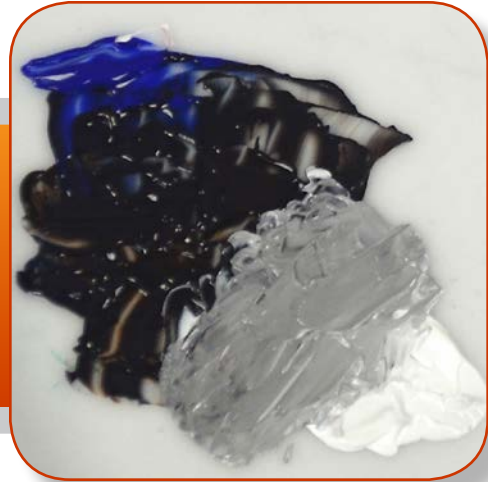


# Mix Rich Blacks with ACRYLIC PAINT



Mix your own luscious black tones to create more depth and interest in your painting

**Supplies:** pad of primed canvas sheets (approximately letter-sized), palette/palette paper, palette knife, water, paper towel, .5 in (1.3 cm) flat brush, Paint: Ultramarine Blue, Phthalo Green, Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna, Alizarine Crimson, Permanent Rose, Titanium White

This activity has three sections:

- Choose Color Combinations
- Prepare Your Palette
- Discover Delicious Grays

Pre-mixed black paint straight from a tube or jar creates a flat, neutral tone that you won't find in nature.

Natural black tones lean toward either warm or cool, with hints of blue, red, or yellow.

## Choose Color Combinations

A good rule to follow for mixing black is to choose the darkest of two complementary colors, but there are exceptions. For instance, bright blue mixed with bright orange makes brown – not black!

So, which colors should you choose to make a beautiful black?



### ArtSpeak

**Primary colors:** Yellow, red, and blue. All other colors originate from primary colors and no combinations of other colors can make primary colors. Primary colors are high-intensity and go well together to create artwork that looks incredibly bright. By mixing the primary colors with other colors in various combinations, millions of different colors can be created.

**Complementary colors:** A set of two colors that are directly opposite one another on a color wheel (such as red and green, yellow and purple, and orange and blue). When placed beside one another, these colors seem brighter and more vibrant.

**Cool colors:** Blue, green, purple, and mixtures of any of these three colors with one another or white or black. Cool colors are usually soothing and calming (such as colors that reflect on snow and ice.)

The following complementary combinations work beautifully:

- Blue and orange: Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna for a cool black
- Red and green: Alizarine Crimson and Phthalo Green for a black with slight hint of green
- Yellow and purple: Burnt Umber and a mix of Permanent Rose and Ultramarine Blue (which make a dark purple) for a warm black with hints of red

In addition to complementary colors, the following two combinations of blue and yellow work equally well and offer an even broader range of options:

- Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Umber for a luscious warm black
- Phthalo Blue and Burnt Umber for a slight hint of cool green

While there are many other combinations, these certainly give you a lovely range of cool and warm black hues to choose from when you paint your next masterpiece.



### ArtSpeak

**Warm colors:** The colors yellow, orange, and red, as well as mixtures of any of these three colors with white or black or with one another.

Warm colors are usually invigorating (such as the colors of fire).

## Prepare Your Palette

1. Place a small blob of Burnt Umber on your palette next to a small blob of Ultramarine Blue (Figure 1).
2. Add a small blob of Burnt Sienna next to another small blob of Ultramarine Blue.

Add this second set of two colors far enough away from the first set, so you don't accidentally use the wrong colors.

3. Add a small blob of Alizarine Crimson next to Phthalo Green as your third set of two colors.

4. Add small blobs of Permanent Rose, Ultramarine Blue, and Burnt Umber next to one another as a set of three colors.

Don't be tempted to use a pre-mixed purple or violet. It will just turn a strange shade of brown.

5. Place a larger blob of Titanium White in the center of your palette.

You won't use this white paint until you begin mixing grays in the next section.

Figure 1





### As an Aside

Most art supply stores offer a range of palettes to choose from and all work well. However, any smooth, nonporous, white surface on which you can see the paint color easily makes an ideal palette.

As a big fan of recycling, I prefer to use old chipped plates or plastic lids when they are no longer of any use in the kitchen.



### Caution!

Acrylic paint dries quickly, so don't leave your paint or brushes exposed to the air for too long.

If you must take a break, clean your brushes and cover your paint with plastic – or if your palette has a lid, close the lid to keep the moisture in.

- 6. Use a palette knife to thoroughly mix equal amounts of Permanent Rose and Ultramarine Blue to make a lovely deep purple.**

Scoop and spread your paint until the color is well-mixed.

Wipe your palette knife clean in preparation for mixing the next batch of colors.

- 7. Use a clean palette knife to mix your purple with the blob of Burnt Umber next to it (Figure 2).**

Mix the paint thoroughly until the color is even; then clean your palette knife.

Figure 2



Figure 3



- 8. Continue to mix the sets of colors laid out on your palette until all are mixed (Figure 3).**

You should now have four different versions of beautiful black tones.

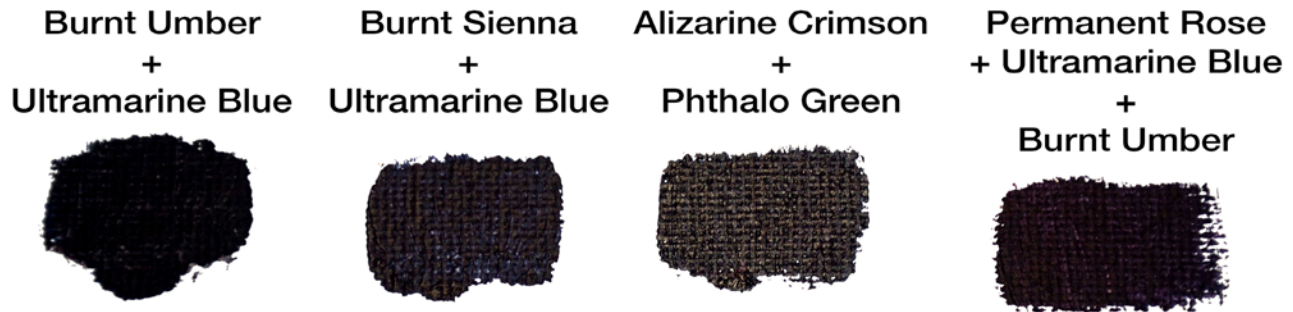
9. Use your brush to paint a swatch of each of the blacks on a sheet from your canvas pad (Figure 4).

Remember to rinse your brush well in water and wipe clean with paper towel in between painting each of the four swatches.

Notice how each of these four blacks has a hint of either brown, blue, green or purple – yet they are still black.

Blacks with a touch of color can help to make deep shadows and dark objects look more realistic and far more interesting than a flat black tone.

Figure 4



## Discover Delicious Grays

10. Use a clean palette knife to mix a little of your blob of Titanium White into each of the four black tones (Figure 5).

Remember to wipe clean your palette knife in between mixing each of the four gray tones.

Figure 5



**Tip!**

When working with acrylic paint, always keep a supply of clean water and paper towel or wipes handy to mop up excess paint from brushes and palette knives, for accidental spills, and for mishaps on your painting.

When working with oil paint, always keep clean paint thinner and a rag on hand. I prefer odorless thinner when working with oils, and always make sure the area is well ventilated. Paint is often messy and sometimes seems to have a mind of its own. Be prepared!

**As an Aside**

Mixing a blend of two colors to create the black or gray tone you want takes a little practice and trial and error to get the perfect match.

With some little experience, you'll be mixing up luscious tones in no time.

### 11. Use a clean brush to paint a swatch of gray underneath each of the corresponding black swatches on your canvas sheet (Figure 6).

Notice how each of the gray tones retain a hint of the brown, blue, green, or purple they were mixed with. Also notice how the gray tone from the mix of purple and Burnt Umber looks more lavender than gray.

To make lovely shades of lavender that are closer to gray, mix in tiny bits of Ultramarine Blue and Titanium White until the intensity matches the lavender. Then, mix a tiny bit of the light blue in with the lavender to bring the lavender more in line with a gray tone.

### 12. Label your swatches and keep them as a reference for later work.

Figure 6



The painting in Figure 7 (on the next page) is an excellent example where several mixes of rich black were used extensively to create the shadows and gray tones in the rocks.

Notice how some rocks are warm gray with hints of red or yellow, and others are cool gray with hints of blue.

Figure 7



To learn more about the artist's work, visit:

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