You want the point to come to a nice sharp point. BUT – the same thing can happen, so you won't know until you test it. This is what I do.

Bring a bottle of water with you in the car, and some paper towels. At the art store, buy what you think looks like a good brush. It does not have to be expensive. I have gotten \$2.00 brushes at Michael's that are great. Pick out brushes from several different manufacturers. After you make your selection and pay for them to your car. Dip the brush head into the water and swish it about a bit. Use your fingers to gently rub DOWN the brush head several times and swish again. You want to remove the coating from the brush bristles. NOW look at it. Does it still come to a head? It might be a good brush. Dry the brush head with paper towels and wait a few minutes to make sure it is completely dry. Look again. If it still comes to a good point it is a decent brush. If it does not, take the brush and the receipt back to the store and tell them you changed your mind. Get your money back for those brushes. I do this with every brush I buy. Even if a particular brand was great the last time I bought it, I still test because brush batches change. Better to test each time, than be disappointed once you are home.

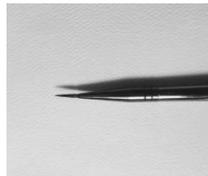
Sizes:

1 is great for most work.

2 will be for a bit larger areas.

0 will be nice for very tiny spaces.

I would get several of each size since beginners often ruin brushes pretty easily at first.

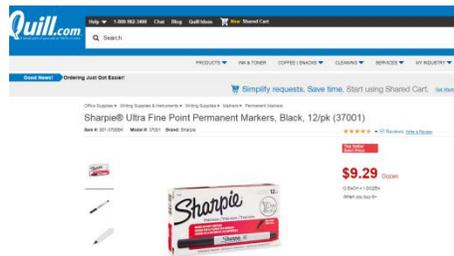


Water pan: Paint brushes will last YEARS if taken care of. NEVER put a brush into a cup – it will bend the tip and trash the brush. Clean all brushes as you use them and as you go along. I use house paint roller pan liners for my brush rinsing and on the go cleaning. Get the ones made for the little 4” rollers. I put a folded paper towel on the “ramp” to keep the brushes from sliding down. Whenever the brush is not in my hand, it is in the tray with the tip in the water. This keeps the paint from drying on the brush head. With water colors it is not as bad, but with acrylic paints it will kill the brush to let it dry.



Pens:

1. Sharpie, extra fine point black markers – for outlining colorbred areas to make them more distinctive, or stand out. These are not archival, but work very well. This is a great price, you may find a better one if you look around more.



https://www.quill.com/sharpie-ultra-fine-point-black-permanent-markers/cbs/032730.html?cm_mmc=SEM_GGL_OS_DSA2&mcode=SEM_GGL_OS_DSA2&qclid=EAlaIqObChMlosObiu6s1QIVA4xpCh2gvA7bEAEYASAAEgIzW_D_BwE&qclsrc=aw.ds

2. Sakura Pigma Micron pens in black. These pens are archival and excellent for scrolls.



As you progress you will probably want to move up to using ink and a dip pen for these black outlines.



Tracing:

1. Least expensive – a well-lighted window. Print out a copy of the image you want use. Use painter's tape to tape it to a window. Put your paper you will paint on over it, center it and tape it down with painters tape. Trace lightly with a pencil.

**** A precaution about using painter's tape. It **WILL** tear most papers if you use it as it comes off the roll. Instead, tear off a section of tape, and tape it to your clothing. Pull it off, and tape it to another area. Do this a few times until it is only a tiny bit sticky, it should be safe for the paper after doing this. Always test first. ****

2. Wax paper –. Print out the picture you want to use in REVERSE. Put the wax paper over it so the wax side is down – facing the picture. Use a slightly blunt pencil, carefully trace the lines. Again, use some painter's tape to keep the print out and the wax paper in place. This is useful if the paper you are using is too thick or dark to see through with a window or light box.

Flip the wax paper over, so the pencil side is now down – and the image no longer reversed, tape your paper down, put the wax paper over it and tape it down so nothing moves. Now using a **PEN**, trace over the pencil lines you made earlier. The pencil will transfer to the paper. In essence, you just made some non-messy carbon paper.

3. Light box – there are many commercially made light boxes. This is my favorite. It is not too expensive, very bright, and easy to store and move around. This is the smallest I would get, since most scrolls are around 11" X 14, and you need room to tape the paper down.



<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00OCKI1JG?psc=1>

Things I wish someone told me when I was first starting out

Other useful items to have on hand:

1. T – Square - A T-square will help immensely with making sure everything is spaced evenly and lined up properly. You can find them anywhere. I recommend clear plastic so you can see through it while working....
2. Graph paper – it is perfect for laying out your designs to ensure it is all even and square...
3. Staedtler Mars Plastic Erasers – These white erasers will do an excellent job of removing pensile lines without tearing the paper. I have tried many types of erasers and these are by far the best.
4. Soft lead pen – these can be messier than a harder lead, but are easier to erase.
5. Gum Sandarac, ground up and in a cloth bag - When oils from your hands gets onto paper, it can cause the paints to not flow well. Making it difficult to paint. Some papers (like Pergamenata) have oils on the surface as a result of the manufacturing process. To remove these oils the bag of Gum Sandarac is whipped over the paper in a circular motion. It will absorb the oils and prepare the paper for painting very well. I use a “never used for anything else” sash house painting brush to brush off the dust left behind so I don’t reintroduce oils by using my hands for this.

Showing 1 - 2 out of 2 total matches:

S123, Gum Sandarac
S123, Gum Sandarac



Used on vellum and paper just before writing to achieve fine hairlines. Will help produce crisper letters. May stop bleeding, feathering.

Choose 1/2oz, 1oz, or Bag.

1/2oz and 1oz: Tie up in a small square of cotton cloth, and lightly pounce onto your paper to produce finer thins.

Bag: A small drawstring (cloth) bag of ground gum sandarac ready for you to use to correct slight bleeding or to get thinner thins. Dab the sandarac onto the paper through the cloth & then hold the paper vertically and tap off any excess. Contains 1 ounce gum sandarac.

[Review this product](#)

S123. Gum Sandarac

https://www.johnnealbooks.com/prod_detail_list/s?keyword=gum+sandarac

6. Gum Arabic - Add a few drops to a small vial of water. Use it to moisten your paints instead of plain water. It makes the gouache stick to the paper better, and not flake off as sometimes happens.

184, W&N Gum Arabic: 2.5oz
Winsor & Newton Gum Arabic



Add this binder in gouache to make it more durable and easier to erase pencil guidelines. Add several drops to a bottle of Higgins Eternal for copperplate writing. 2.5oz (75ml) glass bottle.

I have worked with metallic gouaches for many years. I always add a little more gum Arabic if there are going to be lines to erase, then allow the writing to cure for several hours before erasing. A white vinyl eraser is the gentlest choice for erasing guideline. I avoid guidelines if possible via a light box. - Don King

[Review this product](#)

Your Price **\$15.49**

https://www.johnnealbooks.com/prod_detail_list/s?keyword=gum+arabic



7. Baby wipes – These are the best thing in the world for painters. Before dipping your brush in water to clean it, gently wipe off the excess paint off with a baby wipe, it will remove most of the paint, and keep the water clean for a long time. I seldom ever change my cleaning water, even in an 8 hour painting session due to using baby wipes. They are also great for wiping your hand with. As I paint I often get paint on the outer edge of my hand (the little finger side) from accidentally letting it touch a painted area that is still wet. Then when I move my hand somewhere else, and I transfer that paint to an area where I do not want it! Having the baby wipes nearby and frequently checking and whipping my hand helps prevent a lot of mistakes.
8. A hand bridge – These are awesome! They raise your hand above the work, while giving you a place to rest it. I like the clear ones so you can see the work underneath of it. I would get one that is at least 24” so it can be used diagonally. It is a bit difficult to see since it is clear! You can easily make one with a length of thin wood. Glue a square of the same wood under both ends to raise it up a bit. I put felt on these “legs” so they don’t scratch the paper under them.

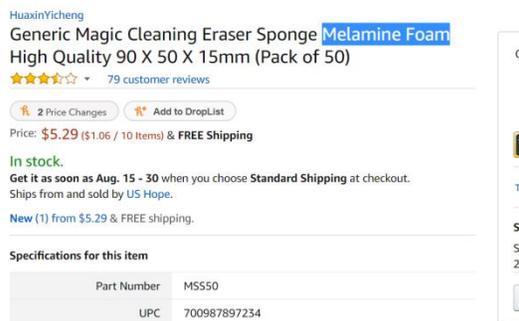


<http://www.jerrysartarama.com/artist-leaning-bridge>

When using Pergamenata paper –

1. When painting on Pergamenata paper, some mistakes can be removed. It is one of the reason I like this paper so much! If you make a mark with paint (or even with ink) that you do not want, there are several ways to remove it.

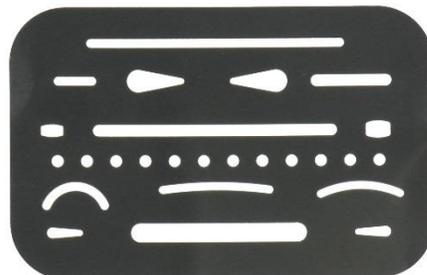
First, try using a fine grain sand paper and very gently rub it away. This works well for most cases. But it is not precise if the area is near something you do not want disturbed. You can do the same thing using a “Magic Eraser”. Don’t buy the expensive ones in the grocery store. Instead you can get them incredibly cheap by going generic. It is called “Melamine Foam”. These don’t have any soap added and are a better choice.



50 of them for about \$5.00! From Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/Generic-Cleaning-Eraser-Melamine-Quality/dp/B00CI05YN8>

You can also use a secretary’s “typewriter shield”, a thin bit of metal with various holes that can be positioned over the mistake. It protects the surrounding areas as you errase. Old tech, but it works very well.



<https://www.amazon.com/Alvin-Stainless-Steel-Erasing-Shield/dp/B000HF6VK6>

- 2. X-Acto knife – only for adults –** If the area is small, or adjacent to other work you do not want touched and X-/acto knife can remove it. Use the flat of the blade, never the point! GENTLY scrape away the mark, removing it in layers. The paint (or marker ink) does not penetrate the Pergamenata, but lies on top of the paper, so it can be gently scraped away.

Once the mistake has been removed you are not finished!!!!

3. You will need an agate burnisher, or something very smooth and curved. I have used the back of a spoon for this before I got my burnisher. Place a small square of glassine or waxed paper over the area you scrapped. Rub over this with the back of the spoon or burnisher, apply some pressure, but don't tear the paper. When you scraped away the paint (with sandpaper, magic eraser or the knife) it makes small micro tears to the fibers of the paper. If left as is, these little tears will wick away future paint or ink, leaving a "feathered " edge to it instead of nice clean edge or line. To correct this, rub the area gently, but firmly with the burnisher to compress these torn fibers into a solid again.

Glassine is a thin transparent paper. It is rather expensive to buy; however you probably have some at home. It is the thin clear paper between the pages of postal stamps you buy (if you get the kind that must be licked). I save these and use them. They are just the correct size for most errors, and FREE! Wax paper works too, but may leave a bit of wax behind that can impede the flow of paint or ink. You may want to gently rub the bag of Gum Sandarac over the repaired area to stop that from happening if you use wax paper.

The process in order, from beginning to end:

1. Do a bit of research and find out the persona of the scroll's recipient, their geographic area and time. Also see if you can find out their interests (cooking, needle work, rapier etc.). Then try to find a style of design that matches that person in some way. Keep track of what these inspirations are because you will need them for your documentation later on. If you cannot get that info, let the type of award, be your guide.
2. After selecting your design idea, draw it out on graph-paper. It is good make it the size of commonly used mattings and frames.

Frame Size	Mat Opening	Image Size
8" x 10"	4.5" x 6.5"	5" x 7"
11" x 14"	7.5" x 9.5"	8" x 10"
16" x 20"	10.5" x 13.5"	11" x 14"
20" x 24"	15.5" x 19.5"	16" x 20"
24" x 36"	19.5" x 29.5"	20" x 30"
30" x 40"	21.5" x 31.5"	22" x 32"

That way it won't cost extra for a custom frame. Using graph-paper will ensure your margins are even. Next, put it onto the paper you want to use. Do this either freehand, or by tracing using one of the methods described above using pencil.

3. Go over all your lines with your sharpie, micron pen, or dip pen.
4. Use the white eraser to remove all traces of pencil.
5. Rub the Gum Sandarac bag all over the page in a circular motion to remove oils deposited from your hands . You do not need to do this very hard.
6. Protect the areas that will not be painted. Use scrape paper and blue tape to cover all areas that will not be painted. If you did calligraphy already, cover that too.

It should look something like this:



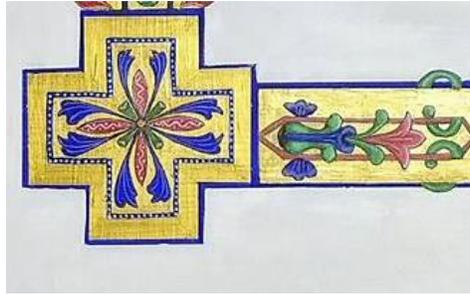
The center, where the calligraphy will go is covered with a bit of paper. The border on the outside is covered as well as some blank inner areas. This way, if some paint drips off the brush it won't get onto an area that should be blank. Also finger prints won't get smudged all over (trust me – that happens easily).

7. Now, begin painting. It is best (in my opinion), to do all the color as solid shapes on the first pass over the project. Usually gold is done first. This does not make any difference when painting gold, but when doing real gold leaf it must be done first, so I just usually do gold first all the time.



Paint from the inside out – the closes things to the center are done first, then move closer to the edge. That way you will not drag your hands over already painted areas. I often the turn the painting on the side or upside down to bring the area I am painting closest to me – again so my hands don't have to move over already painted areas. Use a bridge to protect areas as well.

8. Once the main colors are completed, go back and add the light and darks that make it complete.



9. **AFTER** letting the paint dry completely, re-outline each area with black – it usually gets covered a bit by paint as you are working.

A hint about the black markers – they do not like going over paint very much. If the paint is not absolutely dry, it will block the marker tip and the marker will not work. IF that happens, wipe the marker over some paper – draw a few lines on any bit of paper to get the ink flowing again. Also do not apply much pressure to the marker. On most pieces I do, even with dry ink, I have to stop every minute or so to draw on paper. Sometimes, if it is stubborn, I will dip the pen in water for a second and then dry it with a paper towel, then draw on paper, and finally back on the art.

Always **wash the brushes in warm (not hot) water** when you finish the painting session. I like shampoo for cleaning, but any decent, mild soap will work. Rinse completely and store standing up in a cup with the brush **heads UP** to protect the points.

10. On the back of the scroll, *in pencil*, write your name as the illuminator (and calligrapher – if you did that too). Include your email so they know who to thank! Make sure it does no show through.
11. Always keep the scroll flat. Never roll it up. The paint can crack and flake off if it is rolled or bent. **Never let it get wet or damp**. The paint is water soluble. If it gets wet it will start to flow again and produce smears.

12. If you must mail the scroll, put it into a sealed plastic envelope and between two layers of heavy card board. You can tape the corners of the plastic bag to the cardboard to keep it from shifting. I put this into a mailable envelope. Here are some more instructions on mailing art.

<https://support.saatchiart.com/hc/en-us/articles/205288927-How-do-I-package-flat-artworks-like-drawings-collages-etc-#%2048x48>

Left over paint

If you use wet gouache from a tube, you will probably have some left over. Do not throw it away!

Let it dry out, and use it the next time you paint. Just add a few drops of water, let it soften for a few minutes, and it is ready to go.