

How to Paint an Electric Guitar in 10 Easy Steps

1. Gather Your Supplies

- Electric guitar - If you want this as solely an art piece, I recommend searching on Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace for an older, used guitar. Otherwise, I assume you're here because you have your own electric guitar ready to paint.
- Sandpaper (various grits)
- Circle Sander
- Masking Tape
- Primer
- Microfiber Cloth
- Acrylic Paint
- Posca Pens
- Paint Palette
- Palette Knife
- Montana Spray Varnish
- Screwdriver (to remove hardware)
- [Click here](#) for an Amazon list of some of these recommended supplies.

2. Disassemble the Guitar:

- Before painting your guitar, you'll need to disassemble it by using a screwdriver to remove any parts that you can such as the strings, pickguard, bridge, knobs, and electronics. This will make it easier to paint and prevent any damage to the components. Put these in a plastic bag to make sure no parts get lost while you're painting.

3. Prepare the Body for Paint:

- Using a circle sander and fine-grit sandpaper, lightly remove the existing finish. If there are any bumps or holes, fill these in with [wood filler](#) and sand the body into a rough surface for the paint to adhere to. Be careful not to sand too aggressively, as you don't want to damage the wood and please wear a mask so you don't breathe in any dust!!

4. Clean Your Guitar:

- Use a clean microfiber cloth and remove any dust or debris from the sanding process. This will ensure your paint goes on smoothly.

5. Tape Off Areas You Don't Want Paint:

- Use masking tape to cover any parts of the guitar you want to keep unpainted, such as the neck, fretboard, and any other hardware you weren't able to remove. Additionally, you can use tape throughout the design process to mask off certain areas as you go.

6. Apply Primer:

- Apply a thin, even coat of primer to the guitar body. This will create a smooth base for your design. In this step, you can prime with any color you like! White is common, although some artists use fun colors as a primer because it can have better coverage or help their final design be more vibrant.

7. Transfer your design.

- For all three of the electric guitars I've painted, I used a doodle grid to transfer to major shapes within my design. [Click here to read more about what a doodle grid is](#) and that whole process.
- If you have access to an iPad or digital software, I recommend taking a picture of your guitar and planning out what you want to do before you paint. I recommend hopping on Pinterest and making a board for your guitar painting.
- If you're one of those people who don't need to use a grid or reference, I commend you! Skip this step and move on to step 8.

8. Paint:

- If you've digitally sketched your design, you can use this to decide on a color palette. If you're doing this the old-fashioned way, I recommend gathering your paint and mixing the colors that you want to use. You can utilize [this website](#) (non-spon) to find good color palettes.
- Once your primer is dry and your design is sketched, begin painting your design in layers. I like to paint my background color first, the colors of my main shapes, and then the details on the background. Once this is complete I'll go back in with paint and add more layers to my main objects. Allow each coat to dry completely before applying the next one.
- If you want to outline your designs, I recommend using Posca pens. The black pen in PC-3M has worked well for me and creates clean lines consistently. If you're using Posca Pens, please note that they tend to smear if you use a varnish that requires using a brush. If you use Posca Pens, please, please use a spray varnish.

9. Apply Varnish

- If you want to protect your paint from UV rays, and the elements, and give it a glossy finish, you should apply a clear coat. I recommend using [Montana Spray varnish](#) and applying it in several coats, with many hours between each layer. If you can, find a way to hang your guitar so that it's fully suspended in the air and your spray varnish can reach all the angles. Fully leave it to dry for at least 24 hours.

10. Reassemble Your Guitar:

- Once the paint is completely dry, reassemble all the hardware and components back onto your guitar. If you've forgotten where everything goes, [this video](#) can help you with the process. Make sure everything is securely attached and functioning properly.
- If you know how you can tune your guitar. If not, many local guitar shops would likely help you.

And just like that, you've got your own custom-painted guitar! Except it's not "just like that" because it does take a lot of work, creativity, and patience. Before you display your guitar or give it to a lucky someone, make sure to take some good pics and admire what you've accomplished.

Additional Notes:

- Remember to take your time, be patient, and follow safety precautions while painting. It's always a good idea to practice on a test surface or an old guitar before attempting to paint your main instrument
- I have not used spray paint on an electric guitar, but know of many people who have. [This video](#) may help you get started with that process.
- Does painting an electric guitar affect the sound? [Here's what someone on the internet has to say >>](#)

Resources:

- [Underwater Guitar 1](#)
- [Underwater Guitar 2](#)
- [Retro/Floral Groovy Guitar](#)
- [Click here](#) if you'd like to read the full process of how I painted my first electric guitar ever.