



Celebrating Life Through Art

Paintings & Sculpture

Acrylic Layers Workshop

Quick Reference Guide:

Gel Layers





Acrylic Gel Layers Quick Reference Guide

Acrylic Gel Layers Overview

Gel Layers are what make this Acrylic Layers technique unique. Each Gel Layer creates a physical distance between the underlying underpainting or media layer and the next media layer. These gel layers are fully transparent allowing the earlier layer(s) to show through.

Variations in Gel Layers comes through the textures you create in the wet gel. When dry, these textures allow you to enhance your painting with the palpable “feel” of the gel texture when media is added and subtracted in the next media layer.

I find the act of applying the Gel Layers to be quite meditative and have learned to appreciate the “pause” in the creating process introduced by the drying time. Each Gel Layer “pause” affords an opportunity to reflect on your inspiration and intent, imagine alternative paths forward, or simply rest before the next decision must be made!

Key Gel Layer considerations to remember include:

1. Don't apply gel too thickly to ensure complete drying with no trapped moisture (cloudiness) in the Gel Layer. If you want it thicker, build up with multiple thinner Gel Layers with no media layers in between, letting each thinner layer dry completely before applying additional gel.
2. Be conscious of how “deep” your gel texture is... High peaks and deep valleys can be a challenge to navigate with the subsequent media layer if you weren't expecting a wild “topography” to work on! The gel layer will not dry perfectly level like a poured resin would so keep this in mind!
3. You can experiment with different thicknesses of Acrylic Gels since some brands offer them in different consistencies (i.e., Golden brand has Soft, Regular, Heavy, and Extra Heavy) This technique focuses on using gels which create soft peaks at a minimum and would not be “pourable” like a Gloss Medium.

This workshop introduces five Gel Layer options which are summarized below

- Random Strokes
- Tap, Lift, and Drag
- Emboss
- Scribble
- Swipes and Streaks

You can refer to these to get you started or to inspire your own personal and exciting Gel Layer ideas since these are just a start!

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	<p><u>Random Strokes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once Gel is spread across the piece (~ 1/16" to 1/8" thick or it won't dry properly, you can always add another layer of gel once dry!) create a random pattern with your palette knife. • For an organic random effect, use your palette knife to create <u>small peaks and valleys</u> in the gel. • Experiment with the angle of your palette knife and the degree of pressure you use to find what works best for you and the effect you are trying to create. • Rotate the piece to allow different directions of your strokes. • Look for thick areas to disperse and "non-organic" straight edges to blend, don't forget to pay attention to carrying your texture to the edges of your piece!
	<p><u>Tap, Lift, and Drag</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap your palette knife into the gel... • Lift your palette knife leaving numerous small peaks... • <u>Gently</u> with feather light pressure, drag your palette knife across the peaks to partially blend and spread the peaks leaving a delicate lace-like pattern behind. • This technique is useful in providing some variety to the textures in the gel, so it is not too uniform • You should be able to see the distinct peaks with valleys showing the layers beneath, if not, the gel is too thick, remove some gel from that area and try again! •
	<p><u>Emboss</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a carved stamp or a textured object (like a filigree earring) to emboss the gel with a pattern. • The key is to not have the gel too thick since the stamp cannot leave a distinct imprint if there is too much gel! • Once dry, use paint or dry media on the peaks as a great way to highlight the embossed pattern.



Scribble

- You can use anything you like to scribble a pattern into the gel!
 - Tip of your palette knife
 - A spatula
 - Toothpicks
 - Shapers
 - Twigs
 - Even your finger...
- Vary the thickness and directions of the lines you create to add visual interest...
- Useful to accent specific areas of a painting, would likely be overwhelming if used over the entire piece!
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Swipes & Streaks

- You can use a textured scraper to incise distinct patterns.
- You can gently drag your palette knife over the raised edges of an incised pattern to soften/blend the edges if the pattern is too “perfect” and static.
- You can also use your palette knife to create larger sweeping strokes in the gel to accentuate a “direction” of your texture (e.g., I’ve used angled vertical strokes to imply falling rain...)

What Else Can You Think Of?

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