

Painting Home-Study Course for the Professional Artist

Welcome to the Erin Hanson Home Study Course. I am pleased to be able to offer my knowledge and experience to you via this online mentorship program. The purpose of this study program is to greatly improve your skills and confidence as an artist. The purpose is not to teach you how to paint like me; this is not a step-by-step tutorial on my painting style. However, I am giving you something better: this home-study course leads you down the exact same path I took to become a professional painter. If you follow these instructions exactly, you will become a professional artist as well.

This course is broken into three Sections, each with a series of Lessons. The program is designed to be done one lesson at a time, and you should sign off and date each lesson as you complete it.

Study note: I recommend that you pace yourself through these lessons either on a weekly or monthly basis. If you are an artist who wants to quickly improve your skills and can dedicate 10-20+ hours per week to your craft, you should complete at least one lesson per week. If you only have 10 hours per *month* to paint, then complete one lesson per month. I don't recommend taking longer than one month to complete each lesson. Our lives are short and we still have much to get done!

This program contains 42 pages of lessons. I recommend you print everything out and keep your lessons together in a 3-hole binder. That way you can easily mark your progress as you go.

You will want to be able to track your progress as an artist as you move through the program. Always date your paintings and sketches. You should also keep a digital record of your work by taking photographs of your paintings as you create them. (To photograph 2-dimensional works, I recommend using a digital SLR camera fitted with a circular polarizing lens to cut out the glare. Early in the morning or late in the afternoon, take your painting outside on an easel, and tilt the painting so the sun is casting small shadows across your painting. Turn the polarizing lens until there is minimal glare.)

I wish you lots of success in your artistic endeavors!

Section One

Congratulations on deciding to improve your abilities as an artist! I do not have any short-cuts or easy paths to greatness, but I do believe in hard work, daily practice, and putting in your 10,000 hours to become a master at your craft. This set of lessons is designed to give you a series of goals to work towards, and to inspire you to create one painting a week (50 paintings per year) in order to create your own style of painting that you can be proud to call your own.

Lesson 1

Assignment: Create one pencil sketch from life every day.

Before you can learn to paint, you must first learn to draw. Painting is capturing life in two-dimensions, but before you add color and brush strokes into the mix, you should be able to make a realistic image using simple pencil and paper. There are many courses and books you can read on drawing, but for now this lesson is about the skill of observation. You must train yourself to observe what is actually in front of you, not what you expect to see, and to capture what you observe with pencil and paper.

In this lesson, you will be creating one sketch from life every day. Your sketches do not need to be large, or detailed, or works of art on their own. The purpose of this drill is to practice observing an object and learning to see the different areas of light and dark, where the contrasts are, where the sharp lines are, and where the soft gradations of shadow lie. Use any pencil you like, and keep a spiral-bound notebook so you can keep track of your sketches. Jot the date at the bottom corner of each page.

Each day, take 15 minutes, or an hour, or however long you like, and do a sketch of an object sitting in front of you. You can sketch a chair, a vase, a tree, or any object at all. Try to look at the object like you've never seen it before and discover something new about its shading and shape that you didn't expect to see.

Sign and date each lesson as you complete it:

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 2

Assignment: Create one value sketch from life every day.

This week, you will move to an even more important lesson to learn before you start painting. You will create a sketch of an object, as you did last week, but this time concentrate on both the object *and* the background, and specifically concentrate on the relative values of everything in the scene. Try to use no more than 4 values (white, light gray, medium gray, dark gray) and keep these 4 values distinct in your mind as you draw. Instead of just drawing the outline and details of a chair, for example, you will be drawing the relative lightness and darkness of the parts of the chair compared to the relative lightness and darkness of the room surrounding the chair.

Hint: squint at the scene you are drawing, and squint at your drawing. Try to break the scene into its most abstract, basic shapes.

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 3

Assignment: Repeat Lesson 1 and Lesson 2 until you have observed a definite improvement in your ability to 1) observe objects as they really are, and 2) capture the relative values of a scene.

Great job! You have just improved your ability to paint, which is all about creating value shapes!

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 4

Assignment: Create 3 small monochromatic paintings.

For this assignment, you will need a stack of canvas boards. These can be purchased cheaply from any art supply store, and they should cost about \$1 to \$3 per panel. I recommend starting with 8x10, 9x12, 11x14 or 12x12 sizes. For example, you can use these from Amazon: <https://amzn.to/2HeDL6u>

You will also need a single color of dark-toned paint, and white. You can use blue, sepia, black, ochre, etc.

Working either from life or from a photograph you took, create a value study of the scene. First, mix on your palette the four distinct values that you will be using (white, light, medium, and dark.) Try not to blend the four piles of paint together as you paint, but instead keep the four values distinct from each other on your canvas.

The purpose of this drill is to learn to see how relative values interact in a painting, without adding the complication of color. Even if you've done this sort of monochromatic painting in the past, it is great practice to do it again newly from a fresh point of view.

Hint: don't forget to squint at the scene you are painting and the canvas you are creating. Focus on the abstract shapes in the composition, and don't get distracted by the details.

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Section Two

Lesson 5

Assignment: Create one small painting on board every week.

This is the crux of how you will become a master at painting and discover your own unique style of painting. These paintings do not need to be masterpieces, especially when you are first starting out. The purpose of finishing a small painting every single week is to learn how to overcome the challenges and difficulties you face in your larger works. To become an accomplished painter, you want to put your 10,000 hours in, and you will be creating hundreds of paintings in order to truly master this craft.

When you are painting your small weekly work of art, try to be less serious, less invested, less worried about the final outcome... this is your opportunity to try out a new color or a new technique that you might be nervous about testing out on a masterpiece you have many hours invested into.

When you are creating your “painting a week,” do not copy other artists paintings. Instead, get your inspiration directly from the source, whether it is nature, a model, a still life, an animal, or your pure imagination. Take plenty of reference photos, if your subject matter won't stay still or is too changeable, but do not get into the bad habit of copying your photographs. The photograph is only there to remind you of the source object, and it is your creativity and unique view of the world that will make your painting look like a piece of art, not a copied photograph.

The learning process as an artist entails a lot of trial and error. Yes, you could sit with a master painter and do many workshops with him and learn to duplicate his style over time, but you would not have the opportunity to develop your own way of looking at the world, your own way of using the materials, your own of developing your compositions. Yes, this way of learning is probably more frustrating, and it will take longer, but the lessons you learn will be truly your own, and you certainly as an artist will improve rapidly.

Even if you are not sure if this will work, try it for a year. Try creating 52 small paintings (along with the rest of the lessons that follow), and see if you have greatly improved as an artist.

I want to make one more comment here, about what makes a painting “good.” Many of us are used to having our paintings critiqued by a teacher, or a spouse, or a friend, or a gallery owner. I believe artists should never seek another’s opinion about whether their painting is good or not. As an artist, it is *your* vision and spiritual determination that put that painting into existence. So, the only way to tell if a painting is good or not is to ask *yourself*, “Did this painting turn out the way *I* wanted it to?” This is why it is so important to have a clear vision of what you want your painting to look like before you ever pick up a paint brush. From there, all your struggles as an artist should be aimed at making the paint and the brush and the canvas turn into that vision you have in your head. This is why you create a painting every week: so that you can start to figure out how to move that paint around in a way that ends up looking like your original vision. It might take years of trial and error, but when you get there, you will be able to flawlessly take a concept from your mind and transform it into a painting that turns out exactly the way you wanted it to.

Perhaps you are wondering, “But how will I ever sell my paintings if I do not seek the approval of others? How will I know what paintings are good if I do not ask other people?” The answer is simple. When you are wearing your Artist Hat, you only need to worry about making *your* vision appear on that finished canvas. Once the painting is complete, you can put on your Marketing Hat. Marketing is all about finding public who will respond to and purchase your unique expression of life. Do not mix the two hats together! I promise you, you will be able to find a market for your paintings, no matter what you are painting. There is a huge demand for original art, and thousands of different tastes that can be appealed to. I have never asked anyone whether my work was good or not, and I now sell \$2 million dollars’ worth of paintings every year. I will have more Lessons on how to market your unique creations later on.

This lesson is completed when you have completed one small painting within a week’s time.

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 5

Assignment: Read one sub-chapter every week from *Composition of Outdoor Painting* by Edgar Payne, and apply what you learn to creating one small painting on board every week.

I have read many books on painting technique, color, composition, perspective, etc. This is my favorite text of all of them. Not only does Edgar Payne lay out the basics of composition, but you will learn how composition is *the* basis of any good painting. By properly composing a painting, you can take that vision from your mind and turn it into a 2-dimensional painting. This information in this book applies not only to landscape painting, but to abstract, still life, and portraiture.

This is the only art book that will be required reading on this program. You do not need to agree with everything the author says in this book, but I want you to find something in every chapter that you can use to make your paintings turn out the way you want them to. Remember the purpose of any study is to find what you can apply to your own life that actually works and improves your methodology. Any time you read a book about art technique, you should ask yourself, “how does this information help me create my vision on the canvas?”

While you are reading, be sure to look up in a dictionary any word you do not fully understand. Words that aren't understood will prevent you from understanding the concepts put forth in this book, and these mis-understood words will make you feel frustrated with the text and no longer want to study.

You can purchase this textbook on Amazon here:

<https://amzn.to/2LCMKCs>

Composition of Outdoor Painting Reading Assignments

Sign your initials next to every sub-chapter when you finish reading it, and then write down what you did to apply the information in that chapter to creating your painting for the week. Enter the date you finished the painting for the week. (You may certainly complete more than one chapter and small painting every week, if you wish!)

1. Read the "Preface."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

2. Read Chapter 1 "Origin and Purpose of Art."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

3. Read Chapter 1 "Talent and Genius."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

4. Read Chapter 1 "Elementary Principles."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

5. Read Chapter 1 "Originality."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

6. Read Chapter 1 "Freedom in Expression."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

7. Read Chapter 1 "Opposition of Influences."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

8. Read Chapter 1 "The Artistic Composite."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

9. Read Chapter 1 "Rules."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

10. Read Chapter 1 "Their Place and Purpose."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

11. Read Chapter 1 "Imagination and Emotional Impulses." Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

12. Read Chapter 1 "Nature."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

13. Read Chapter 1 "Abstract and Visual Quality."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

14. Read Chapter 1 "Knowledge and Discipline."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

15. Read Chapter 1 "The Mental Approach."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

16. Read Chapter 1 "Enthusiasm."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

17. Read Chapter 1 "Direct and Remote Influences."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

18. Read Chapter 2 "Selection."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

19. Read Chapter 2 "High Ideals Important."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

20. Read Chapter 2 "Improper Motives."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

21. Read Chapter 2 "Simplicity."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

22. Read Chapter 2 "Unequal Measures."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

23. Read Chapter 2 "Natural Composition."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

24. Read Chapter 2 "Rearrangement."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

25. Read Chapter 2 "The View Finder."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

26. Read Chapter 2 "Balance."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

27. Read Chapter 2 "Mistakes in Composing."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

28. Read Chapter 2 "Discouragement."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

29. Read Chapter 2 "Preliminary Sketches."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

30. Read Chapter 2 "Pencil Notes."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

31. Read Chapter 2 "Several Sketches of the Same Subject." Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

32. Read Chapter 2 "Composition."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

33. Read Chapter 2 "Overworking the Composition."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

34. Read Chapter 2 "Breadth and Simplicity."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

35. Read Chapter 2 "Errors in Arrangement."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

36. Read Chapter 2 "Hills and Mountains."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

37. Read Chapter 2 "Trees."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

38. Read Chapter 2 "Clouds and Marines."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

39. Read Chapter 2 "Boats."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

40. Read Chapter 2 "Main Interest in Composition."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

41. Read Chapter 2 "Figures and Animals."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

42. Read Chapter 2 "Drawing."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

43. Read Chapter 2 "Mass Principle."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

44. Read Chapter 2 "Decorative Approach."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

45. Read Chapter 2 "Linear Design."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

46. Read Chapter 2 "Perspective."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

47. Read Chapter 2 "Station Point of the Artist."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

48. Read Chapter 2 "Horizon Line."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

49. Read Chapter 2 "Vanishing Points."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

50. Read Chapter 2 "Other Factors in Perspective."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

51. Read Chapter 2 "Values."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

52. Read Chapter 2 "Range of Values."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

53. Read Chapter 2 "Outdoors Compared to Pigment."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

54. Read Chapter 2 "Restricted Tonal Scale."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

55. Read Chapter 2 "Interchange."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

56. Read Chapter 2 "Its Value."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

57. Read Chapter 2 "Color."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

58. Read Chapter 2 "Balance."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

59. Read Chapter 2 "Harmony."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

60. Read Chapter 2 "Spectrum."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

61. Read Chapter 2 "Spectrum."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

62. Read Chapter 2 "Experimenting with Primary Colors."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

63. Read Chapter 2 "Predominating Tint or Shade."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

64. Read Chapter 2 "Grays."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

65. Read Chapter 2 "Difference in the Intensity of Color Outdoors and Pigment."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

66. Read Chapter 2 "The Palette."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

67. Read Chapter 2 "Rhythm."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

68. Read Chapter 2 "Rhythm a State of Mind."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

69. Read Chapter 2 "Rhythm in Nature."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

70. Read Chapter 2 "Visual Rhythm in the Picture."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

71. Read Chapter 2 "Repetition."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

72. Read Chapter 2 "Repetition of Line Form and Color."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

73. Read Chapter 3 "Composition Symbols or Stems."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

74. Read Chapter 3 "The Steelyard."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

75. Read Chapter 3 "The Balance Scale."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

76. Read Chapter 3 "The O, or Circle."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

77. Read Chapter 3 "The S, or Compound Curve."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

78. Read Chapter 3 "The Pyramid or Triangle."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

79. Read Chapter 3 "The Cross."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

80. Read Chapter 3 "The Radiating or Converging Line."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

81. Read Chapter 3 "The Ell or Rectangular."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

82. Read Chapter 3 "The Suspended Steelyard."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

83. Read Chapter 3 "The Three Spot."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

84. Read Chapter 3 "Group Mass."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

85. Read Chapter 3 "The Diagonal Line."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

86. Read Chapter 3 "The Tunnel or Tunnel-Like."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

87. Read Chapter 3 "The Silhouette."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

88. Read Chapter 3 "The Pattern."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

89. Read Chapter 4 "Conclusion."

Initials_____

What did you apply to your painting?

Date_____

Section Three

Lessons 7-10 are done concurrently with creating one painting every week.

Lesson 7

Assignment: Listen to or read *The Fountainhead*, by Ayn Rand.

The Fountainhead is a best-selling fiction book that all artists should read. It is an inspiring story of the true ideal of being an artist in this day and age. It is also a fantastic fiction book in its own right. There are lots of architecture terms in this book, so be sure to look them up online so you can see pictures of what they are talking about.

Skip ahead over the introduction, and start right on Chapter One: “Howard Roark laughed...”

I personally love listening to Audible books while I paint, so here is a link to the Audible and hardcopy versions:

<https://amzn.to/2YstwkP>

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 8

Assignment: Write the following essay and email it to me at info@erinhanson.com (with the subject line “The Fountainhead”).

Essay:

What do you think it means to have “integrity” as an artist? In your opinion, what is the “ideal” that an artist should strive for in our day and age?

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 9

Assignment: Purchase and read 5 books on art technique.

In the same way you gleaned useful information from *Composition of Outdoor Painting*, you will now break into your own research and discovery. Find 5 books on art that you want to read (or pull down 5 books from your shelf that you have always been meaning to read.) Read each book from cover to cover, looking for information that will help you realize your artistic vision on canvas.

By now you have created at least 100 original paintings, and you are starting to get a feel for what “your style” is going to look like. The purpose of reading these 5 books is to gather additional technique to address those trouble areas you are still running into, and to figure out ways to make the paint do what you want it to do.

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 10

Assignment: Purchase and read 5 books on art marketing.

There is a lot that can be said on art marketing. I have been studying the subject for 15 years, and I have likely read every book that has ever been published on the subject. Instead of telling you everything I've ever done that worked or didn't work, I will just tell you that learning marketing is rather like learning to paint. You must invest years of trial and error, as well as years of diligent study. The successful ways you find to best market your art will be different from the artist next door, who might find her successes along completely different lines.

So, just as you studied art books to help you figure out which techniques would let you realize your vision on canvas, you will now study art marketing books to find out which marketing techniques will work best for you. Marketing always involves getting your artwork in front of potential collectors. Try different suggestions as laid out in the books: try doing art festivals, try working with galleries, try selling your paintings online. Try social media, email marketing, online ads, and hanging paintings in coffee shops. Learn how to write about your paintings, and learn how to talk about your paintings. I love the book *Art Write* to help you with this: <https://amzn.to/2PZF0ZH>

You will soon learn that 80% of your painting sales come from only 20% of your marketing efforts. I can't tell you what those actions are going to be for you – it will be different for every artist. Keep track of your numbers, and track where each painting sale comes from. After six months, or a year, you will see that 80% of your sales are coming from only 20% of your marketing. So, what you do is concentrate your efforts on that 20%. You may feel like you are losing valuable marketing actions, but in fact you are specializing and homing in on your exact market. This will make every dollar you spend on marketing more effective.

Have fun studying! Learning how to market yourself can be as enjoyable as painting! This is how you will create a good living being an artist and say goodbye to the silly notion of “starving artists.”

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 11

Assignment: Continue creating one painting every week. Your weekly paintings can be small pieces, and you can work on larger pieces in between if you like. Every time you paint, first come up with a clear image in your mind of what you want to create before you pick up a brush. Use your pre-planning composition tools, pencil sketches, and painting sketches to work out the exact details of the composition and central communication of your painting before you begin. The clearer the image you can form in your mind before beginning to paint, the easier the painting process will be for you.

Continue reading new books to discover those little nuggets of information that will help you make your painting turn out the way you envisioned it in your mind. There are thousands of techniques in painting, and the only right ones are the ones that work for you. Don't be afraid to experiment! That is how your own unique style will emerge.

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 12

Assignment: Complete your first 200 paintings. Look back over your progress over the past several years and compare your earlier works with your later works. Are you starting to see a style emerge? Do you find that paintings are easier to create and match more closely to the mental picture you have of them beforehand?

Once you have completed every Lesson in this program, and you have also created 200 original works of art, send me an email! I would love to give you my personal congratulations!

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Conclusion

My lesson plan is comprised of every successful action I took in order to become the artist I am today. I believe that if you follow in my same footsteps, and do every action as I have laid out above, you will also find great success and pleasure in your work.

I wish you the very best in your painting.

Warmly,
Erin Hanson