

Turtle Feathers

www.turtlefeathers.net

Angelus Leather Paints

~ How to Paint ~ ~ Frequently Asked Questions ~

Angelus is the number one brand of leather paint for custom sneaker painters and all leather artisans. Turtle Feathers is the number one distributor of products for the custom leather market, and we are deluged with questions from aspiring customizers.

In this article we try to provide the best step-by-step directions possible, and also to answer the most common questions, so that even a novice with limited artistic experience will still be able to learn the basics of custom leather painting and develop the skills of a seasoned professional.

It is very important to keep in mind that the quality of the finished work will never be better than the quality of the products used. Many people start out by using cheap hobby store acrylic paints. The use of low quality products often results in finishes that will peel, crack, wear out quickly, or fade. Unlike most acrylic paints, Turtle Feathers offers products that are specifically formulated to be used on leather. In addition to being the highest quality acrylic paint available, they have been designed with a 'flexing' property that allows the paint to flex in use, and thus are especially resistant to cracking. They also have an anti-mildew property that contributes to a high quality, long lasting finish. The finish from lesser quality products may look good at first, but often will not last.

Choosing Angelus, the premium brand of acrylic paints, is the key step to successful leather customizing. However, painting is only one step in the process. The leather must also be properly prepared, as well as correctly finished. Top customizers take no shortcuts on quality. Here are the steps that the pros follow in order to make sure that their work lasts.

Step 1: Ready the project with Preparer-Deglazer

The Preparer-Deglazer is specially formulated to thoroughly clean the leather in preparation for painting. This is as important for new leather as it is for leather that has already seen use. Chemical residues remaining from the manufacturing process can interfere with the paint adhering to the leather correctly. If the leather is not scrupulously cleaned before painting, there is a significant increase in the possibility that the paint may later peel. Peeling is most often a problem with customizers who are in too great a hurry to begin painting, and choose to skip the basic key steps that help to ensure a high quality finished product. It is available in 4 ounce bottles and pints.

The Preparer-Deglazer will tend to strip any existing paints or finishes that are not very solidly adhered to the leather, and therefore should only be used on the area to be painted, and only on leather items. It should never be used on plastic, rubber, or non-leather items. If non-leather products are to be painted, such as rubber sides or soles, they should be cleaned exceptionally well with soap and water. The base for the Preparer-Deglazer is acetone, but the Angelus brand contains a special blend of ingredients, specifically designed to be used as a leather cleaner, and to be used with these paints. Some people choose to use straight, industrial grade acetone, which reacts especially harshly with leather, rather than the recommended Angelus Preparer-Deglazer. We discourage such a choice.

An option for Step 1:

If 'rubber' sides, toes, or soles are to be painted, use the Blue Foam Cleaner to thoroughly clean the area to be painted. The Preparer-Deglazer can only be used on the leather itself.

Also, we cannot ship the Preparer-Deglazer outside the United States. The Blue Foam Cleaner is the next best choice for cleaning the leather itself, and we recommend that our international customers order this item to ensure a thorough cleaning and preparation of the leather.

Another option for Step 1:

For especially smooth leather, e.g., patent leather, some customizers add an extra step before cleaning. The area to be cleaned, and then painted, is first lightly sanded with very fine sandpaper. This 'scuffing', with a very fine grit, gives the paint more 'surface' to bond to, and thus reduces the possibility of peeling.

Step 2: Paint

Again, patience is important. Inexperienced customizers, anxious to have the work done yesterday, often slather on thick coats of paint. Although the paint does have specially blended flexing properties which makes the paint resistant to cracking, the benefit is drastically reduced if applied overly thickly. Multiple thin coats of paint will produce a much higher quality finished work than another done with a single thick coat. Be sure to allow the paint to thoroughly dry between coats. DO NOT use a hair dryer or similar device to speed the drying process. This could cause damage to the paint, drastically reducing its lifespan.

The paint is much more likely to crack if applied too thickly. Top custom sneaker painters do not rush through any step of the process. The project is not worth doing if it is not worth doing well. Be sure to thoroughly stir the paint before each use. It is sometimes insufficient to merely shake the bottle. The paint should be very well mixed before use. Turtle Feathers stocks all 62 colors in 1 ounce bottles, four ounce bottles, and pints. None of our competitors offer anything even close to approaching this selection. Black, White, and Neutral are also stocked in quarts. Additionally, we can special order any color in quarts and gallons.

We also carry the complete line of Angelus Neons, in all twelve colors, in 1 ounce and 4 ounce bottles.

The standard paints dry with just a bit of gloss in the finish. The Neons dry to a flat matte finish.

An option for Step 2:

Due to the many requests that we received from our customers, Turtle Feathers, together with Angelus Leather Products, worked to develop the Duller. This product is mixed with the paint, and actually removes gloss from the paint. Some customizers want little or no gloss at all in the final product, desiring a flat matte finish, and using the Duller achieves this effect. The paint naturally has some gloss in the finish, and the Duller, which comes with an Eye Dropper, is added in varying doses in order to fully customize a matte finish. (This item is available in a 4 ounce size only.)

The Eye Dropper that comes with the Duller holds 1.5ml. Typically, between 1.5ml and 4.5ml of Duller are added to one ounce of paint. This ratio is a guideline, and is completely customizable. Just test out various combinations on some scrap material, and blend the 'perfect' Duller/Paint recipe for your needs. It isn't necessary to add Duller to a whole bottle of paint. Turtle Feathers also carries top quality 1 1/4 ounce Wide Mouth Jars for use in custom mixing and blending.

Another option for step 2:

Turtle Feathers offers Metallic Dusts as an additive to the Neutral paint. (They are not 'officially' recommended for use with other colors.) The Metallic Dusts are mixed with the Neutral paint to give a metallic 'glimmer' of 'shimmer' to the finish, and are available in twelve colors.

Step 3: Seal and protect with Acrylic Finisher (Matte, Satin, Gloss, or High Gloss)

After allowing the final coat of paint to cure overnight, the final step toward a successful project is to use the Acrylic Finisher, which is available in several blends. The Acrylic Finisher is available in Matte, Satin, Gloss, and High Gloss. In addition to protecting the paint from scuffing, and the usual hazards of wear and tear, this step allows one more opportunity to control the shine of the final finish. If the Duller has been used, the Matte Finisher should be selected, so as not to add gloss back to the work. The Satin, Gloss, and High Gloss finishers, in that order, each have a bit more gloss than the other. The Acrylic Finishers come in 4 ounce bottles, pints, and quarts. This product adds a flexible, non-cracking water resistant finish coat over the paint. This is a key step to reduce the impact of scuffing, and everyday wear and tear. Typically, between two and four coats of the Acrylic Finisher are used.

Frequently Asked Questions

Step 1, Step 2, and Step 3 are easy enough, but of course questions still remain. Here are the most commonly asked questions that we get here at Turtle Feathers:

What kinds of brushes are best? What do you recommend?

Professional customizers use professional equipment, and we stock three brush sets which have been specially selected to be used for use with our paints. These brush sets are the officially recommended brushes of Turtle Feathers. Of course, you can use any brush that you like, and apply the paint with any technique that suits your style. The 1 ounce paints come with a 'brush cap'. It's all about results. If the finished product looks good, then it doesn't matter what was used to get the results. However, most customizers will be happiest with the final results of their work after having used good quality brushes.

How much paint do I need to do a pair of shoes?

If you are using a single color, a 4 ounce bottle is best. If using several colors, then 1 ounce bottles will be fine. 4 ounce bottles of Preparer-Deglazer and Acrylic Finisher (The smallest sizes available.) will be plenty. Of course, if several pairs of shoes are to be customized, the 4 ounce paints or pints will be a better value, and pint sizes of Preparer-Deglazer and Acrylic Finisher should be considered.

Can I paint on suede?

No and yes. These paints are intended to be used on smooth leathers, so we can't tell our customers that it is okay to use them on suede. However, we know that some of our customers do paint on suede, and are happy with the results. Because it defeats the purpose of having the suede texture, it is not typical to paint suede. We do carry a good selection of Angelus Suede Dyes.

How do I clean up this mess?

Soap and water is ideal for cleaning up after using any of these products. There is no need for any chemical based cleaners or solvents.

62 colors just aren't enough. I want my own custom colors.

This is not a problem. These paints can be custom blended into an infinite variety of colors. Two or more colors can also be mixed together, creating entirely new custom colors. Colors that are just a bit too dark can be lightened shade by shade, by adding a little of the color "Neutral".

What do I do my mixing in? How do I store my paint?

We have 1 1/4 ounce, wide mouth glass jars available for anyone interested in custom blending their own paint colors. These are a must have item for anyone mixing their own colors. We also have Eye Droppers available, which make adding small, precise amounts very easy.

Can I do my sneaker customizing with an airbrush?

Sure. Most customizers use brushes, but plenty of artists use an airbrush. In order to be sure that the paint flows freely, some airbrush artists thin the colors down a bit with the Acrylic Finisher.

Can I get metallic colors?

In the metallics, we have Antique Gold, Bronze, Copper, Pewter, and Silver.

How long until I get my stuff?

We ship same day, Monday through Saturday. We are always 98%+ in stock on all items. There will rarely be a delay to any order. Over 95% of all orders are shipped via USPS Priority Mail, and will typically take three to four days to arrive. It will be sometimes be a better deal to ship via UPS, because of package weight or value. This will add a day or two more to delivery time.

Testing ?

We always recommend testing out custom paint blends and special techniques on scrap leather, and old shoes first, becoming confident in the results that can be expected. Becoming proficient through practice is the key to preparing for complex work on high dollar commissioned work.