

ARTISTS' GLOSSARY

This glossary includes definitions of terms peculiar to the subject. Meanings of words which are not exclusive to the subject can be found in the Oxford English Dictionary. The use of at least the concise edition is recommended.

Where terminology varies between the UK and the USA, a list of equivalent terms is provided at the end of this glossary.

Aluminum Stearate : Wax-like material sometimes used for stabilizing oil paint.

Binder : The substance which holds the pigment in a paint, ground or drawing material.

Casein : Adhesive/binder made from skimmed milk.

Chassis : Wooden frame, fixed or expandable, used to brace a wood-based board on which to stretch either paper or a canvas. Interchangeable with 'stretcher' and sometimes 'frame'.

Cradled Board : Originally a hardwood panel with fixed strips along the grain and movable strips across the grain on the reverse, used to brace the board but still allow it to expand. Today, 'cradled' is used to mean a wood-based board which has been glued and screwed to a fixed chassis.

Canvas : Sometimes loosely termed to mean a stretched and primed canvas ready for use or already being painted on.

Double Stretched Canvas : Two layers of canvas stretched on one frame.

Drying Oil : Vegetable oil which dries to a film by oxidation.

Essential Oil : Extracted from plants, an oily liquid which is partly volatile.

Fugitive : Indicates a lack of lightfastness in the colour of a pigment.

Glazing : Transparent colour over dry underlayer, used to create spatial and/or optical colour effects. Oil colour offers the widest manipulative possibilities in glazing but any transparent medium can offer glazing too.

Ground : Layer on support which can alter in colour, absorbency or texture. 'Primer' is also used for 'ground'.

Gum : Hardened sap of plants which is either water-soluble or absorbs water.

Handling Properties : Group of properties which reflect smoothness, brushability, spreadability, tactility, etc.

Humidifier : Substance or thing which retains moisture or prevents it escaping.

Imprimatura : Coloured veil over a white ground.

Industrial Methylated Spirit : Type of alcohol. Purer than mineralized methylated spirit. Recommended for artists' use where alcohol is required, but is difficult to obtain.

Key : Rough surface.

Livering : Solidification of oil paint within its tube, caused by poor quality pigments or grinding. Nowadays, it is not likely to occur in paint made for artists.

Mahlstick : A long rod with a padded end, used to steady your hand against a painting.

Masking Fluid : Rubber latex solution used to mask out areas on paper.

Media : Plural of medium in sense of particular method, e.g. oils, water colour, etc.

Medium : Used either to indicate a particular method, or to indicate a material used for further manipulation of a method, e.g. glaze medium in oil painting. Plural is mediums.

Mineralized Methylated Spirit : Type of alcohol. Contains violet dye and more impurities than industrial methylated spirits. Commonly available from hardware stores.

Mineral Oil : Type of oil refined from petrol.

Mineral Wax : Wax/es refined usually from petrol.

Mull, Mulling : Grind, grinding (rubbing) pigment with muller and plate (slab).

Parchment : Prepared skin of sheep or goat, mainly for calligraphy.

pH of paper : Measure of acidity. pH7 indicates a paper which is acid-free.

Polymerized Oil : See *Stand Oil*.

Primer : Ground.

Proprietary : Trade name.

Resin, Natural : Hardened sap of plants which is insoluble in water.

Resin, Synthetic : Resinous compound, usually synthesized from petrol.

Shellac : Resin secreted by stick insects on certain trees, mainly in India. Available in a number of grades.

Sinking Paint : Layer of paint which sinks into underlayer.

Stand Oil : Stand oil can be assumed to be linseed stand oil. Stand oil is a drying oil which has been processed by heat. It can also be called polymerized oil.

Stretcher : See Chassis.

Support : Material which supports the ground and painting or drawing.

Surfaced : Rough surface.

Tooth : Rough surface.

Toothed : 'Toothed' and 'surfaced' are both used to indicate a roughened ground.

Veil : See *imprimatura*.

Vellum : Prepared calf-skin, mainly for calligraphy.

Wetting Agent : Usually a detergent-based liquid which breaks surface tension of a binder, and 'wets' the pigment or support.

British / American variations in terminology

Chipboard : Particleboard.

Hardboard : Masonite.

Paraffin : Kerosene.

Sterling Board : Aspenite.

Wedge (in expandable stretchers) : Key