

Acrylic Pouring — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into pours you can reproduce. Each section pairs with a course module: you dial in paint-to-medium ratios and test cell-making forces, drill silicone and heat until cells are a dial not a gamble, run the dirty pour, swipe, and ring pour as deliberate methods, then cure, clean, and seal a finished canvas. Keep your filled sheets and small test tiles together; over time they become a personal recipe book of ratios, colour pairs, and results you can repeat rather than rediscover.

Paint, Medium, and the Physics of a Pour

Set up a level station, mix paint to a tested pourable ratio, and learn by hand which forces drive cells.

Checklist: Pour-Station Setup Check

- Work surface checked level with a spirit level or phone level app
- Canvas raised on push pins, cups, or a wire rack inside a catch tray or over a drop sheet
- Nitrile gloves on; loose clothing and hair secured away from the torch
- Butane torch and heat gun present, tested, and kept clear of the plastic sheeting
- Stir sticks, clean mixing cups, and a kitchen scale or measuring spoons ready
- Raw canvas primed with one or two coats of gesso and fully dry
- Mixed more paint than the surface needs, roughly 1 to 1.5 millilitres per square inch
- Dust-free, level spot reserved nearby to leave the finished pour to cure flat

Exercise: Find Your Ratio with the Ribbon Test

Pick one pouring medium (Floetrol, Liquitex Pouring Medium, or GAC 800) and one paint. Mix three small cups of a single colour at three ratios, for a heavy-body paint try 1:2, 1:3, and 1:4 paint to medium, stirring slowly to avoid air. Run the ribbon test on each: lift the stick, let paint drizzle back, and watch whether the ribbon sits then melts in. Judge which ratio gives a warm-honey, self-levelling pour for that exact paint.

- Which medium and paint did you use, and what three ratios did you mix?

- For each cup, did the ribbon stack and hold (too thick), melt back in a second or two (right), or vanish like milk (too thin)?

- Which ratio became your keeper for this paint, and what did you have to add (a splash of water?) to land it?

- Did any cup show foam or bubbles from over-stirring, and how did resting and tapping the cup help?

Worksheet: Colour Mix Record

Fill one row per colour you mix for a pour, so a working mix can be repeated exactly. Record the verified ratio you actually used, not the one you intended.

Date

Colour name and pigment code (e.g. titanium white PW6)

Paint brand and body (heavy / soft / craft)

Medium used (Floetrol / Liquitex / GAC 800)

Ratio paint to medium actually used

Water added (yes/no, roughly how much)

Silicone added (none / drops, what kind)

Ribbon-test result (thick / right / thin)

Density behaviour expected (sinks / rises)

Where used (which pour)

Exercise: Density Showdown

Choose one dense colour (titanium white, an ochre, or a cadmium) and one light colour (a phthalo blue or green, or a quinacridone). Mix both to the same pourable ratio with no silicone. In a small cup, layer the dense colour on top of the light one, then pour onto a test tile or small canvas and tilt gently. Observe whether the heavy colour sinks and the light one rises into cells, with surface tension alone.

- Which colour was denser by pigment, and did putting it on top make it sink as predicted?
 - Did any cells open from density alone, without silicone or heat? How strong were they?
 - What changed when you then passed a torch over the tile once or twice?
 - Based on this, which of your colours will you keep as cell-drivers (heavy, placed on top)?
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Cells on Demand: Silicone, Heat, and Control

Calibrate silicone dosing and heat against cell size, and prove you can make cells with no oil at all.

Exercise: Silicone Dose Ladder

Mix four identical cups of a light colour at your keeper ratio. Add silicone in a ladder: 0 drops, 1 drop, 3 drops, and 6 drops of treadmill silicone (or a dimethicone hair serum) per cup, stirring each only once or twice. Pour each over a dark base on four test tiles and torch each once. Compare how cell number and size change as the dose climbs.

- How did cell quantity and size change from 0 to 6 drops?
 - Which dose gave the cell look you actually want for your pieces, and with what silicone product?
 - What happened when you over-stirred any cup, did the cells weaken or vanish?
 - Which colours will you load with silicone, and which will you leave clean so cells land where you plan?
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Exercise: No-Silicone Cells

Make cells without any oil. Mix colours with Floetrol at your keeper ratio, do a small dirty pour, and use only heat and air: a torch for one or two passes, then a heat gun on low to stretch cells. Optionally pour a combined cup through a kitchen strainer for a field of small cells. Compare the result to your silicone tiles.

• Did Floetrol plus a torch give you usable cells with no silicone? How did they compare in size to the silicone version?

• What did the heat gun do to the cells, did you get dendrite or feathered patterns?

• If you tried the strainer pour, how dense and small were the resulting cells?

• For your next real piece, will you go silicone or silicone-free, and why (consider the cleaning step later)?

Worksheet: Cell Activation Log

Record each cell test so you can reproduce a look on purpose. Note the method, dose, and heat, plus the result.

Test tile number

Base colour(s) and top colour

Cell method (silicone / heat only / strainer)

Silicone type and drops (if any)

Stirs after adding silicone

Torch passes and heat-gun use

Cell size (large / medium / small / dense field)

Result quality (clean / muddy / scorched)

Cleaning needed before sealing (yes/no)

Checklist: Failure-Prevention Check Before Pouring

- Consistency confirmed by ribbon test, not guessed
- Thinned with medium, not excess water, so the film will not lift or peel
- Cup rested and tapped to release trapped air and avoid pinholes
- Colours chosen to contrast in value so they will not blend to mud
- Plan to tilt the minimum needed for coverage, then stop
- Torch passes planned light and moving, never dwelling, to avoid crazing and scorch
- Enough paint mixed for full coverage plus run-off
- Canvas gessoed and surface level and protected

The Three Core Techniques

Run the dirty pour, swipe, and ring pour as distinct repeatable methods and capture what each colour pair does.

Exercise: Dirty Pour and Flip Cup

Mix three to five colours to your keeper ratio, adding silicone only to the ones you want to rise. Layer them down the side of one cup, keeping layers distinct, with a cell-driver like white placed deliberately. Do one puddle dirty pour and one flip cup on separate canvases. Tilt the minimum needed for coverage, then torch once or twice. Compare the spread of the two.

- What layering order did you use, and which colour spread widest (the bottom layer)?

- How did the flip cup's central cell burst compare to the puddle pour's more even field?

- Did you stop tilting in time, or did extra tilts push the colours toward mud?

- Which colour combination would you keep, and what would you change about the layer order next time?

Exercise: Swipe Practice

Lay a dark, colourful base across a canvas, then place a strip of silicone-loaded white along one edge. Drag it across with a soft tool (baby wipe, damp paper towel, palette knife, or acetate) using barely the weight of the tool. Pass once or with very light repeats, then torch lightly along the swiped band. Repeat the same colour pair two or three times to learn how it blooms.

- Which tool and pressure gave a clean band of cells rather than a smear?

- What happened when you pressed too hard, and how light did the touch need to be?

- How did swipe direction (straight, curved, edges-to-middle) change the composition?

- After repeating the pair, what is your reliable recipe for this swipe (base, top colour, silicone, tool)?

Worksheet: Technique Result Sheet

Fill one sheet per finished pour so you can reproduce or improve it. Capture the technique, recipe, and honest result.

Date and canvas size

Technique (dirty pour / flip cup / swipe / ring / strainer)

Colours and their pigment codes

Layer or pour order

Silicone in which colours, and dose

Tilts (how many) and torch passes

Cell result (size, where they landed)

What worked

What to change next time

Exercise: Ring Pour Control Drill

Set up several colours. Pour the first as a small puddle, then pour each next colour slowly from low height into the exact centre, returning to the same point every time so the rings stay round. Build at least five rings. Leave one piece flat for a clean bullseye, and on a second piece tilt once at the end to stretch the rings into an organic shape.

- Could you keep returning to the same centre to keep rings round, or did they drift?
 - How did pour height and speed affect how even each ring was?
 - Compare the flat bullseye to the tilted, stretched version, which suits the look you want?
 - How dependent was this technique on silicone compared to your swipe and dirty pour?
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Curing, Sealing, and Finishing

Cure fully, remove silicone, apply an isolation coat where needed, and choose and apply a topcoat.

Checklist: Pre-Seal Readiness Check

- [] Painting fully cured, not just touch-dry (one to three weeks for thick pours)
- [] Cured flat, level, and dust-free with no embedded lint
- [] If silicone was used, surface washed with lukewarm water and a drop of dish soap, or wiped with isopropyl alcohol
- [] Surface fully dried again after cleaning
- [] No oily sheen or beading remaining anywhere on the surface
- [] Isolation coat planned if finishing with varnish
- [] Finish chosen (varnish vs resin) for this piece and its purpose
- [] Ventilated space and dust cover ready for the topcoat

Exercise: Isolation Coat and Topcoat Trial

On a cured, silicone-cleaned test piece, apply a thin isolation coat of a clear gloss medium (such as Golden Soft Gel Gloss thinned roughly 2 parts gel to 1 part water), keeping a wet edge and letting it dry clear. Then apply your chosen finish: several light passes of a spray varnish like Krylon Kamar, a thin brush varnish, or a measured pour of art-grade epoxy resin torched to clear bubbles. Judge the result.

- Did the isolation coat dry clear and even, or leave ridges or fog? What would you change?
 - Which finish did you apply, and did it go on cleanly with no fish-eyes (proof the silicone was gone)?
 - If resin: did you measure exactly to ratio, level the piece, and torch out bubbles successfully?
 - How did the finish change the colour and sheen, and is varnish or resin right for your next real piece?
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Worksheet: Finishing Record

Record how each finished piece was sealed so you can repeat a good result and trace any problem. Painting name and date poured

Cure time before sealing

Silicone used (yes/no) and cleaning method

Isolation coat (product, ratio, coats)

Topcoat type (spray varnish / brush varnish / epoxy resin)

Topcoat product and number of coats/passes

Resin ratio and torch (if applicable)

Final sheen (gloss / satin / matte / glassy)

Any issues (fish-eyes / cloudiness / bubbles) and likely cause

Checklist: Finished-Piece Quality Check

- Surface fully hard and cured, no soft or tacky spots
- No fish-eyes, craters, or cloudiness from leftover silicone
- No crazing or fine cracks across the film
- Even sheen across the whole surface, no blotchy absorption
- Cells and colours read as intended, not muddied
- Signature placed and sealed in
- Edges clean (sealed, painted, or wiped of run-off)
- Piece protected under a dust cover for the full topcoat cure

Your Action Plan

1. Pick one pouring medium and one paint, and run the ribbon test at three ratios to lock your keeper consistency
2. Gesso your canvas, set up a level, tray-protected station, and mix enough paint for full coverage plus run-off
3. Sort your colours by pigment density into sinkers and risers, and decide which will be cell-drivers
4. Run the silicone dose ladder and a no-silicone heat test, and choose your default cell method
5. Pour your first dirty pour, tilting the minimum needed, and torch lightly to bloom the cells
6. Practise the swipe with one colour pair two or three times until the band of cells is reliable
7. Do a ring pour for control, leaving one flat as a bullseye and stretching one with a single end tilt
8. Let the finished piece cure fully, then wash off any silicone with soap and water or wipe with isopropyl alcohol
9. Apply a thin isolation coat if you are varnishing, keeping a wet edge so it dries clear and even
10. Seal with your chosen topcoat, varnish for archival flexibility or epoxy resin for a glassy finish, and protect it while it cures

