

ENGLISH FOR ARTISTS

Fine Art & Painting

Everyday words. Clear conversations. Your own creative voice.

ESL120 | Course, visual guide and practical workbook

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World Cultures & Education



pencil



round brush



flat brush

10 units | 80 key words | 10 studio dialogues

Visual aids, adaptable activities, art movements and ten artist profiles.

For young learners, adults and older artists. Begin with familiar objects and materials you already have.

A course for every stage of life

This course develops everyday English for drawing and painting. The language begins around elementary level and can be extended for more confident speakers. Artistic experience is welcome but not required. Learners choose their own subjects; age does not decide the level of the task.

Choose your route

Start simple: name objects, point, match and use one short sentence.

Build confidence: rehearse the dialogue and complete the basic task.

Extend: compare methods, explain a choice or write a longer description.

A flexible ten-week plan

Use one unit each week, or repeat at your own pace. Try three 20-minute sessions: learn and point; speak and make; review and revise. Teachers can use 45-60-minute meetings with practice between meetings. This course teaches language through art; it is not a professional materials qualification.

Access and participation

Work seated or standing. Choose large tools or grips if useful. Give written directions as well as spoken ones. Label colors by name and value. Allow rest breaks, extra time, pointing, dictation or a partner scribe. Do not assume all older artists need the same support or all young artists need easier work.

A practical starting kit

Paper, a pencil, an eraser and an everyday object are enough to begin. Suitable colored pencils or age-appropriate water-based paints are optional. Follow product labels and studio rules. Young learners need appropriate adult supervision. Keep food and drink separate from art materials.

Your learning path

01. Meet the artist and the studio

Introduce yourself and name your daily art practice.

02. Drawing tools and useful requests

Name drawing tools and ask to borrow one.

03. Paper, canvas and preparation

Describe a painting surface and compare two supports.

04. Paint types and material labels

Name common paints and ask which material is suitable.

05. Color mixing and value

Describe a mixture and compare light and dark.

06. Brushes, marks and simple techniques

Identify brush shapes and explain a short painting process.

07. Describe subject and composition

Explain where objects are placed in a picture.

08. Daily studio care and collaboration

Ask for help and describe a clear cleanup routine.

09. Art shops and everyday supply conversations

Request an item, ask about size and check its intended use.

10. Talk about art, feedback and exhibitions

Describe your artwork, respond to feedback and write a label.

After the units

Explore the movement guide, contemporary art and ten artist profiles. Complete the final studio project and review your answers. These are practice activities, not a certified language assessment.

UNIT 01 | LEARN

Meet the artist and the studio

Goal: Introduce yourself and name your daily art practice.

WHO

I am a painter.

WHAT

I paint flowers.

WHERE

I work at home.

Eight useful words

artist	a person who makes art
painter	an artist who paints
studio	a place for making art
artwork	a finished or developing work of art
sketchbook	a book for drawings
subject	what an artwork shows
practice	regular work to improve a skill
inspiration	an idea or experience that starts your work

UNIT 01 | SPEAK & MAKE

Meet the artist and the studio

Sentences for daily use

I am an artist.

I paint landscapes.

This is my sketchbook.

I get ideas from nature.

A short studio conversation

A: Hello. My name is Sam. I am a painter.

B: What do you paint?

A: I paint flowers and places near my home.

B: May I see your sketchbook?

A: Yes. This is a new sketch.

Language and studio note

Use a/an before one countable thing: a painter, an artist. Paint is a verb or a material. A painting is an artwork. Say I paint, not I am paint.

Try it

Choose an object or imagine a studio. Say your name, name two things you draw or paint, and introduce your sketchbook. Write three sentences.

Optional extension

Give a 45-second introduction explaining one source of inspiration. Ask a partner two questions about their art.

UNIT 01 | CHECK & REFLECT

Meet the artist and the studio

1. What does artist mean?

- A. a person who makes art
- B. an artist who paints
- C. a place for making art

2. What does artwork mean?

- A. a finished or developing work of art
- B. a person who makes art
- C. an artist who paints

3. Which sentence introduces a person's art practice?

- A. I am paint flowers.
- B. I painting flowers.
- C. I paint flowers.

4. Which question invites another artist to describe their work?

- A. What do you paint?
- B. Where is my receipt?
- C. How much is this pad?

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.
I can use one sentence without reading.
I can ask for help or clarification.
My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 02 | LEARN

Drawing tools and useful requests

Goal: Name drawing tools and ask to borrow one.



pencil



round brush



flat brush

Eight useful words

pencil	a tool with a graphite or colored core
graphite	the gray drawing material inside many pencils
eraser	a tool for removing pencil marks
sharpener	a tool for making a pencil point
ruler	a tool for measuring and drawing straight lines
charcoal	a dark drawing material
colored pencil	a pencil with a colored core
line	a mark with length

UNIT 02 | SPEAK & MAKE

Drawing tools and useful requests

Sentences for daily use

This is a pencil.

Could I borrow your ruler?

I need an eraser.

Please pass the colored pencils.

A short studio conversation

A: Could I borrow your ruler?

B: Yes. Here you are.

A: Thank you. I need a straight line.

B: Do you also need an eraser?

A: Yes, please.

Language and studio note

Use *Could I borrow...?* to receive something temporarily. *Could you lend me...?* asks the owner to give it temporarily. Say *some charcoal*, not *a charcoal*, when naming the material.

Try it

Label four tools. Use a pencil or colored pencil to make a straight, curved and zigzag line. Ask politely to borrow one tool.

Optional extension

Explain why you chose a soft or hard pencil. Write a four-item packing list for a drawing session.

UNIT 02 | CHECK & REFLECT

Drawing tools and useful requests

1. What does pencil mean?

- A. the gray drawing material inside many pencils
- B. a tool for removing pencil marks
- C. a tool with a graphite or colored core

2. What does sharpener mean?

- A. a tool with a graphite or colored core
- B. the gray drawing material inside many pencils
- C. a tool for making a pencil point

3. You want to use a friend's ruler and return it. What do you say?

- A. I am an eraser.
- B. Could I borrow your ruler?
- C. Could I buy your studio?

4. Which tool is intended for measuring a straight distance?

- A. An eraser
- B. A charcoal stick
- C. A ruler

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

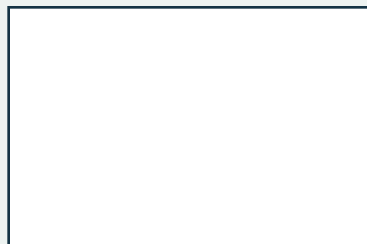
I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

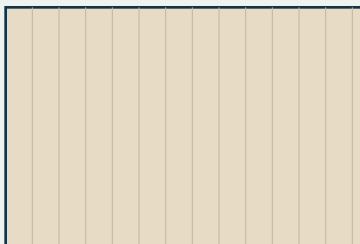
UNIT 03 | LEARN

Paper, canvas and preparation

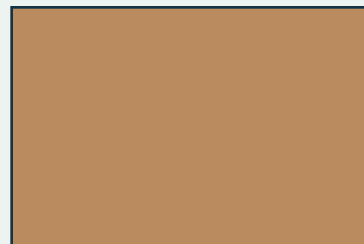
Goal: Describe a painting surface and compare two supports.



paper



canvas



panel

Eight useful words

paper	a sheet used for drawing or painting
canvas	a woven fabric used as a painting support
panel	a rigid board used as a support
support	the surface that carries the artwork
gesso	a preparation used to prime suitable supports
primer	a preparatory coating
texture	how a surface feels or appears
smooth	having little surface roughness

UNIT 03 | SPEAK & MAKE

Paper, canvas and preparation

Sentences for daily use

I am painting on paper.

This surface is smooth.

That paper has more texture.

Is this canvas already primed?

A short studio conversation

A: Is this canvas already primed?

B: The label says it is primed for acrylic paint.

A: Good. I will check the instructions.

B: What about the paper?

A: I want thicker paper for my watercolor test.

Language and studio note

Use on for a support: on paper, on canvas. Use with for a tool or material: with a brush. Check product labels for compatible supports and preparation; acrylic gesso is not a universal preparation for every technique.

Try it

Compare two available surfaces without buying anything. Describe each with smooth, rough, thick or thin. Write I can draw on ____.

Optional extension

Draft three questions about support, primer and intended paint before choosing a new surface.

UNIT 03 | CHECK & REFLECT

Paper, canvas and preparation

1. What does paper mean?

- A. a rigid board used as a support
- B. a sheet used for drawing or painting
- C. a woven fabric used as a painting support

2. What does support mean?

- A. a woven fabric used as a painting support
- B. the surface that carries the artwork
- C. a sheet used for drawing or painting

3. Which sentence names the support?

- A. I paint on paper.
- B. I paint with a ruler.
- C. I paint tomorrow.

4. Choose the correct material-and-support phrase.

- A. Watercolor from paper
- B. Watercolor on paper
- C. Watercolor at paper

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

- I can name the key objects.
- I can use one sentence without reading.
- I can ask for help or clarification.
- My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 04 | LEARN

Paint types and material labels

Goal: Name common paints and ask which material is suitable.



watercolor



gouache



acrylic

Illustrative swatches: results depend on paint and method.

Eight useful words

watercolor	paint commonly used in transparent water-based washes
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acrylic	paint with an acrylic polymer binder
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oil paint	paint using a drying oil binder
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gouache	a generally opaque water-based paint
---------	--------------------------------------

pigment	the colored substance in paint
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binder	the material that holds pigment together
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medium	a type of art material, or an additive used with paint
--------	--

opaque	not allowing much of the background to show through
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UNIT 04 | SPEAK & MAKE

Paint types and material labels

Sentences for daily use

I use watercolor.

This paint is opaque.

What does the label say?

Is this material suitable for this activity?

A short studio conversation

A: What paint are you using?

B: Watercolor. I want a transparent wash.

A: I am using gouache for an opaque shape.

B: Let us read the labels before we start.

A: Yes. We should follow the instructions.

Language and studio note

Watercolor is the common U.S. spelling; watercolour is the British spelling. Water-based does not mean every product is harmless. Read age guidance and handling instructions. The word medium has more than one art meaning.

Try it

Read a paint label with a teacher or partner. Find the material name, color name and instructions. Make three paper color tests using suitable water-based materials, or describe imagined tests.

Optional extension

Compare watercolor, acrylic and gouache in four simple sentences. Study oil-paint vocabulary through labels; practical oil work belongs in a suitably supervised and equipped studio.

UNIT 04 | CHECK & REFLECT

Paint types and material labels

1. What does watercolor mean?

- A. paint commonly used in transparent water-based washes
- B. paint with an acrylic polymer binder
- C. paint using a drying oil binder

2. What does gouache mean?

- A. a generally opaque water-based paint
- B. paint commonly used in transparent water-based washes
- C. paint with an acrylic polymer binder

3. In this art context, pigment means...

- A. a wooden display frame
- B. a person visiting a museum
- C. the colored substance in paint

4. You want the paper beneath a wash to remain visible. Which word fits?

- A. Transparent
- B. Opaque
- C. Framed

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

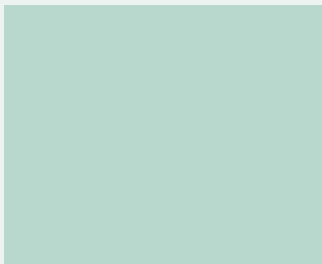
I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 05 | LEARN

Color mixing and value

Goal: Describe a mixture and compare light and dark.



light



middle



dark

Eight useful words

palette	a surface for arranging or mixing paint
primary color	a starting color in a specified mixing model
secondary color	a color made from two primaries in a model
hue	a color family, such as red or blue
value	how light or dark a color is
tint	a color mixed with white
shade	a color mixed with black
complementary colors	colors opposite one another on a specified color wheel

UNIT 05 | SPEAK & MAKE

Color mixing and value

Sentences for daily use

I mixed blue and yellow.

This green is lighter.

Add a little white.

Which color has the darkest value?

A short studio conversation

A: I mixed blue and yellow.

B: What did you make?

A: A green mixture. Then I added white.

B: The second mixture is lighter.

A: Yes. The pigments affect the result.

Language and studio note

The traditional red-yellow-blue wheel is a useful classroom model, not the only color model. Actual pigment mixtures vary. Red, green and blue describe a different model for light. Value and price are different meanings of value.

Try it

Make or draw three value patches: light, middle and dark. Describe a simple mixture. Label colors with words so color vision is not the only way to identify them.

Optional extension

Compare three mixing tests, identifying paint names and proportions. Explain one unexpected result without assuming all paints behave alike.

UNIT 05 | CHECK & REFLECT

Color mixing and value

1. What does palette mean?

- A. a starting color in a specified mixing model
- B. a color made from two primaries in a model
- C. a surface for arranging or mixing paint

2. What does hue mean?

- A. a surface for arranging or mixing paint
- B. a starting color in a specified mixing model
- C. a color family, such as red or blue

3. In a painting description, value usually tells us...

- A. the artist's selling price
- B. the lightness or darkness
- C. the size of the frame

4. What do we call a color mixed with white?

- A. A shade
- B. A receipt
- C. A tint

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 06 | LEARN

Brushes, marks and simple techniques

Goal: Identify brush shapes and explain a short painting process.



pencil



round brush



flat brush

Eight useful words

round brush	a brush with a round shape and a pointed or rounded tip
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flat brush	a brush with a broad, flat edge
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filbert	a flat brush with a rounded end
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palette knife	a tool for mixing or applying paint
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stroke	a mark made by a brush or tool
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wash	a thin layer of diluted paint
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layer	one application placed over or beside another
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blend	to mix or soften a transition
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UNIT 06 | SPEAK & MAKE

Brushes, marks and simple techniques

Sentences for daily use

I use a flat brush for this mark.

First, make a light wash.

Next, let the layer dry.

Then add another layer.

A short studio conversation

A: How did you make that wide mark?

B: I used a flat brush.

A: What will you do next?

B: I will let this layer dry. Then I will add details.

A: I will test my marks on spare paper.

Language and studio note

First, next, then and finally help explain a sequence. Brush labels and sizes vary by brand. Test on spare paper. Use a suitable blunt tool under supervision if an activity calls for a knife; the vocabulary lesson does not require knife use.

Try it

Use one brush or a pencil to make dots, short lines and broad marks. Explain three steps aloud. Do not rush drying because a written schedule says to move on.

Optional extension

Compare a round, flat and filbert brush, or their pictures. Describe which mark each can make and write a four-step method.

UNIT 06 | CHECK & REFLECT

Brushes, marks and simple techniques

1. What does round brush mean?

- A. a flat brush with a rounded end
- B. a brush with a round shape and a pointed or rounded tip
- C. a brush with a broad, flat edge

2. What does palette knife mean?

- A. a brush with a broad, flat edge
- B. a tool for mixing or applying paint
- C. a brush with a round shape and a pointed or rounded tip

3. Which word begins a clear sequence?

- A. First
- B. Yesterday's
- C. Expensive

4. Choose a clear next-step sentence.

- A. Next, a drying.
- B. Next, let the layer dry.
- C. Next, yesterday dried.

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

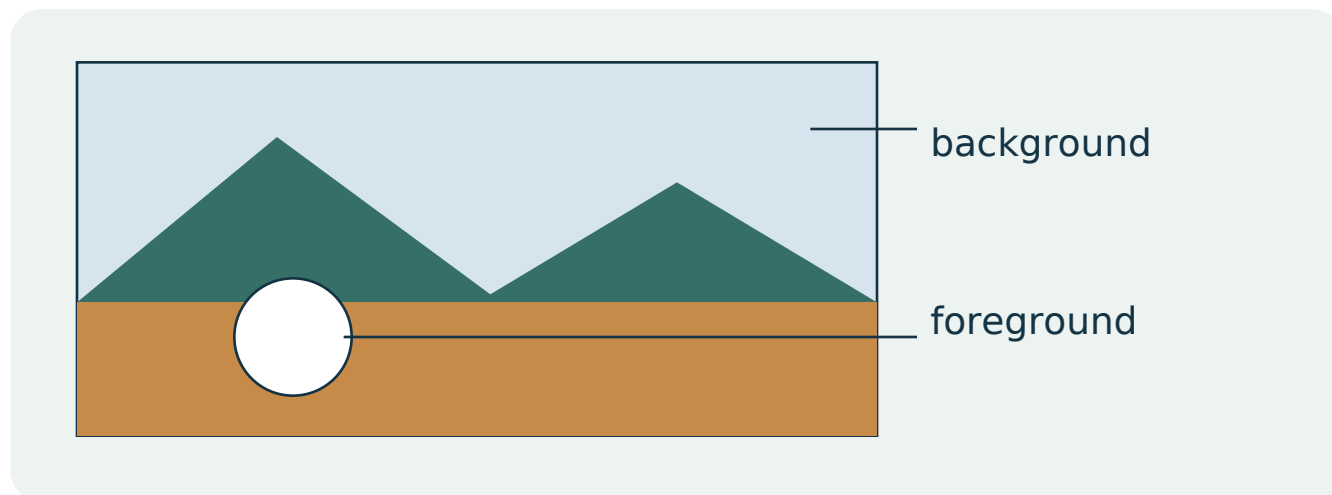
I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 07 | LEARN

Describe subject and composition

Goal: Explain where objects are placed in a picture.



Eight useful words

still life	a picture of arranged objects
landscape	a picture focused on a place or scenery
portrait	a picture of a person
foreground	the part that appears closest
background	the part that appears farthest away
composition	the arrangement of elements
focal point	an area that draws attention
negative space	the space around or between subjects

UNIT 07 | SPEAK & MAKE

Describe subject and composition

Sentences for daily use

The cup is in the foreground.

The trees are in the background.

The focal point is on the left.

There is space around the subject.

A short studio conversation

A: What is the subject of your painting?

B: A cup and a leaf. It is a still life.

A: Where is the cup?

B: In the foreground, slightly to the left.

A: The open space helps me see its shape.

Language and studio note

Use on the left/right for a side and in the foreground/background for depth. I can see describes visible evidence. It may suggest describes an interpretation, not a proven fact.

Try it

Arrange two safe household objects or draw them from memory. Make a small thumbnail sketch. Describe the subject and two positions.

Optional extension

Create three different compositions of the same subject. Explain how position and negative space change what the viewer notices.

UNIT 07 | CHECK & REFLECT

Describe subject and composition

1. What does still life mean?

- A. a picture of arranged objects
- B. a picture focused on a place or scenery
- C. a picture of a person

2. What does foreground mean?

- A. the part that appears closest
- B. a picture of arranged objects
- C. a picture focused on a place or scenery

3. Which phrase refers to the area appearing nearest the viewer?

- A. background
- B. price list
- C. foreground

4. What is the space around or between subjects called?

- A. Negative space
- B. A portrait
- C. A tube

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 08 | LEARN

Daily studio care and collaboration

Goal: Ask for help and describe a clear cleanup routine.

1. Read instructions

2. Ask for help

3. Store and tidy

Eight useful words

easel	a stand that holds a painting support
apron	a garment that protects clothing
container	a vessel for holding materials
cloth	fabric used for an appropriate cleaning task
bristles	the hairs or fibers of a brush
label	written product information
storage	keeping materials in a suitable place
clean up	put materials away and tidy the workspace

UNIT 08 | SPEAK & MAKE

Daily studio care and collaboration

Sentences for daily use

Could you help me adjust the easel?

Please close the container.

Where should I store this?

What do the cleanup instructions say?

A short studio conversation

A: I need help adjusting the easel.

B: Let us ask the teacher.

A: Where should I put the remaining paint?

B: Check the label and our studio's disposal instructions.

A: Then I will put away the dry materials.

Language and studio note

Cleanup methods depend on the paint and local disposal rules. Keep art materials separate from food and drink. Do not put tools in your mouth or assume paint waste can go down a drain. Younger learners need appropriate adult supervision.

Try it

Use unused or clean materials to rehearse a tidy workspace. Ask one help question and explain where three items belong. Read the actual cleanup instructions before handling paint waste.

Optional extension

Write a six-line studio handover covering materials, closed containers, storage and any unresolved cleanup question.

UNIT 08 | CHECK & REFLECT

Daily studio care and collaboration

1. What does easel mean?

- A. a garment that protects clothing
- B. a vessel for holding materials
- C. a stand that holds a painting support

2. What does cloth mean?

- A. a stand that holds a painting support
- B. a garment that protects clothing
- C. fabric used for an appropriate cleaning task

3. You do not know how to dispose of paint waste. What is the best first step?

- A. Mix it with your drinking water
- B. Check product and studio disposal instructions
- C. Pour it into any drain

4. Which request asks for assistance?

- A. What is the title?
- B. How many sheets are there?
- C. Could you help me adjust the easel?

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 09 | LEARN

Art shops and everyday supply conversations

Goal: Request an item, ask about size and check its intended use.

1. Name the item

2. Check intended use

3. Ask quantity / price

Eight useful words

tube	a squeezable container for some paints
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set	a group of items sold or used together
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sheet	one piece of paper
-------	--------------------

pad	a group of bound or attached paper sheets
-----	---

size	how large an item is
------	----------------------

quantity	how many or how much
----------	----------------------

price	the amount of money requested
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receipt	a record of a purchase
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UNIT 09 | SPEAK & MAKE

Art shops and everyday supply conversations

Sentences for daily use

Do you have a small watercolor pad?

How many sheets are in the pad?

How much is this set?

Is this paper suitable for watercolor?

A short studio conversation

A: Do you have a small watercolor pad?

B: This example pad has twelve sheets.

A: How much is it?

B: The fictional price is eight dollars.

A: Thank you. I will compare it with what I already have.

Language and studio note

Use How many...? for countable items, such as sheets. Use How much...? for a price or an uncountable amount. A supply conversation can be practiced without buying anything.

Try it

Role-play an art shop using three objects or drawings. Ask about quantity, size and a fictional price. Check the intended use.

Optional extension

Prepare a supply request for a group session. Separate essential items from optional ones and explain your choices.

UNIT 09 | CHECK & REFLECT

Art shops and everyday supply conversations

1. What does tube mean?

- A. one piece of paper
- B. a squeezable container for some paints
- C. a group of items sold or used together

2. What does pad mean?

- A. a group of items sold or used together
- B. a group of bound or attached paper sheets
- C. a squeezable container for some paints

3. Which question asks about a countable quantity?

- A. How many sheets are in the pad?
- B. How much is the set?
- C. Where is the studio?

4. The fictional pad costs eight dollars. Which question asks for that information?

- A. Which medium did you use?
- B. How much is the pad?
- C. How many pads are blue?

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

UNIT 10 | LEARN

Talk about art, feedback and exhibitions

Goal: Describe your artwork, respond to feedback and write a label.

1. Name the work

2. Describe the medium

3. Share your idea

Eight useful words

title	the name given to an artwork
dimensions	measurements such as height and width
exhibition	a presentation of artworks
gallery	a place or organization showing art
artist statement	a short explanation of an artist's work or approach
feedback	comments that can help you review your work
technique	a way of using materials
contemporary	belonging to the present or relatively recent period

UNIT 10 | SPEAK & MAKE

Talk about art, feedback and exhibitions

Sentences for daily use

The title is Quiet Morning.

It is watercolor on paper.

The dimensions are 20 by 30 centimeters.

Thank you. Could you explain your suggestion?

A short studio conversation

A: Tell me about your painting.

B: It is called Quiet Morning. I used watercolor on paper.

A: I notice a soft transition in the sky.

B: Thank you. I blended the edges.

A: Could you tell me about your choice of colors?

Language and studio note

Begin feedback with an observation: I notice.... Ask permission before offering a suggestion. State dimensions with units and your chosen order, such as height x width. Give your own interpretation rather than claiming to know another artist's intention.

Try it

Write a label with artist name, title, year, medium and dimensions. Give a 30-second introduction and ask one respectful question about another work.

Optional extension

Write a 60-80-word artist statement. Separate what the viewer can see from the meaning you intended. Revise one sentence after feedback.

UNIT 10 | CHECK & REFLECT

Talk about art, feedback and exhibitions

1. What does title mean?

- A. the name given to an artwork
- B. measurements such as height and width
- C. a presentation of artworks

2. What does gallery mean?

- A. a place or organization showing art
- B. the name given to an artwork
- C. measurements such as height and width

3. Which feedback opening is most useful and specific?

- A. Your art is wrong.
- B. All paintings must look like mine.
- C. I notice repeated curved lines.

4. Which label states both a material and a support?

- A. Acrylic on canvas
- B. Quiet Morning
- C. 20 by 30 centimeters

Your own studio sentences

Write or dictate three sentences for your task. A partner may write your words.

Can-do check

I can name the key objects.

I can use one sentence without reading.

I can ask for help or clarification.

My next practice goal is: _____

Art schools, movements and approaches

Here, a school means a shared artistic approach or tradition; a movement is a broader development among artists. The labels overlap and do not contain every artist's work. These short European and U.S. examples are an entry point, not a complete world art history. Artistic traditions across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas need their own contexts.

Renaissance | roughly 1400s-1500s in Europe

Artists explored observation, proportion and perspective alongside religious and other subjects.

Words: perspective, proportion. Practice: Draw an ordinary object and describe its proportions.

Baroque | roughly 1600s to early 1700s in Europe

Often associated with dramatic light, movement and rich visual effects; styles varied.

Words: contrast, shadow. Practice: Describe the light and dark areas of one scene.

Realism | especially mid-1800s France and related developments

Artists gave sustained attention to ordinary people and daily life rather than only idealized subjects.

Words: ordinary, daily life. Practice: Describe an everyday activity using three clear sentences.

Movements at a glance

Impressionism | especially France from the 1860s-1880s

Painters explored changing light, visible marks and modern life, often working outdoors.

Words: light, brushstroke. Practice: Describe how a place looks at two times of day.

Post-Impressionism | late 1800s into early 1900s

A broad label for varied approaches extending or reacting to Impressionism; color, structure and expression developed in different ways.

Words: structure, expression. Practice: Compare an observed color with an expressive color choice.

Expressionism | especially early 1900s Europe

Distortion and strong color can communicate emotional responses rather than naturalistic appearances.

Words: emotion, distortion. Practice: Choose a feeling and describe an original color arrangement.

Cubism | from about 1907, associated with Picasso and Braque

Subjects may be broken into geometric facets, bringing more than one viewpoint into a picture.

Words: viewpoint, facet. Practice: Draw two views of a cup and describe their shapes.

Movements at a glance

Surrealism | from the 1920s

Artists explored dreams, unexpected combinations and approaches influenced by the unconscious.

Words: dream, unexpected. Practice: Combine two ordinary objects in an imagined scene.

Abstract art | many approaches from the early 1900s onward

Art may simplify visible subjects or work with shapes, colors and marks without a recognizable subject.

Words: shape, rhythm. Practice: Describe an arrangement of shapes without naming a real-world object.

Pop art | especially 1950s-1960s Britain and the U.S.

Artists drew on popular culture, consumer imagery and mass communication.

Words: repetition, popular image. Practice: Design an original repeated everyday symbol; describe the pattern.

Contemporary art: more than one style

Contemporary art generally refers to art of the present and relatively recent past. Its boundaries are debated. It is not a single look, a guarantee of quality or a synonym for abstract painting. Artists may paint realistically, work with abstraction, combine materials or create installations and digital works. [1]

Mixed media

More than one material or medium is used in a work. Model: The artist combines paint and paper.

Installation

An arrangement of elements forms a work experienced in a space. Model: The objects fill part of the room.

Concept

An idea guiding the work. Model: The work explores memory.

Context

The circumstances that help us understand the work. Model: The place and date may affect our reading.

Digital art

Art made or developed through digital processes. Model: The artist uses a digital tool to make the image.

Look, ask, interpret

What can you see? Which materials or marks are visible? What questions does the work raise? What information comes from a label or the artist, and what is your own interpretation? Use I notice... / It may suggest... / I would like to know....

Learning at an art school or in the community

Art education can take place in a fine-art department, an independent art school, a community college, a museum workshop, a local studio or a self-study group. This is a guide to learning formats, not a ranking or admissions directory.

Foundation and beginner workshops

Develop basic drawing, observation, material vocabulary and studio routines. Ask: Is this suitable for someone with no experience?

Fine-art degree or diploma study

May combine studio work, critique, art history and independent projects. Ask about the actual curriculum, entry requirements and recognition of the award.

Community and museum learning

Short workshops and shared looking activities can support intergenerational groups. Ask about access, age guidance and materials.

Portfolio preparation

A portfolio is a selected collection showing your work and development. Ask what the institution requires; requirements vary.

Lifelong studio practice

Peer groups, guided projects and personal study can continue at any age. Choose a format that suits your goals and pace.

Useful questions

How long is the course?
Which materials are included?
Can I work seated?
What language level do I need?
May I see an example project?
How do you give feedback?

Ten influential artists to explore

A selected learning list, not an objective top-ten ranking. It introduces varied approaches and includes a modern Egyptian painter. No example activity reproduces a named artwork.

1. Leonardo da Vinci

Italian; 1452-1519

A Renaissance artist whose paintings and drawings reflect close study of people, nature and visual structure.

Studio words: observation, proportion, perspective

Your original practice: Look closely at a leaf and describe three visible details.

Museum or foundation source [2]

2. Rembrandt van Rijn

Dutch; 1606-1669

Known for portraits, self-portraits and narrative scenes, with expressive light and close attention to human presence.

Studio words: portrait, shadow, contrast

Your original practice: Describe a face in a drawing using light, middle and dark values.

Museum or foundation source [3]

Ten influential artists to explore

3. Claude Monet

French; 1840-1926

A central Impressionist painter who explored light, color and changing appearances, often revisiting a subject in a series.

Studio words: landscape, reflection, series

Your original practice: Describe the same imagined garden in morning and evening light.

Museum or foundation source [4]

4. Vincent van Gogh

Dutch; 1853-1890

A Post-Impressionist painter associated with expressive color and energetic brushwork in landscapes, portraits and still lifes.

Studio words: stroke, color, movement

Your original practice: Use your own marks to describe movement, then explain your color choice.

Museum or foundation source [5]

Ten influential artists to explore

5. Pablo Picasso

Spanish; 1881-1973

Worked across many media and styles. With Georges Braque, he helped develop Cubism and new ways of showing form and viewpoint.

Studio words: shape, viewpoint, collage

Your original practice: Describe an object from the front and side; make an original study.

Museum or foundation source [6]

6. Frida Kahlo

Mexican; 1907-1954

Known for self-portraits that explore personal experience and identity through carefully chosen objects and imagery.

Studio words: self-portrait, identity, symbol

Your original practice: Choose an object meaningful to you and explain its role in an original portrait.

Museum or foundation source [7]

Ten influential artists to explore

7. Georgia O'Keeffe

American; 1887-1986

An American modernist whose paintings and drawings include enlarged natural forms and landscapes, inviting close attention to shape.

Studio words: close-up, form, scale

Your original practice: Enlarge a small natural detail in a drawing and describe its form.

Museum or foundation source [8]

8. Jacob Lawrence

American; 1917-2000

Used bold shapes and color to tell stories about African American history and everyday life, often through related panels.

Studio words: narrative, panel, sequence

Your original practice: Draw three original scenes from an everyday journey and explain their order.

Museum or foundation source [9]

Ten influential artists to explore

9. Mahmoud Said

Egyptian; 1897-1964

An important figure in modern Egyptian painting, associated with strongly modeled figures and scenes rooted in Egyptian surroundings.

Studio words: figure, setting, local life

Your original practice: Describe a familiar place and a person's activity there.

Museum or foundation source [10]

10. Yayoi Kusama

Japanese; born 1929

Her career includes painting, sculpture and installations. Repetition, dots and immersive spaces are recurring features of her work.

Studio words: pattern, repetition, installation

Your original practice: Create an original repeated mark and explain its rhythm and spacing.

Museum or foundation source [11]

Final studio project

Create an original drawing or painting of a familiar object, place or personal idea. A pencil drawing is sufficient. You may work from memory or choose a nonrepresentational arrangement. Use suitable materials and follow the instructions for them.

1. Plan

Name your subject, support, tools and intended materials. Make a small study or dictate your plan.

2. Explain

Use first, next and finally to describe three steps. Identify one color or value choice and one composition choice.

3. Present

Give a 45-60-second introduction or share a written version. Include title, medium, dimensions and one reason for a choice.

4. Respond

Ask a respectful question about another work. Receive one specific observation, decide what you want to revise and explain why.

A practice rubric

Score each area 0-4: 0 = not yet; 1 = substantial help; 2 = some help; 3 = mostly independent; 4 = clear and independent. The rubric evaluates communication, not whether the art looks like someone else's work.

Task completion ____ / 4

Correct material and tool words ____ / 4

Clear sequence and description ____ / 4

Respectful interaction ____ / 4

Useful revision after feedback ____ / 4

Reusable artwork label and statement

Label template

Artist: [name]

Title: [title]

Year: [year]

Medium: [material] on [support]

Dimensions: [height] x [width] [unit]

Dimensions given as height x width.

Fictional example

Artist: Sam Rivera

Title: Quiet Morning

Year: 2026

Medium: Watercolor on paper

Dimensions: 20 x 30 cm

Dimensions given as height x width.

Statement template

My artwork shows ____.

I used ____ on ____.

I chose ____ because ____.

First, I _____. Next, I _____.

I want the viewer to notice _____.

After feedback, I would like to _____.

Feedback starters

May I share an observation?

I notice _____.

Could you explain _____?

Have you considered _____?

Thank you. I will try _____.

Answer key and explanations

Unit 1: Meet the artist and the studio

1. A. It means a person who makes art.
2. A. It means a finished or developing work of art.
3. C. Use I + the present-tense verb paint.
4. A. What do you paint? asks about art practice.

Unit 2: Drawing tools and useful requests

1. C. It means a tool with a graphite or colored core.
2. C. It means a tool for making a pencil point.
3. B. Borrow means receive something temporarily.
4. C. A ruler measures length and can guide a straight line.

Unit 3: Paper, canvas and preparation

1. B. It means a sheet used for drawing or painting.
2. B. It means the surface that carries the artwork.
3. A. On paper identifies the painting surface.
4. B. On names the support carrying the paint.

Unit 4: Paint types and material labels

1. A. It means paint commonly used in transparent water-based washes.
2. A. It means a generally opaque water-based paint.
3. C. Pigment gives a paint its color.
4. A. Transparent paint layers allow the support or lower layer to show.

Unit 5: Color mixing and value

1. C. It means a surface for arranging or mixing paint.
2. C. It means a color family, such as red or blue.
3. B. Value describes light and dark in this context.
4. C. A tint is a color mixed with white.

Answer key and explanations

Unit 6: Brushes, marks and simple techniques

1. B. It means a brush with a round shape and a pointed or rounded tip.
2. B. It means a tool for mixing or applying paint.
3. A. First introduces step one.
4. B. The sentence gives a clear instruction.

Unit 7: Describe subject and composition

1. A. It means a picture of arranged objects.
2. A. It means the part that appears closest.
3. C. The foreground appears closest.
4. A. Negative space is the area around or between subjects.

Unit 8: Daily studio care and collaboration

1. C. It means a stand that holds a painting support.
2. C. It means fabric used for an appropriate cleaning task.
3. B. Disposal depends on the material and applicable guidance.
4. C. Could you help me...? is a polite assistance request.

Unit 9: Art shops and everyday supply conversations

1. B. It means a squeezable container for some paints.
2. B. It means a group of bound or attached paper sheets.
3. A. Sheets can be counted, so use how many.
4. B. How much is...? asks about a price.

Unit 10: Talk about art, feedback and exhibitions

1. A. It means the name given to an artwork.
2. A. It means a place or organization showing art.
3. C. A specific observation supports respectful discussion.
4. A. Acrylic names the material and canvas names the support.

Resources, sources and next steps

Movement summaries are introductory, original explanations. Tate's glossary and museum collections offer deeper study. Artist profile links are grouped below. Sources do not endorse this course. Links were checked during preparation in October 2026. No copyrighted artwork reproductions are included; instructional visuals are original.

[1] Tate: Contemporary art

The Met: Impressionism and modernity

Tate: Art terms glossary

[2] Leonardo da Vinci - museum / foundation profile

[3] Rembrandt van Rijn - museum / foundation profile

[4] Claude Monet - museum / foundation profile

[5] Vincent van Gogh - museum / foundation profile

[6] Pablo Picasso - museum / foundation profile

[7] Frida Kahlo - museum / foundation profile

[8] Georgia O'Keeffe - museum / foundation profile

[9] Jacob Lawrence - museum / foundation profile

[10] Mahmoud Said - museum / foundation profile

[11] Yayoi Kusama - museum / foundation profile

The Metropolitan Museum of Art: collection

MoMA: artists and collection

Keep a studio language record

Date | New word | My own sentence | Next practice

Return to earlier units and replace model details with your own accurate descriptions. Ask a teacher to help with pronunciation and unfamiliar materials.

Publication

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