

ARTGROW. CREATIVE



BACK
COUNTRY
INSTRUCTIONS

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Getting Started



Backcountry Bear captures twilight in the mountains—glow in the sky, silhouettes in the trees, and a bold bear shape that's simple to paint but striking on the wall.

With easy color blocks, tap-and-swipe trees, and quick fur textures, this beginner-friendly project guides you to a dramatic result—no experience required.

Painting Title: Back Country

Skill Level: Beginner-Friendly

Approximate Time to Complete:

60-90 Minutes

Supplies Needed:



- **Canvas** – Pre-stretched, sketched and primed, size of your choice.



- **Acrylic Paints** – Choose from the following colors:

- Light Cream

- Warm Tan

- Warm Gray



- Black

- White



- Silver Metallic (optional, for stars)

- **Brushes** – A variety of sizes, including flat, round, and detail brushes.

- **Palette** – For mixing colors.

- **Water Container** – To rinse brushes.

- **Paper Towels or Rags** – For cleaning brushes and surfaces.

- **Apron or Old Shirt** – To protect clothing from paint.

- **Easel (optional)** – For comfortable painting posture.

Feel free to tailor the colors and supplies to suit your painting project!

Painting Instructions



STEP ONE

Instructions:

Use a 1" flat or wash brush to fill the sky area with light cream paint. Start at the top of the canvas and work downward in smooth, horizontal strokes. Extend the paint slightly into the edges of the mountain outlines to ensure clean edges later. Apply an even, thin layer—avoid overloading your brush.

Tips:

- Let the sky dry fully before moving on to the next color.
- A second coat will help cover tracer lines or make the cream look brighter.
- If brushstrokes feel streaky, add a drop of water to thin the paint slightly.
- Don't worry about perfection—the texture of the strokes will add interest.



STEP TWO

Instructions:

Using a medium flat or round brush, fill in the clouds, mountain bands, and ground areas with warm tan paint. Paint the bear's muzzle warm tan as well. Work around the moon carefully, leaving it light cream.

Tips:

- Use curvy brushstrokes for the clouds and more horizontal strokes for the mountain bands and ground.
- Switch to a smaller detail brush if the spaces feel tight.
- Don't worry if the first layer looks streaky—once dry, a second coat will even it out.
- Keep the muzzle edge neat so it contrasts sharply with the black later.

Painting Instructions *Continued*



STEP THREE

Instructions:

With a medium flat brush, paint the upper sky area and the distant treeline using warm gray paint. Fill the two small gray patches on the bear's back as well. At the edge where the gray meets the tan mountains, flick your brush upward to suggest distant tree points.

Tips:

- Use long horizontal strokes for the sky so it stays smooth.
- Switch to a liner/detail brush for the small gray spots on the bear.
- Don't overwork the gray—let a little unevenness suggest natural texture.
- The upward “flick” motion at the treeline makes it look like tiny trees instead of a hard line.



STEP FOUR

Instructions:

With a medium round or flat brush, paint the bear silhouette solid black. Use a liner brush to carefully outline around the ears, muzzle, and legs before filling in the larger areas. Add black shadows to the foreground ground shapes as well, sweeping the strokes diagonally for contrast. Allow this layer to dry completely before moving on.

Tips:

- Outline first with a detail brush, then fill in with a larger brush for smooth coverage.
- Work slowly around the muzzle—this edge is important for the bear's expression.
- If edges look uneven, clean them up with the surrounding colors (light cream or tan).
- Let the black layer dry fully before adding highlights later, or they will blend into gray.

Painting Instructions *Continued*



STEP FIVE

Instructions:

Paint the foreground trees using black paint. Start with a liner brush to create thin vertical trunks. Then, switch to a round brush and use a tap-and-swipe motion to build up the branches and foliage from top to bottom. Keep the shapes loose and irregular to mimic natural trees.

Tips:

- Begin with light taps at the top, then press a bit more firmly as you move downward for fuller branches.
- Leave small gaps between foliage clusters so the background colors peek through.
- “Smush” the brush at the bottom of each trunk to seat the tree naturally into the ground.
- If you’re nervous, practice the tapping motion on a paper plate or scrap paper first.

Painting Instructions *Continued*

STEP SIX

Instructions:

Once your painting is completely dry, use a palette knife to scrape a thin layer of metallic silver over the white mountains, light and dark gray mountains, the small black riverbank area, and the white cloud.

Tips:

- Use the back of the palette knife to scoop up a little paint, then wipe it on the edge of your plate—this helps control how much you apply.
- Think “scrape” rather than “paint.” This language usually clicks with people—you’re dragging a thin layer over the surface to build rocky-looking texture.
- Less is more: it’s much easier to add more later than it is to take it off.
- Follow the angle of the mountains for a more natural texture.
- Gently scrape a bit of silver across the white cloud for added shimmer and dimension—just a whisper of sparkle.



You Did It!

You've finished your night landscape painting—great work! Before you hang it up or gift it to someone special, here are a few optional finishing touches to really make it shine:

FINAL CARE & DISPLAY TIPS

- **Seal your painting** with a clear acrylic sealer (spray or brush-on) to protect it from dust, smudges, and moisture. Be sure it's completely dry before sealing.
- Want to skip framing? Try **gliding a sponge dipped in black paint** along the edges of the canvas for a crisp, finished look. It makes the artwork feel complete and polished on its own.
- If you do want to frame it, floating **frames from Amazon** are an affordable and easy way to elevate your piece. They make the painting really pop!

Now step back and admire what you've created—you brought this canvas to life!



Behind the Brush



Hey! I'm Susan,

I created ArtGrow Creative because I know what it feels like to doubt your creativity — and how powerful it is to rediscover it. You don't need to be an "artist" to make something beautiful. You just need space to try, play, and surprise yourself.

Whether this was your first time picking up a brush or one of many, I hope you felt that spark. That moment where you realize you're allowed to create just because you want to.

Thanks for painting with us. Let's keep growing — one brushstroke at a time.

*Susan
O'Sullivan
Choros*

Share Your Work

We'd love to see what you've created! Post your painting using **#ArtGrowCreative** and be sure to follow and tag us on Instagram **@artgrow.creative**.

Prefer to share by email?

Send a photo of your finished piece (or your painting in action!) to susan@heyimsusan.com — we love seeing what you've made.

Let's Do This Again!

Paint Kits: Order a paint kit that comes with everything you need — brushes, paint, and step-by-step instructions.

Private Events: Book a Private Party for birthdays, team events, or a creative night in with friends.

Pop-Up Paint Socials: Join a Pop-Up Paint Social happening in your community — no experience needed, just show up and paint!

Stay Connected: Join our mailing list to find out when the next event is happening near you!



Troubleshooting Common Acrylic Painting Challenges

Even the most confident artists run into little hiccups! Here are some common painting issues and quick fixes to help you troubleshoot with ease, but remember, mistakes are part of the process. Trust the journey, and most importantly—enjoy creating!

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- 1. Paint is streaky or see-through**
Problem: The canvas is showing through too much.
Fix: Let it dry fully and add a second thin layer. Acrylic paint works best in layers—don't try to glob on too much at once.
 - 2. Colours are muddy or blending weirdly**
Problem: You're mixing colours on the canvas that weren't meant to mix.
Fix: Let each section dry completely before painting beside or on top of it. A quick blast with a hairdryer helps speed things up!
 - 3. Brushstrokes look too harsh**
Problem: You want smoother blends or softer texture.
Fix: Use a light hand and slightly dampen your brush with clean water to help the paint glide more smoothly. Blend while the paint is still wet.
 - 4. Paint is drying too fast**
Problem: You're losing time to blend or adjust.
Fix: Work in smaller sections or lightly mist your palette with water to keep paints workable. Some people also use a wet palette.
 - 5. You can't see your sketch anymore**
Problem: You painted over your outlines and feel lost.
Fix: That's okay! You can always re-sketch with chalk or a water-soluble pencil, or freehand with a brush or marker during outlining.
 - 6. Paint looks clumpy or uneven**
Problem: Too much paint or an old brush.
Fix: Wipe off excess paint before applying. Use a thin, even layer and try a softer brush. Clumps can often be smoothed once dry with a dry brush or sanding block.
 - 7. The paint is lifting when you try to paint over it**
Problem: You're going over an area that's not quite dry.
Fix: Stop and dry the area completely before layering again.
 - 8. You're feeling stuck or frustrated**
Problem: It's not looking how you imagined.
Fix: Take a step back and remember that acrylics are super forgiving. You can always paint over something or adjust it later. Keep going—perfection isn't the goal, progress is.