

The Keys To Improve Your Painting

Discover the keys to improving your painting starting today!

By Rod Moore

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The Keys To Improving Your Painting

Welcome and congratulations on getting your copy of this book "The Keys To Improving Your Painting".

I am excited that you have joined us as we take a look at what you need to do, and where you need to apply your focus, in order to improve your painting.

Over the last decade I have had the good fortune to teach more than 75,000 students via our online courses at the Learn To Paint Academy around the world, and hundreds in workshops around the country.

As a result of this unique position I have gained insight into why some artists really develop their art careers and why others remain stuck. Many of my students have gone from absolute beginner to becoming very good artists who regularly sell their work, win prizes in art competitions, or have gone on to start their own art schools.

Yet many others struggle and remain stuck making little to no progress.



"Noosa Hinterland Trails"

Rod Moore

In observing the different results that our artists have achieved I have noticed that there are specific reasons why. There are definite keys to improving your painting that those who achieve better results and produce better paintings follow.

Those who make little progress tend to ignore these keys.

In this book I want to highlight these keys for you so that you have a level of awareness of what you need to do.

If you are serious about really developing your painting skills to a high level then you will want to pay close attention to the ideas presented here.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

Right now we are in a unique moment in history.

It is my belief that it is the greatest time in history for artists. There has never been more opportunity for artists than there is right now.

The Internet has made it possible for you and I to not only learn and develop our skills as artists, but to reach out around the world and attract an audience of people interested in us and our art.

For those of you interested in selling your art and maybe developing a regular income as a working artist, it gets even better. Today more art is sold online through a myriad of online galleries, market places, and social media, than is being sold in physical bricks and mortar galleries.

This represents opportunity for those with any level of ambition.

Equally though there are more artists than ever before who are also keen to take advantage of this opportunity.

Regardless, I still maintain that it is the greatest time in history for artists who are willing to learn and develop their skills, work hard, and remain persistent.

If you have the desire to develop yourself as an artist then the first steps for you to focus on is in this book.

Before we really dig into it though, it's important that you understand a little about me and why you should listen to what I have to say.

My Journey As An Artist

My journey as an artist started in 2006.

At that point I had never picked up a brush before. I was working in a little office in inner city Melbourne as a consultant.

One morning I broke my coffee mug which was an absolute disaster as nothing happened without coffee.

Downstairs from my office was a two dollar shop. I went inside and found a coffee mug that would hold a suitable volume, and turned around to walk up to the counter to pay.

As I turned around I found myself in the art supplies section.

I don't know if you have ever felt this ... but I had an overwhelming rush of excitement when I saw all those colorful tubes of paint, brushes and canvases. My heart rate increased slightly with excitement.

Keep in mind that I had never painted before and I was 38 at the time.

As I looked at all the art supplies this voice in my head said "Buy Everything!"

So I did. I literally bought one of everything. I went home that day with 48 different colours, a fistfull of brushes and a pile of canvases. I also had no clue on how to use any of it.

Excited to do my first masterpiece I set up in the backyard that weekend and produced my first painting.

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The above is my very first painting.

After finishing this little 8" x 10" painting I did what many hopeful artists do when they first have a go.

I erroneously determined I must not have any natural talent for art.

So I promptly packed all the supplies into a box and the box went under the bed.

For the next few years I fluffed around with watercolour and acrylics and became more and more frustrated as time went on. I had the desire and calling to create beautiful paintings. I could see them in my head but I couldn't translate that onto the canvas.

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It wasn't until November 2010 that I did my first oil painting that I decided I was going to commit to learning and developing my skills, and become a full time professional artist.

In the decade that followed from November 2010 to November 2020 I went from complete beginner to full time professional artist and art teacher with a multiple six figure art business.

It certainly wasn't easy but it was worthwhile. There were many frustrations and challenges along the way. If I had known the information in this book back at the start it would have fast tracked my progress and saved me a lot of heartache.

Today I am a full time professional contemporary impressionist artist in my hometown of Noosa. My paintings have been sold to collectors around the world. The workshops that I run from my studio, and around Australia, regularly sell out, and we have students in the Learn To Paint Academy from right around the world.

I don't tell you this to brag. That's not my intention. I tell you this to give you hope.

If you are struggling with improving your painting and you have the desire to get better, then right now you are most likely frustrated. Nothing you do seems to work and you just feel stuck in the one place making little to no progress.

I get it ... I have been there and know what it feels like to think you don't have the talent for it even though you have the desire to want to produce great looking paintings.



When you are feeling stuck and frustrated with your progress it is easy to make the assumption that I did after my first attempt.

That you must not have any natural talent, right?

Natural Talent - Does it Exist?

Does natural talent even exist though? Or is it a myth?

I have struggled with these questions over the last decade of my art journey.

During that time I have exhibited zero evidence of having any level of natural talent yet here I am a full time professional artist.

I am certain that I wasn't blessed with any amount of natural talent.

That's not to say that natural talent does not exist.

I believe that some people are born with a natural talent for art and other creative endeavours. There is no doubt about that.

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However I think it is so rare that it's not even worth considering. And just having natural talent is no guarantee of success as an artist. I know some terrific artists who could be world class who are working in factories.

The gift of natural talent is so rare it is not worth worrying about whether you have it or not.

It is more than possible to become a very good artist starting with no identifiable natural talent as I have done.



Consider how the great masters of yesteryear learnt to paint.

In the 1700's and 1800's in Europe if you wanted to learn to become a great artist you needed to work for it.

You would enroll in an Atelier to study under a master artist. The investment to do so was often quite expensive for these hopeful artists.

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You would attend the Atelier every day and for the first year all you would focus on would be drawing skills. Drawing from life every day.

Over time you would progress to painting with oils.

After a period of about four years of intense study, you would paint your master a final piece of work and they would assess if you are ready to graduate or not. A masterpiece was your final piece of work kept by the master you studied under that signalled your readiness to tackle the art world.

The typical artist back then studied for a minimum of four years almost daily developing a set of skills, and practising those skills.

In the modern world today we want instant results.

We expect everything to come to us easily.

However developing a high level of artistic skills requires a level of focused study, and regular practise, sustained over a period of time.

Yes natural talent does exist for a few fortunate folks but it is so rare that it's not worth considering if you have it or not. Even if you did have it, that's no assurance of success as an artist.

The better path and the one used by the great masters of yesteryear is to work through the four stages of learning.

The Four Stages Of Learning Anything

There are four stages of learning anything.

When you are familiar with them it will help you get a clear understanding of where you are on your journey and how to keep moving forward.

These four stages apply to everything ... learning to paint, playing golf, programming computers, driving a car, cooking great vegan meals and so on.

We all move through these four stages:

1/ Unconscious Incompetent

When we first try to learn something new we are unconsciously incompetent.

What this means is we know nothing about what needs to happen to become a great painter, but even worse, we don't know what we don't know.

A lot of the keys to becoming a good painter we have never even heard of when we are starting out. Ideas like Notan studies, compressed values, high key painting, lost edges mean nothing to us and likely we have never even heard of them let alone understand them.

We all start here ... knowing nothing and not even being aware of what we don't know.

2/ Consciously Incompetent

This stage usually is when we first start painting.

We perhaps watch some YouTube videos, do an online course, read a book etc. So we buy some art supplies and have a go.

And typically we start to realize how little we know and how lacking our skills are. We become conscious of the fact we are incompetent with the basic skills.

This is the frustration period. This is when so many assume they don't have talent for painting and quit.

Don't do that.

Push on.

In this stage we start to develop some conscious awareness of different fundamentals like colour mixing etc but we are still incompetent in our application of this knowledge.

3/ Consciously Competent

In this stage we have gained some knowledge through study, and we have some skills in applying that knowledge.

We are consciously aware of the fundamentals and probably have a good degree of knowledge stored away about them, and we are starting to get good at applying it.

At this stage we are producing reasonable quality paintings. Often we see artists start to sell a few pieces, enter the local art show and so on when they reach this stage.

Note – Interestingly I believe this third stage is the longest stage and it's easy to get stuck here.

We have a high level of skill and competency in applying the fundamentals ... but we are often stuck in our conscious minds and thoughts.

4/ Unconscious Competence

This is the level of mastery.

In this stage you no longer need to think when you paint.

If you need to mix an earthy warm brown tone for rocks in sunlight you don't need to consciously think through how to do this.

It becomes automatic.

Your skills in practical application have shifted to the unconscious mind. As a result you free yourself up and this opens a doorway to a higher level of artistry to enter.

When you stop thinking about what you are doing you step into a state of flow which enables you to tap into a higher level of creativity that is from a different source.

When you reach this fourth stage you are a true master of painting. People will comment how you make it look so easy, and how lucky you are to have natural talent for painting.

And while it may be easy at this last stage the journey to get there certainly is not. It takes time and dedication to arrive at stage four if that is your goal.

It is my belief that practically anyone can reach this fourth stage given sufficient focus, dedication, commitment and the passage of time.

Reaching this level though becomes more about mindset than anything else.

A good initial goal to aim for is to move through stages one and two to reach stage three.

In stage three you are producing good quality work and have become a competent artist.

Once we have an awareness of these four stages of learning the obvious question becomes *"How do we move through these four stages in the most efficient manner?"*

The answer is to focus on the ...

The 3 Keys To Learning

Human beings tend to overcomplicate everything.

I have found the better approach is to simplify things right down to the basics.

The more you identify the few things that make the most difference, and focus your time and energy on them, the faster you will reach your goals.

That is what I did with my efforts to learn to paint.

I stripped away everything that wasn't essential and focused on a few things. What I was left with was these three keys which if you follow them will help you achieve the level of painting you desire.

The three keys are:

Key 1 - Mastering the Basics (Fundamentals)

My first mentor Jim Rohn used to say *"there are usually about a half dozen things that account for eighty percent of the results you achieve!"*

What he meant was that in any endeavour in life there are usually a handful of things you need to focus on that make the most difference in the results you produce.

We refer to these as the basics ... or the fundamentals.

If you want to build a successful business then the basics you need to focus on might be Sales, Marketing, Customer Service, Finance, Admin and Human Resources.

A business needs to be good in all of these areas in order to achieve success.

If you want good health then the basics might be Nutrition, Exercise, Quality Sleep, Sunshine, Relaxation, Piece of Mind for example.

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Achieving good health requires you to apply focus in each of these areas.

Difficult to be truly healthy if you are strong in all of these areas except for Piece of Mind when you are stressed all of the time.

Learning to paint, and indeed improving your painting, also requires you to focus on mastering a set of basics. What I refer to as the Fundamentals of Good Painting!

It is almost impossible (in my opinion) to produce quality paintings without focusing on, studying, and applying these fundamentals of good painting. As you develop your understanding of these fundamentals your paintings will move from looking amateurish to having a more finished professional quality.

Attempting to get good at painting without some knowledge of these fundamentals will only slow your progress down and keep you stuck in the second stage of learning, which is where all of the frustration is.

The best decision I ever made in my pursuit of developing a career as an artist was to spend time mastering these fundamentals.



"Exploring The Coast"

So what are the fundamentals of good painting that you want to spend time mastering?

In no particular order they are:

- Composition & Design
- Values
- Colour & Colour Mixing
- Brush Work & Mark Making
- Edges
- Drawing

Naturally there are more things to learn to become a great artist.

However as my mentor Jim Rohn said, about a half dozen things will make up to eighty percent of the difference in your results.

By studying and focusing on these fundamentals you will greatly improve your painting.

At the **Learn To Paint Academy** we have a program called the "**Fundamentals Program**" which is an indepth look at each of these areas. Those students who invest the time in this program almost always improve their painting.

Key 2 - Practise, Practise, Practise

There is no substitute for painting a lot in order to improve.

Few of us have the ability to pick up a brush for the first time and feel instantly competent in the skills of painting.

You can read every book on golf and think you understand the game. But the first time you pick up a club and start swinging it at that little white ball ... well you soon realise that knowledge on its own is not enough. Now you have to practise what you have learned.

It takes time and practise, practise, practise. Practising the fundamentals.

Note - While practise is important it is more important to practise with the right knowledge. You gain the knowledge you need through studying the fundamentals from key one.



"Afternoon Light, Kenilworth"

Rod Moore

There is no substitute for acquiring brush miles.

Yes it is important to acquire knowledge on the fundamentals, which we will talk more about soon, but that alone won't help.

You need to take what you learn and put it into practise.

The more you paint the better you will get.

The more you paint, armed with the right knowledge of the fundamentals, the faster you will progress.

One of my mentors Kevin McPherson has said that if you want to become a professional artist then do 1,000 paintings in three years. That is nearly one painting a day for three years.

Even professional concert pianists with decades of experience will still play scales for several hours a day. Practising and drilling the basics of her craft until they become second nature.

One of the ways we assist our students at the Learn To Paint Academy is to provide them with lots of painting projects to try. At last count there were over 150 or more painting projects of varying degrees of difficulty.

Key 3 - Community

One of the big keys we have found that can really help you improve your painting is being involved with the right community.

When you surround yourself with other art minded friends you feel more encouraged and inspired. Plus you get the added advantage of being able to get feedback from the community on your paintings and progress.

When the Covid pandemic really started to take effect in March 2020 we were concerned about our students. So we decided to do a live stream a day for the month of April.

Every single day during April 2020 we did a complete painting via live stream. And hundreds of our students joined in with many of them painting along live.

The feedback from that experience taught us the importance of being involved with a community of other artists who are on a similar path that you are on, and are learning from the same source that you are.

Since then we have placed a lot more focus on developing a community of our students in the Learn To Paint Academy.

Our students really love the opportunity to spend time with like minded people, all learning from the same courses and projects.



"Bend In The Oxley River"

By Rod Moore

As a side note - When you are learning to paint it is advisable to find one (maybe two) mentors to learn from at any one point in time.

When you find the right person to learn to paint from, spend all your time focused on what they teach you. Soak it all in. Learn all the lessons you can from them and really focus on what they are teaching you.

What many of us do is jump from one teacher to the next. Each teacher has their own style and approach to painting. Jumping from one teacher to the next can actually slow your progress down as you are not hearing a consistent message.

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We learn through repetition. You need to hear the same message a number of times to really learn the lesson being taught. If you are too quick to jump off to another teacher then you will miss the depth of the lesson.

In my ten year journey learning to paint and becoming a professional artist there have really only been three artists that I have learnt from. Sure I have been to lots of different workshops, watched tons of DVD's and YouTube videos and so on.

But there have only really been three artists that I have not only watched, but learned from to the point where it impacted my own painting skills significantly.

And these are the three artists that when I spent time learning from them I felt excited to pick up a brush and start painting. That's the sign of a really good teacher. They inspire you to want to have a go and do the next painting.

So those are the three keys to learning to paint:

1/ Mastering the Basics (Fundamentals)

2/ Practice, Practice, Practice

3/ Community & The Right Mentor

If you can organise yourself where you have access to the right information to teach you the fundamentals of good painting, then practice what you learn consistently, and be involved with a great community of other artists then there is no doubt in my mind you can improve as an artist.

I have seen it happen so many times with our students.

Many join the Learn To Paint Academy as absolute beginners and wind up as very good artists. We have had lots of students who have gone on to enter art shows and win prizes, sell their paintings, and start their own art teaching businesses.

Of these three keys it all starts with key one ...

Mastering The Basics (Fundamentals)

As we discussed earlier, there are usually about a half dozen things that account for 80% of the difference in results.

This is true for most things we want to learn in life.

Once we identify what these half dozen things are (the basics) then our job is to focus on learning them.

As mentioned, in painting the basics we need to know are:

1/ Composition & Design

Having had more than 75,000 students through our online courses and hundreds in workshops I have been able to observe where most beginners struggle.

The first and most obvious place is with basic composition and design of the painting.



Composition and design is arguably the most important aspect of the success or failure of a painting. That's why we have dedicated a complete course on Composition & Design in the Learn To Paint Academy.

If you start out with a poorly composed painting then no amount of adding details, colours etc later on will help. Once the basic design of the painting is off track then it is more likely than not that the painting will not turn out the way you anticipated.

A good understanding of composition and design however will put you on the right path towards more successful paintings, more consistently.

The good news is composition can be easily learned.

There are a number of compositional structures we can use that will automatically improve the quality of our painting.

Some of these include:

- Rule of thirds
- Strong focal point
- L Shape design
- S shape design
- One dominant shape
- High horizon line
- Low horizon line

There are a lot more that we go through in the Composition & Design course but you get the idea.

What you want to do is find out all of the composition structures you could use, learn them, and then look for opportunities to improve your painting by using them.

Here is one way to think about composition and design which we utilise in the Moore Method of Painting.

It is to look for the big shapes in the scene. Usually there are about a half dozen big shapes in any scene that you want to paint. If you can train your eye to clearly see these big shapes, and then learn to place them accurately on your painting surface then you will take a big step forward.

I am constantly reminding our many students that they need to put the big shapes in the right place, the right size and the right shape on their painting surface.

Many of our students make quick progress just from using better composition and starting with the big shapes.

Once you have your composition sorted out the next fundamental that you need to understand and apply is Values:

2/ Values

One of the things we need to keep in mind as painters, especially if we are trying to paint any level of realism, is that we have to use illusion to end with a successful painting.

What do I mean by that?

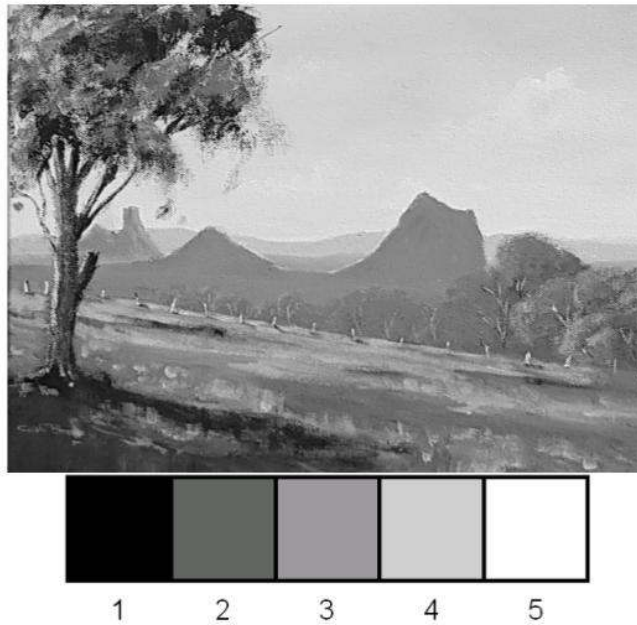
Think about this ... we live in a three dimensional world. All of the scenes we are trying to paint are three dimensional. That is they have height, width and depth to them.

But what about our painting surface?

Our painting surface only has two dimensions being height and width.

So how do we create a sense of depth, which is necessary for a realistic looking painting?

Well there are many ways however Values is definitely a key to this.



So what are Values in a painting?

Values are the underlying pattern of darks and lights within a painting.

Often when we look at great paintings we do not notice the values because they are usually in colour. And it can be difficult when we are starting out to see the value of colour until you have been trained on how to do so.

But if we convert everything to black and white then the values become clear as in the above example.

There is a lot to learn about Values. When you start to learn and apply this knowledge your paintings will take a more professional look to them with a greater sense of depth and realism.

We cover everything in our Values course but let me give you one key principle you can use right now.

To create depth in a landscape or seascape painting you generally will find darker values in the foreground, and lighter values in the distance.

Make a note of that and apply it in your next painting.

If you look at the example picture above at the foreground tree you will notice that it has the darkest darks in the picture. The same tree further back in the distance will not be as dark. It will start to lighten off.

This is easily observed in nature once you become aware of it. The more you train to see values in nature the more you will see the world as one big painting opportunity.

Next up in the fundamentals of good painting is Colour.

3/ Colour

There is an old saying that Values do all of the work and Colour takes all of the credit.

This is so true. Colour is exciting and gets our attention. In fact I think colour is what attracts a lot of people to want to paint.

Like anything in painting though there is a set of principles to learn with colour. Once you learn them and apply them you can greatly improve your painting.

A big mistake I see many beginners make, and I have made it myself, is to try and bypass studying colour and colour mixing by buying more tubes of paint.

Paint manufacturers come up with a dizzying array of beautiful colours and it is tempting to buy them all ... and I have in the past. The problem comes when we start to use thirty five colours on our palette and can not understand why we are mixing muddy colours.

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From having worked with tens of thousands of students I have noted that we all naturally tend to overcomplicate things. We have a more is better mentality, especially when it comes to colour, and we keep adding more colours to solve our challenges we have with colour.

The better approach is to go back to basics and study colour and colour mixing.

And develop a level of mastery around it.



When it comes to colour there are three primary colours:

1/ Blue

2/ Red

3/ Yellow

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In theory to learn about colour and how to mix it we should start with just these three colours and white. In fact in many of the courses in the Learn To Paint Academy that is exactly what we do.

From these three primary colours we can create three secondary colours which are:

1/ Orange

2/ Purple

3/ Green

These three secondary colours are derived by mixing two of the primary colours that are next to each other on the colour wheel.

If you look at the colour wheel above you will see the yellow and red (both primary colours) are next to each other on the colour wheel. So when mixed they will produce an orange.

Knowing this we can identify the formula for mixing these secondary colours:

1/ Orange = Yellow + Red

2/ Purple = Blue + Red

3/ Green = Yellow + Blue

Notice in each of these formulas we are using two of the primaries to arrive at the secondary colour.

Once we know how to mix secondary colours we can then move on to learning to mix the six tertiary colours, and complimentary colours. And of course there is lots more to learn beyond this about colour and colour mixing.

Chances are good if you have been painting for any length of time you will have heard all of this before. But have you really taken the time to study colour mixing and really master it?

There is of course a lot more to study and learn about colour. You know when you have started to really understand colour and master it when you find yourself mixing up a whole range of different colours without having to think about it.

It just starts to happen automatically which is what you want to aim for.

The next fundamental you will want to master is:

4/ Brushes & Brushwork

Brushes are the tools we use to create our masterpieces.

Brushwork is how we apply paint to the surface, and is the marks we leave on the surface that uniquely identify us as the artist. Every artist makes different brush marks and for many great artists these become almost part of their signature style or voice.

Learning about the different types of brushes and how to use them for different effects is obviously an important part of the artist's journey.

The way you hold the brush for instance will alter the way paint is applied to the painting surface.

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Personally I like looser, less refined paintings so I tend to hold the brush at the very end so that it has more freedom and movement. The result is less precise application of the paint on the surface.



The above example taken from one of my landscape paintings shows some of the effects you can achieve with brushes and brushwork.

As the brush, and how you use it, is so important to the end result of your painting we recommend studying brushes and brushwork. Over time you will develop your own unique style which leaves marks on the surface that uniquely identify you.

In the Learn To Paint Academy we have a complete course dedicated to brushes and brushwork for you to study.

These are the main fundamentals of good painting I would recommend you start with.

Make it part of your practise to study them.

But don't just study them to gain an intellectual understanding of these fundamentals. You want to study them and apply them in your painting so that you see an improvement in the results you produce.

There are other fundamentals of good painting to study as well which are edges, drawing, and observational skills.

One consideration is to not try and master all of these fundamentals at the same time. It can be too overwhelming and can take years to really master these areas.

Instead we recommend focusing on...

The One Thing

Rather than try and master all of the fundamentals of good painting at the same time I suggest you pick the one thing that will make the most difference right now in your painting.

There is often one area of your painting that if you were to improve it, would have the biggest impact on the quality of the results you produce.

Looking at the list of the fundamentals:

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- Composition & Design
- Values
- Colour & Colour Mixing
- Brushes & Brushwork
- Edges
- Drawing
- Observational Skills

Ask yourself "What is the one thing from the list of fundamentals that I should focus on right now that will give me the most improvement in my painting?"

Then when you have identified the one thing, go to work on improving it.

Study all you can on the one thing you have identified, apply it in your painting, and start to make improvements in that area.

Once you can see improvements in that area of your painting, then ask the question again. Then go to work on that, and so on.

By following this one thing approach you don't overwhelm yourself with trying to learn everything about painting all at once (which would be impossible), rather, you break it down into manageable chunks.

From working with tens of thousands of students through our online courses and hundreds through our workshops, I suggest that for most students the one thing will most likely be Composition & Design and / or Values.

Most beginners think their biggest problem is colour and colour mixing, and how to do details.

Naturally these are important areas to work on but typically aren't what will give you the most improvement in the success or failures of your paintings.

Now let's talk about the one thing that will hold you back from moving forward and realising your dreams of being an artist.

Reducing Overwhelm and Frustration

The biggest roadblock to you making progress with your paintings is going to be overwhelm and frustration.

Lots of people desire to become good artists and paint great pictures.

And many try.

But way too many fall short of realising their goals with painting because at some point they become either overwhelmed with the whole process of learning, or they become frustrated when they fail to produce the results they seek.

It's at this point that many just give up.

They assume, as we discussed earlier, that they must not have the talent for painting.

This is a make or break moment for most of us.

What I want to assure you is that pretty much every great artist at some point arrived at a point where they either felt completely overwhelmed with trying to learn all they needed to know about painting, or they just became frustrated at their perceived lack of progress.

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I have been there. After my first painting I concluded I must not have the talent to be an artist. All of the art supplies I had purchased to create my masterpiece were promptly packed in a box and put under the bed.

Thank goodness I decided to have another go.

And at numerous stages along my ten year journey I have arrived at points of total frustration.

In every case I realised that I was overcomplicating things.

Too many colours that I was trying to mix. Too many brushes, tools, mediums and other options.

Through observing students of the Learn To Paint Academy I have seen this over and over again.

We naturally want to overcomplicate the process of learning to paint.

The key then to moving past overwhelm and frustration with your painting is to simplify everything.

Go back to basics and master the basics first before adding layers of complexity.

Once I realised this I started to remove everything out of my painting process that was not 100% necessary.

I removed most of the paints on my palette and really learned how to mix the three primary colours to best effect.

Brushes that I thought were essential for different effects were put aside and I ended up with just a couple of brushes. This made me really study how to use them to create a variety of marks instead of reaching for another brush, and another and so on.

The way I approached painting was to stop thinking about all the details, and to instead think about big shapes. Once I got good at identifying the handful of big shapes that had the most impact on the composition, and focused on those everything became easier.

Simplification is essential to you making progress.

This led to the development of..

The Moore Method of Painting

Today at the Learn To Paint Academy the way we teach students follows a similar process of simplification.

The **Moore Method of Painting** is all about simplifying down to:

3 Steps

3 Colours

3 Brushes

Learning to paint following three main steps, using just three colours and three brushes reduces all of the complexity in the painting process.

The result is less overwhelm and frustration.

In fact many of our students find that they end up producing much better quality of paintings. Paintings that they are really happy with.

With this comes confidence and excitement to try again.

Which of course gives them greater momentum moving forward.

Let us have a look at an example of a painting done using the Moore Method of Painting and typical painting process we would use.

1770 Beach Painting Demonstration

This painting is of a famous beach in Australia known as 1770.

The photo's for this demonstration were taken during a live three day workshop in my Noosa studio. This was the first painting we did during the workshop.

In this step by step painting demonstration I will walk you through the process of painting this scene of 1770 Beach using the Moore Method of Painting.



The photo itself is a great little seascape scene. It's easy enough for beginner to intermediate artists to have a go at. It's simple in terms of the main shapes in it, but still has enough interesting points to make it a fun painting project to try.

First of let's look at the materials used starting with colours:

- French Ultramarine Blue
- Alizarin Crimson
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White

I used water mixable oils and as you can see worked with a simple palette.

Note – You can follow the same process with Acrylics, traditional oils, and Gouache for this project.

The painting surface used was a MDF board of 10 x 16" and prepared with two coats of Gesso.

For brushes I used a couple of Flat Brushes and a Palette Knife.

The Moore Method of Painting

Before we get started let me briefly tell you about the Moore Method of Painting.

The **Moore Method of Painting** is the primary method we teach at the Learn To Paint Academy.

Our approach is all about simplifying things right down into their most basic elements. From experience I have found too many beginner to intermediate artists overcomplicate things too much and this is where they come unstuck.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

Take colour mixing as an example. It is a fundamental skill of good painting knowing how to mix the right colours effectively. Most beginners however have no real idea on how to mix secondary or tertiary colours from the basic primary colours. Instead they go and buy lots of colours from the art supply store.

The problem is when you start to mix these already mixed colours you quickly wind up with mud.

So the Moore Method of Painting is all about simplifying down. Our motto is:

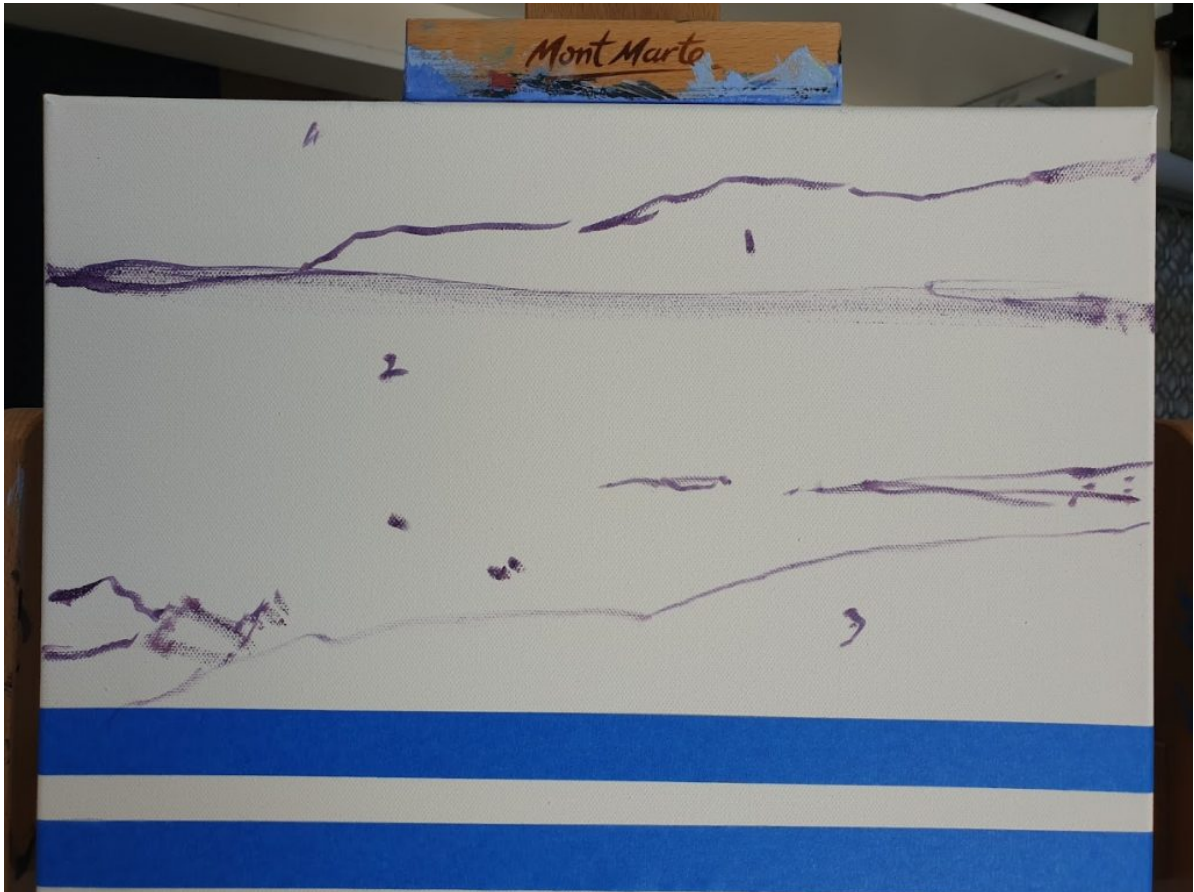
- 3 Steps
- 3 Colours
- 3 Brushes

This approach of simplifying things right down to the basics, and learning the fundamentals of good painting, has proven to be very successful for so many of our students. To date more than 75,000 students online have learnt to paint with the Moore Method of Painting and hundreds in one day workshops.

Let us now look at the first step in the Moore Method of Painting:

Step 1 - Drawing The Big Shapes

Our starting point is always to identify and then draw in loosely the big shapes:



As you can see in the photo above I have mapped in the big shapes.

There are four main big shapes in the photo reference. They are the sky, the headland, the water, and the sand. You could argue that the rocks are five and six. At most then we have six big shapes.

At this stage we are completely ignoring the details like the boats.

I use a loose mix of Ultramarine Blue & Alizarin Crimson for the drawing and a small flat brush.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

Don't worry too much about getting a super tight and detailed drawing. We just want to loosely place our big shapes on our painting surface to ensure we have a solid composition.

Now on to step two of the Moore Method of Painting:

Step 2 - Blocking In Big Shapes

This step is all about setting up our values patterns so we can achieve a sense of depth in our painting.



This step is all about setting up the Values in the painting. We work from our darkest darks to our lights blocking them in.

Values are what I would consider an absolute fundamental of good painting. For a deeper understanding of values check out the [Fundamentals Program](#)

Our rocks are our darkest values. We mix up our dark with Ultramarine Blue, Alizarin Crimson and a little Yellow Ochre.



Next we block in the headland shadow tone as you can see above.

The key here is to start to use the principles of Aerial Perspective to create a sense of depth and atmosphere.

So we use the dark from the rocks and we lighten the value (by adding some Titanium White) and cool its temperature down

The next darkest element is the darks in the sand:



As you can see above the sand is blocked in with a darkish orange tone.

One of the key principles of Aerial Perspective is understanding how to use colour temperature. Here is a principle to always keep in mind ... Warm colours come forward and Cool colours go back. In terms of creating depth this knowledge is invaluable. Here we have the warm sand tone, and the cool headland tone, which will add depth automatically.

Let's now work on the Sky:



As you can see above I have added in some shadow tones for the clouds, and then worked around these with some Ultramarine Blue which I greyed back a bit, and mixed it with Titanium White.

The last stage of our block in is to get the water in:



The water is a simple combination of Ultramarine Blue + Titanium White.

As the water gets closer to the foreshore I am adding into it a little of the Cadmium Yellow Light.

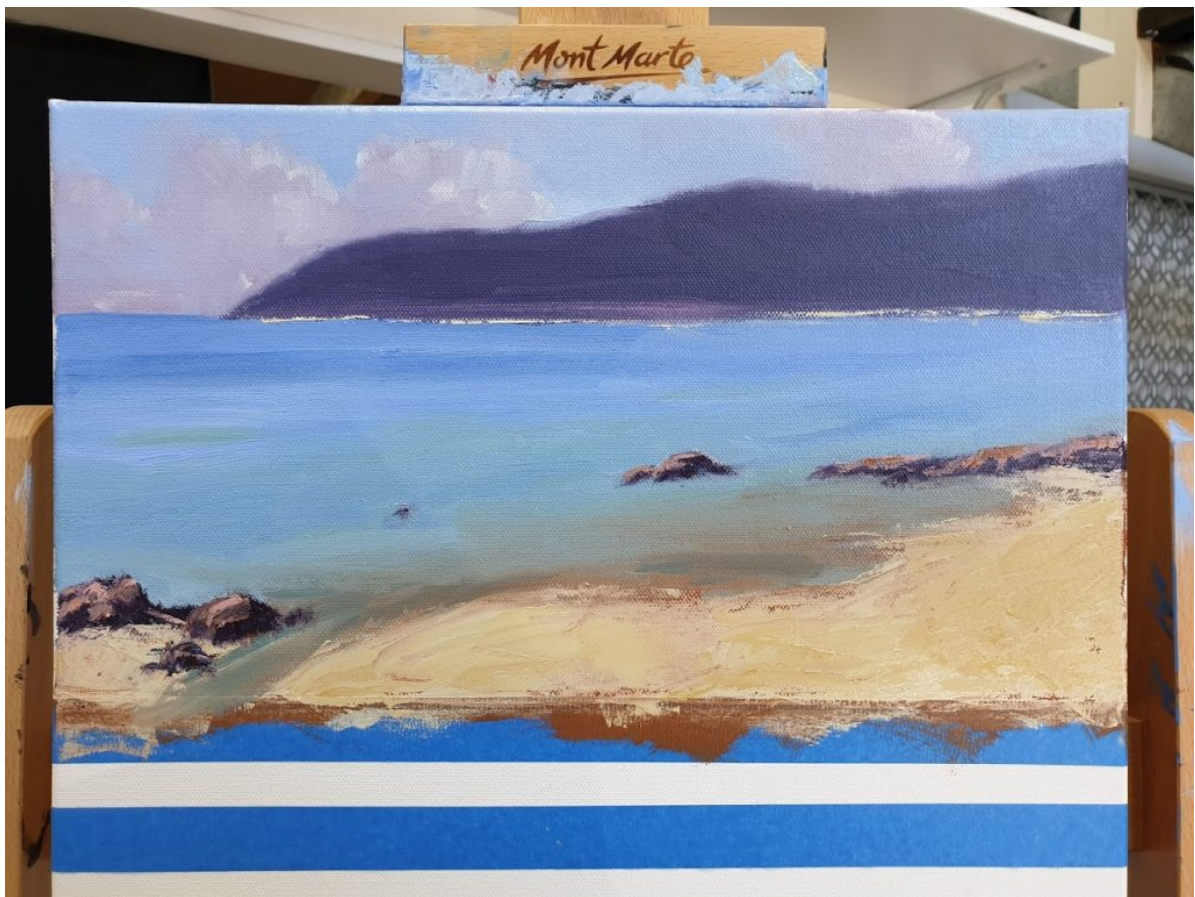
Notice how I have blurred the edges between the water and the sand area.

That completes the second step of the Moore Method of Painting. Let us now go on to the third step:

Step 3 - Details, Highlights & Finishing Touches

At this stage I would usually take a bit of a break for at least thirty minutes to give the paint time to just dry off a little.

Our goal in the third step is to really bring the painting to life. We are going to add our middle values, and highlight values, add in any details and finishing touches we need.



As you can see above I have added a lighter tone for the sand over the darker orange tone.

To do this I have used Yellow Ochre and Titanium White. The paint has been applied quite liberally with a palette knife to create a little texture and interest.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

On the rocks I have used more of a brown tone to indicate some form and shape to them.

Next I moved on to the headland foliage:



The headland foliage is just a mix of Ultramarine Blue & Yellow Ochre with some Titanium White.

Notice we are not painting trees, or leaves, or branches. It's just getting a basic colour down to represent, or hint at, the tops of the foliage catching light.

Important point is to make sure you leave enough of the shadow tone coming through as I have done.

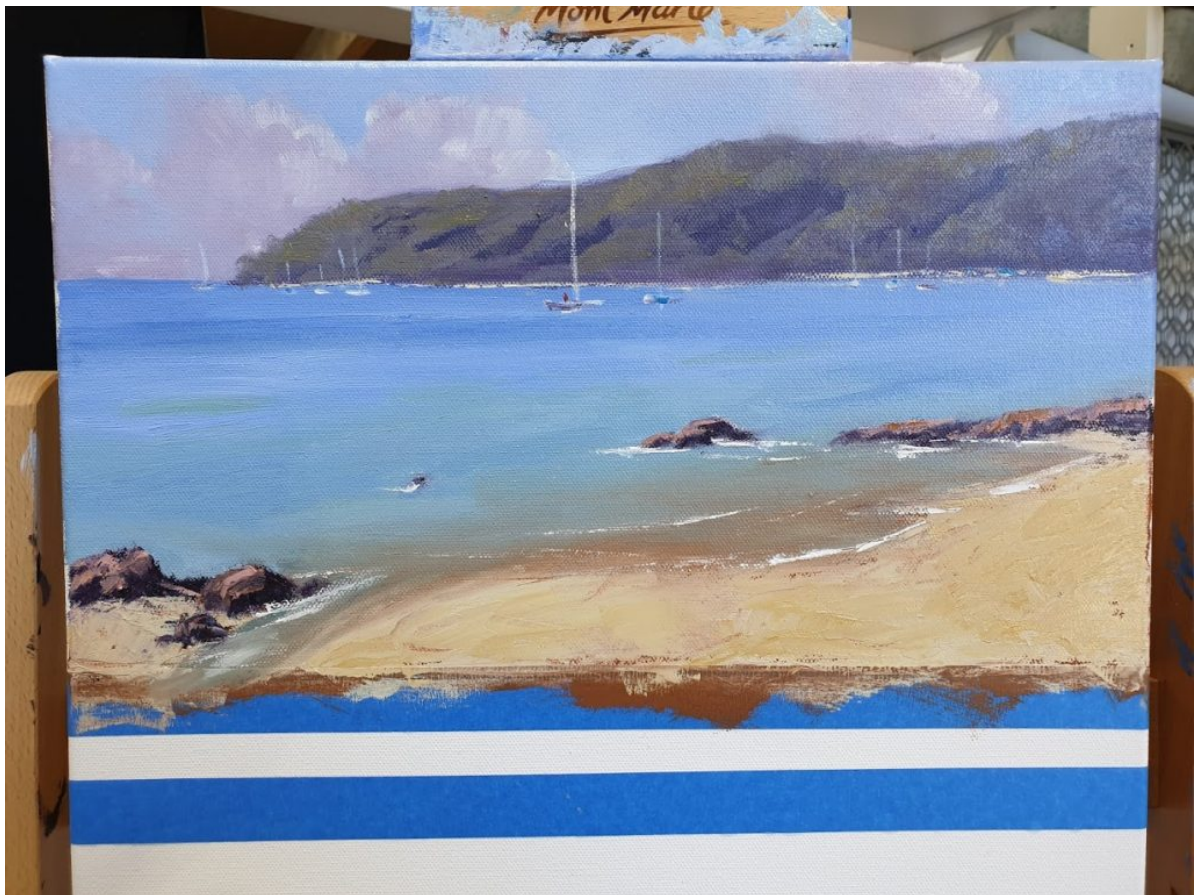
The Keys To Improving Your Painting

You can really get a sense of the depth of the atmosphere developing in this now.

The final step is to add in just a few details. Notice that the details come right at the end.

The success or failure of your painting is all to do with the fundamentals of good painting ... namely Composition, Values, Colour, Brushwork, Edges and so on. 90% of the success or failure of your painting will fall within these fundamentals areas.

No amount of detail at the end will fix a painting that is failing in the fundamentals.



As you can see above I have added in a few marks to indicate boats. You don't need to overly detail these, just indicate them.

With a palette knife I have added in some white foam where the water meets the sand and around the rocks.

All up the demonstration took about thirty minutes of painting time. The students in the workshop who followed the steps closely all did terrific versions of it. Give it a try yourself.

This is a fun painting project to have a go at.

Have a go at this one and follow the steps as outlined, and I am confident you will produce a terrific version of this painting.

Note – If you feel you struggle with any aspect of this painting project then the issue is most likely one or more of the fundamentals. I suggest studying the fundamentals of good painting as outlined earlier.

Now that we have seen a practical demonstration of the Moore Method of Painting let's consider some further keys to help you improve your painting.

Further Keys To Improve Your Painting

Everything we have talked about so far will help you to improve your painting.

But they are just a starting point for you.

Here are some further keys that I offer to you for your consideration:

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **Get clear on why you want to paint in the first place** Is it for a bit of fun, for therapy, relaxation, for social reasons, to earn an income, international fame and fortune? You get to choose and there is no right or wrong answer.
- **Based on your why, decide on what your end goal is for your painting journey**. For me it was always to become a professional artist earning an above average income and bringing joy to the world through my painting. What is the end goal for you?
- **Seek out a teacher whose work you admire and teaching style resonates with you**. When you find them go all in and commit to doing all of their courses, workshops and painting projects that you possibly can.
- **Choose a medium to learn to paint in**. You can always change to another medium later on but for now choose one and decide to really master that medium. You may need to try out a few different mediums initially to settle on one but once you make the decision to focus on one medium spend some time focused on it.
- **Choose a subject to specialize in**. When you choose what you want to focus on painting, stay with that subject until you really get a handle on it. There are different skills and knowledge you need for different subjects. For instance if you decide to paint portraits then you need to learn about the plains of the skull and how the different angles of these plains will change in different light sources. On the other hand if you choose to focus on landscapes then you need to study and master aerial perspective. Cityscapes would require a better understanding of linear perspective. So you can see your choice of subject will lead you to having to learn subject specific skills.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **Decide how much time you wish to commit to your painting journey each week.** Learning to paint is a marathon not a sprint. You need to commit time to it and you need to stick with it for the long term. So allocate an amount of time each week to the study and practice of painting. The amount of time needed will be determined by your goals.
- **Divide your weekly time allocation into study and acquisition of knowledge (via courses and workshops) and actual painting where you apply what you have just learned.**
- **Do a benchmark painting.** This is a painting you do today that is the very best you can do. It becomes your benchmark which displays your current skills, knowledge, understanding of your medium and subject and so on. Keep this painting on your studio wall and aim to beat it. Do a benchmark painting annually and look for improvement.
- **Set up your studio space.** You need a dedicated space to call your studio. This is where you can leave all of your supplies and equipment permanently set up. From experience and observation I have found that having a permanent set up makes it so much easier to get started painting. You don't need a lot of room. My first studio was in a closet. As I achieved better results with my painting journey my studios got bigger.
- **Keep a stock of art supplies.** I have found that it is best to always have a supply of painting surfaces, brushes and paints on hand. There is nothing worse than getting half way through a painting when you are in the flow and you run out of Titanium White. You go to your local art supply store and they are sold out. Believe me this happens often. Better to order your art supplies online and always have extra tubes of the paints you use a lot of on hand.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **Shut out distractions** Tell your family, dog and attention seeking cat that your painting time is sacred and you can not have any distractions while you paint. Once you express how important your painting is to them they will hopefully respect your request.
- **Remember the four stages of learning** It is inevitable that you will reach sticking points where you become frustrated. This is not the time to give up or assume you don't have the talent for painting. During this time you need to develop patience and know that you can move through any sticking point and the associated frustration. All great artists at one time felt a sense of frustration with their progress or current work. Have faith you can move through it and just keep learning and painting.
- **The more you learn the more you realise there is to learn** The great thing about painting and the journey towards mastery is that you can never know everything. In fact most of us will only ever acquire a fraction of the total knowledge base of master level painting. Even when you think you know something, like aerial perspective for example, there is often a lot more depth you can go into. And some things can only be truly learnt through practice. So always keep learning.
- **Paint frequently** You are better to paint for twenty minutes a day each day for a month than to try and cram a month's worth of painting into a weekend. Painting frequently has a dramatic impact on your skills. This is why the daily painting movement is so popular. If you can paint daily. If not then find the next most frequent schedule for your painting.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **Have patience** Painting takes time. A lot of time to truly master. If you have ambitions of becoming a professional for example then you need to think in terms of decades. I recently arrived at the ten year mark of my painting journey. While I have achieved a lot in that time I consider this first decade as my apprenticeship. The next decade will be where I really develop my skills towards mastery, and the third decade will be when I do my best work. Have patience my friend.
- **1,000 paintings** Master artist [Kevin Macpherson](#) suggests that in order to become a good artist you need to complete one thousand paintings. From experience I would agree with this and I wish I had heard this at the start of my journey. If you do a painting day over three years then you will significantly fast track your skills.
- **Let your painting be your teacher** When we first start out we seek external validation for our paintings. We post in forums our latest work looking for feedback and likes. We seek the opinion of others on a similar journey. And mostly we are looking for advice on how to improve our paintings ... but we are asking the wrong people generally. A better approach is to let your painting be your teacher. After completing each painting ask yourself what are two or things you did really well with this painting, and what is the one thing you need to focus on improving for the next one? Start a journal and post a photo of your painting with the answers to these questions in it. Do this for each painting you complete and watch how fast you develop. You will learn more from analyzing your painting and letting your painting be your teacher, than you will from getting feedback from others.
- **Master the fundamentals** We talked about these earlier in this article. The fundamentals are things like composition & design, drawing, colour and colour mixing, values, edges, brushwork etc. Mastering these fundamentals is essential to developing great art.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **Immerse yourself in your subject matter.** If you want to be a great landscape artist then you need to immerse yourself in the landscape. You can't paint a subject you don't know effectively as you miss the nuances of the scenes. As an example it would be difficult to become a great seascape artist if you have never been to the beach. A great seascape artist is typically someone who has a passion for the beach and is there all the time. When they go to paint it they are painting with salt in the hair and the sound of crashing waves fresh in their minds.
- **Collect reference material.** An essential part of an artist's practice, yet rarely talked about, is constantly collecting reference material. You want to be collecting photos, doing sketches, small studies on location and other reference materials. Build up a library of your own reference materials. This ties back to immersing yourself in your subject. I am primarily a landscape artist and two to three times a year I am off on a road trip collecting reference material.
- **Study master artists.** Find half a dozen master artists whose work you love. Then find all of their paintings on the internet you can. Download them to your computer so you can really study their best works. Select half a dozen of your favorite works from your favorite artist and print them out and stick them in a journal. Then make notes about what you love in the painting, and what works well. What drew you to this piece of work? The more you study the masters before you the more you can form a vision of yourself moving to a master level.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **Visit Museums & Galleries.** There is a big difference between looking at paintings online or in a book, versus standing in front of them in real life. When you stand in front of the works of the masters your experience is completely different as the heart and soul of the artist infuses the work with an energy you can feel. So visit museums and galleries as much as possible and soak up the works of the greats.
- **When painting, switch off your conscious mind.** Great painting is something that flows through you and bypasses your conscious thinking mind. It's best if we can shut off our conscious mind when painting. Think less and feel more. If you have really studied the skills and gained the knowledge you need then it will move to your unconscious mind soon enough. How do you switch off your thinking mind? The easiest way is to play music while you paint or listen to your favorite podcast.
- **Look for progress.** Every three months compare your latest work against your last benchmark painting. Can you see obvious improvement?
- **Be prolific.** The great artists of history were all prolific. [Picasso](#) produced more than 40,000 pieces of artwork in his lifetime. The more work you produce the greater chance you have of producing some great work.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **It's a mindset game.** Really mastering anything in life is largely a mindset game. On some level you need to work on developing your mindset. This comes down to using your imagination to develop a vision of where you see yourself taking your art. And you need to develop a positive optimistic outlook. The more positive energy you develop the more positive things happen to you. Don't ask me how that works but I can assure you it does. I can't tell you how many negative artists I have met who have moaned about how great it was in the eighties to be an artist ... and their careers have stalled or are non-existent. Things change, life moves in new directions and so we have to as well with a positive energy. If you think you can, and believe you can become a great artist you are far more likely to than if you have a real negative mindset.
- **Don't compare yourself to others.** One of the worst mistakes you can make is comparing yourself to other artists. We are all on different journeys and we all come from different backgrounds and levels of competency. So never compare yourself to another artist. Just focus on you and develop yourself on your journey. It's easier that way.
- **Start selling your work as soon as you can.** Use marketplaces like eBay and Etsy to start to sell your work as soon as possible. Even if it is for low prices like \$20 or \$30 for your practice pieces. This way you get paid to learn to paint. And you can take the money you make and invest it back into more art supplies and more education. This is what I did early on and it accelerated my progress.
- **Don't wait for inspiration.** Inspiration is largely a myth. As Picasso said inspiration does exist but when it shows up it better find you hard at work. Professional artists don't work on inspiration ... they just get to work and on a good day inspiration turns up as they work. They never use inspiration, or a lack of it, as a reason for lack of production.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

- **Stay healthy.** The healthier you are and the more energy you have the better you will paint. Trust me I have tried it both ways. At times during my painting journey I have been extremely unhealthy due to poor lifestyle choices. My painting and progress suffered. Today I am focused on improving my health and energy and my painting is improving in line with my health. It may seem unrelated but if you don't feel well it's hard to paint well.
- **Have faith.** When nothing seems to be going right with your painting and you are not happy with your production it's easy to lose faith. For me I developed an understanding that there is a higher level of intelligence which is the source of all creativity. The more faith I developed in this the more I was able to tap into this infinite pool of creativity.
- **Have fun.** Perhaps the most important aspect of learning to paint and becoming a great artist is to have fun along the way. If you are miserable and generally unhappy it's like trying to drive forward with the handbrake on. Painting should bring joy and happiness to you and the world. So have fun and spread fun.

These are just some of the keys to learning to paint that have been important to me in the last ten years. There are clearly a lot more keys I can share with you through the work we do at the Learn To Paint Academy.

For now though I trust you can incorporate some of the ideas into your painting and begin to see the improvements you seek.

Here is what you can do next...

In Conclusion

The key takeaway message in this book is that becoming a good painter is not a matter of natural talent or ability. It is not a gift given to a select few. Nor is it a matter of lack.

Rather, it is a matter of understanding that there are certain fundamental skills that all good artists need to learn. Few have been able to achieve success as an artist without a solid working knowledge of these fundamentals.

Further, these fundamental skills of good painting can be learned.

As you learn them and apply them into your paintings you will see considerable improvement start to emerge in time.

When you combine these fundamentals with a painting method like the Moore Method of Painting you will develop your painting skills well beyond where you may be right now.

And practise, practise, practise.

Consistent, regular, focused painting applying what you learn along the way will take you as far as your heart desires with your painting.

The most important thing of all is to enjoy the process.

Have fun with it!

Additional Resources

If you are wanting to learn more then here are some additional resources for you to explore:

- **The Moore Method of Painting** - Learn more about how the Moore Method of Painting can help you simplify the painting process down, and reduce frustration and overwhelm.

[Click here for The Moore Method of Painting](#)

- **Fundamentals of Good Painting** - Learn more about the Fundamentals of good painting as discussed in this book.

[Click here for The Fundamentals of Good Painting](#)

- **Learn To Paint Academy** - Learn more about what we do at the Learn To Paint Academy and how you can join us.

[Click here for the Learn To Paint Academy](#)

About Rod Moore



Rod Moore is a contemporary impressionist artist based in Noosa. His paintings are collected globally and he is known for his loose, bold & expressive style of landscape painting. Rod is the founder of the Learn To Paint Academy and has taught hundreds of people in workshops, and more than 75,000 people online, to learn to paint with his easy to follow Moore Method of Painting.

Rod's work is inspired by the natural beauty of the South East Queensland region from the hinterland to the beaches. Since moving to the area five years ago he has sought to capture the essence of nature's fullest expression of herself.

Where once he was focused on painting with a realism approach, today he is inspired to capture the atmosphere, emotion and feeling that creates a sense of place. Details of the landscape give way to broader brush strokes, bolder colours and the interplay of lights and darks.

Rod spends endless hours on location capturing, recording and collating information to be utilised in the studio as inspiration for larger works. Studies painted en plein air stimulate the creative energies and fuel his imagination. This quest to draw inspiration from the environment around him facilitates the creative process where the work flows through him onto the canvas.

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

Rod's end goal is to inspire the viewer of his work to feel a sense of awe and wonder, a spiritual connection, to the land and place we call South East Queensland

Visit Rod's website - <https://www.RodMoore.art>

About the Learn To Paint Academy

The Learn To Paint Academy is the place for beginner to intermediate artists to improve their painting skills.

More than 75,000 students have taken one of courses from across the globe with many going on to win art prizes, sell their work in exhibitions, start art teaching businesses and more.

With more than 45+ courses and 150+ painting projects the Learn To Paint Academy represents a substantial resource for learning to paint and improving your painting.

Our global supportive community of inspired artists provide amazing support and encouragement for our students.

Visit the Learn To Paint Academy website - <https://www.LearnToPaint.academy>

Feedback From Our Students

Here is just some of the feedback received from students of the Learn To Paint Academy:

"I found Rod Moore's art group in the middle of last year and by the end of the year had decided to become a life member. It was a great decision on my part! Rod's style of teaching is very relaxed and encouraging, easy to follow. You don't need to be a budding Picasso. There are so many courses to choose from, covering not only the necessary basics but varied and more challenging topics too. Weekly chats and paint alongs, monthly challenges and studies and a supportive community make Learn to Paint Academy the perfect place to learn and improve as an Artist."

- Jacqueline Cox

"After quite a lengthy break from art, I decided to reconnect with oil painting and was fortunate enough to find Rod Moore's Learn To Paint Academy (LTPA) videos on YouTube. His teaching style immediately struck a chord with me - limited materials, clear instructions/demonstrations and a method guaranteed to develop painting skills and confidence. Rod's wide range of painting subjects offers choice and introduction to multiple mediums. His live streams go beyond simply painting and offer advice on areas such as preparing boards for painting to marketing art works and reviews of art materials. The establishment of the LTPA website has led to a supportive, empathetic community that provide advice and encouragement."

- Garry Taylor

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

"I found Rod's 5 Day Challenge excellent. I joined the challenge as a beginner but feel I am now on the way to becoming a good hobby artist equipped with the knowledge required to perfect my paintings using Rod Moore's Method of painting. I have learned a lot about composition, design, values, and the effects of distance on size and positioning of big shapes. I still have a lot more practice to do to perfect these principles but having this knowledge ensures I will move forward in the right direction. An added bonus was I also got to interact with some lovely people who encouraged me along the way."

- Lexie Hudson

"I came across the academy on facebook and decided to take the 5 day course. I very much enjoyed it and for my birthday in June 2020 I decided to become a life member. Having retired due to ill health I finally had the time to learn how to paint. Rod is a fantastic and talented teacher, very engaging and a lovely way with everyone. It's been a joy to be part of an online academy and I really look forward to the live sessions despite it being really late here in the UK. The courses I have taken so far have been really good and I have really enjoyed the masters analysis and also learning how Rod became a teacher and artist. I've also learnt a lot from other more experienced art academy members. I have set up my own art space since joining and really look forward to doing more courses and following the live sessions. Thank you so much, it has become a dream come true to learn from such a lovely friendly man, a great artist and teacher."

- Pauline Evans

"I really struggled and didn't even know that I didn't understand. Found the LTPA totally by accident and on a whim, I gave the 5 day challenge a try. It's been the best experience and I'm so grateful to be a lifetime member. Rod Moore is a great teacher and explains the fundamentals in clear and easy to grasp terms. He is encouraging as are the community of participants. I encourage anyone who thinks they'd like to try their hand at painting to do it. Thank you Rod...

THANK YOU!"

- Wanda Kimura

"I first discovered The Moore Method of Painting when I stumbled across a free challenge on Facebook. I surprised myself completely with the results of my first landscape painting under Rod's easy tutoring. I became a member of the Learn To Paint Academy in a limited capacity, to see how it went. Well I'm now a very happy life member. Rod's simplified method, easy going , relatable style of tutoring and generosity, made joining no brainer. I've learnt so much and am looking forward to growing and developing my skill more as I continue on. Thanks Rod, I hit the jackpot finding that first challenge."

- Dawn Ferguson

The Keys To Improving Your Painting

"The Learn To Paint Academy challenge has been a fantastic experience - both the video tutorials where Rod takes us through demonstration paintings, and also, importantly, the online group where we share our progress and get to see hundreds of other people painting along with us. We get to see what others make of the same start point, and their individual takes on a subject - and by observing what other people have done I'm finding myself able to think critically about how I might approach the issues they face, or mimic their successes. Rod's teaching style is down to earth and clear, and he returns continually to the principles behind the Moore Method, so that I feel I'm really getting to grips with them. My painting and approach has improved already and I'm only a few days in. Really pleased I signed up and will be joining future challenges and paid courses. Thanks Rod!"

- Selina Churchill

"I've always wanted to learn to paint, but never got around to taking a class. I was so happy to find the Learn To Paint Academy because the online format is perfect for me to work at whatever pace I choose. The Moore Method of painting has been easy to learn and creates buildable skills. Rod's down to earth way of presenting his material is clear, interesting and enjoyable. Thanks Rod for the great courses!"

- Julie Mello

Discover the keys to improving your painting

In this comprehensive eBook Learn To Paint Academy founder Rod Moore shares with you what he has learned in the last decade.

Through the Learn To Paint Academy Rod has helped more than 75,000 students globally, and hundreds in one day workshops. This has placed him in a unique position to identify the keys to making improvements in your skills as an artist.

MOORE