

Crafters' Corner - Articles & Tips

The Liner: Brush of Many Uses

by David Hoff

The magic of the Liner seems almost limitless. Once this brush is mastered, a variety of brush stroke doors open for its users. This long-bristled round brush is designed to work like a fountain pen, allowing color to flow down its reservoir to its tip and onto the ware. Further your brush stroke skills and understand the uses of the remarkable Liner brush.

How Liners Work

The Liner's length allows users to achieve an almost endless flow of color, thus creating a perfect tool for detailing and other fine line work. By changing the pressure of a Liner against a working surface, artists can also achieve variations in basic brush stroke work. By changing pressure and brush movement, painters can generate an almost endless variety of brush strokes.

Brush Sizes

Liners may be purchased in a variety of widths and lengths. The numbering system for brushes ranges from small to larger numbers. The larger the number, the wider and longer the brush. Thus, a #10/0 brush creates very fine lines, and a #4, #6 or even a size #12 are for larger lines.

Many individuals use the #10/0 and #5/0 Liners for completing eyelashes on figurines. It's important to note that these small Liners create better eyelashes than a Detail brush. The length of a Liner allows artists to make fine strokes. Its length holds more color and produces finer, longer lines than a Detail brush.

Liners are designed to be the fountain pens of brushes. Through practice, artists can even create finer details with a quality #4 Liner, than with smaller #1 and #0/5 Liners.

Brush Quality

Fine Red Sable brushes are the best brushes for fired colors. Red Sable holds more moisture and allows painters to complete strokes without running out of color midway through a stroke. Also, the Red Sable springs back to its original shape, thus allowing a better tail at the end of the stroke.

Taklon brushes do not hold as much moisture as the Sable and they do not work as well for fired color. However, Taklons work well with acrylics.

Good brushes generate great brush strokes with very little effort. For quality brushwork, purchase the best brushes in sizes appropriate to the specific media being used.

Brush Fundamentals

There are fundamental procedures for all brush strokes that make desired looks easier to achieve. Instructors have their own styles of completing brush strokes, however most follow a few general rules that foster immediate excellence. This information can also be used for a variety of brushes including the Filbert, Shader, Round and the Dagger Liner.



- A Liner should be held almost straight up or at a ninety degree angle to the ware, ninety percent of the time. This position insures that color will flow down the reservoir of the brush and that artists will benefit from the full play of the bristles against the ware.
- Always dampen a brush before using it. However, after wetting the brush, be sure to remove excess water from the bristles by pinching the reservoir between your fingers and thumb.
- Make sure all colors being used are the same consistency. Artists cannot properly load a brush with colors of different consistencies. A color that's too thick will not load onto a brush that already has very thin color in it, or vice versa.

- When loading a Liner, pull it through the color; do not just plop the brush into the color, then proceed to the stroke. A brush is reshaped by pulling it through the color, and the bristles are pulled back to its point.
- Always fully load a brush before attempting any brushwork.
- For most people, pulling a brush toward oneself is easiest, and strokes can be accomplished without difficulty. However, many left-handed individuals might find it easier to work away from themselves. Left-handed people are used to pushing when they write, whereas right-handed people pull. This muscle conditioning plays an important role with brush strokes.
- When completing any brushwork, remember that the last color loaded onto the brush is the first color off. For example, if an artist desires a white daisy petal with a yellow tip, the brush should be loaded in white and its tip in yellow. The yellow will be first off the brush. If a yellow daisy petal with a white tip is desired, then the brush should be loaded with yellow and tipped with white.



Specifically for Liners

There are specific tips for Liners that also make brushwork easier. The tips relate to loading and working specific strokes.

Loading

- Pull the brush several times through the color and make sure the brush tip is reformed before completing a stroke. The color should fill three-quarters of the brush reservoir.
- To side-load a brush:
 - Fully load the brush with one color, then pull the brush one time only through a second color
 - or**
 - Pull one side of the brush through one color, then pull the other side of the brush through a second color.
- Load and tip a brush by fully loading it, tip its end with a second color, then tap the brush back into a point against the palette.
- Multiple colors can be loaded onto a Liner by pulling it through various colors several times.
- If fine line work and/or scrollwork is desired, fully load a Liner with color that is slightly thinner than normal. The thinner color makes it easier for paint to flow off the brush, thus creating finer lines and better looking scrolls.

Brush Strokes

Brushwork in general is accomplished through the use of color, motion and pressure. This is true with any brush, but with the Liner this combination is most important. Here are some brief definitions:

- **Colors** - Paint colors and the method used to load them on a brush.
- **Motion** - The way an artist moves their arm, hand or wrist while painting.
- **Pressure** - The amount of brush force or pressure used on a piece while a stroke is being completed.

You can easily complete the various strokes below by referring to the "Brush Stroke Worksheet." Each definition corresponds to its number on the worksheet.

(When you are done with the strokes on the worksheet, try this [practice piece](#))

Brush Stroke Worksheet



1. **Fine Lines** - Tip, pull and gently lift up on the brush as the stroke is completed.
2. **Fine Broken Lines** - Tip, pull and lift the brush off the ware randomly to create broken segments on a design. This type of work is good for outlining and detailing the design.
3. **Fine Scrollwork** - Tip, pull and release pressure off the brush tip as the bend of a scroll is entered. Be sure that the color is thinned slightly when creating scrolls.
4. **Pressure Stroke** - Press, pull and lift the brush slowly off the ware. Note that the smaller strokes are completed with less pressure and less pulling.
5. **Comma Strokes** - Press, pull and curve the brush while pulling it, then lift it off the ware. Again, note that the smaller stroke is completed with less pressure and pulling.
6. **Leaf-like Pressure Strokes** - Tip, pull, press, pull and lift the brush off the ware slowly.
7. **Ribbon Strokes** - These strokes are completed the same as above, however the Liner is not lifted off the ware. The stroke continues in a longer continuous motion.
8. **Hat Pin** - Tip, pull and continue pulling until the desired length is completed, then press down on the tip to complete a round teardrop design at the end of the stroke.
9. **Teardrop Stroke or Brush Print** - The brush is no longer held straight up with this stroke. Hold it more like a pencil and press the loaded brush against the side of the ware. Again, smaller strokes are completed with less press on the Liner's tip.

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