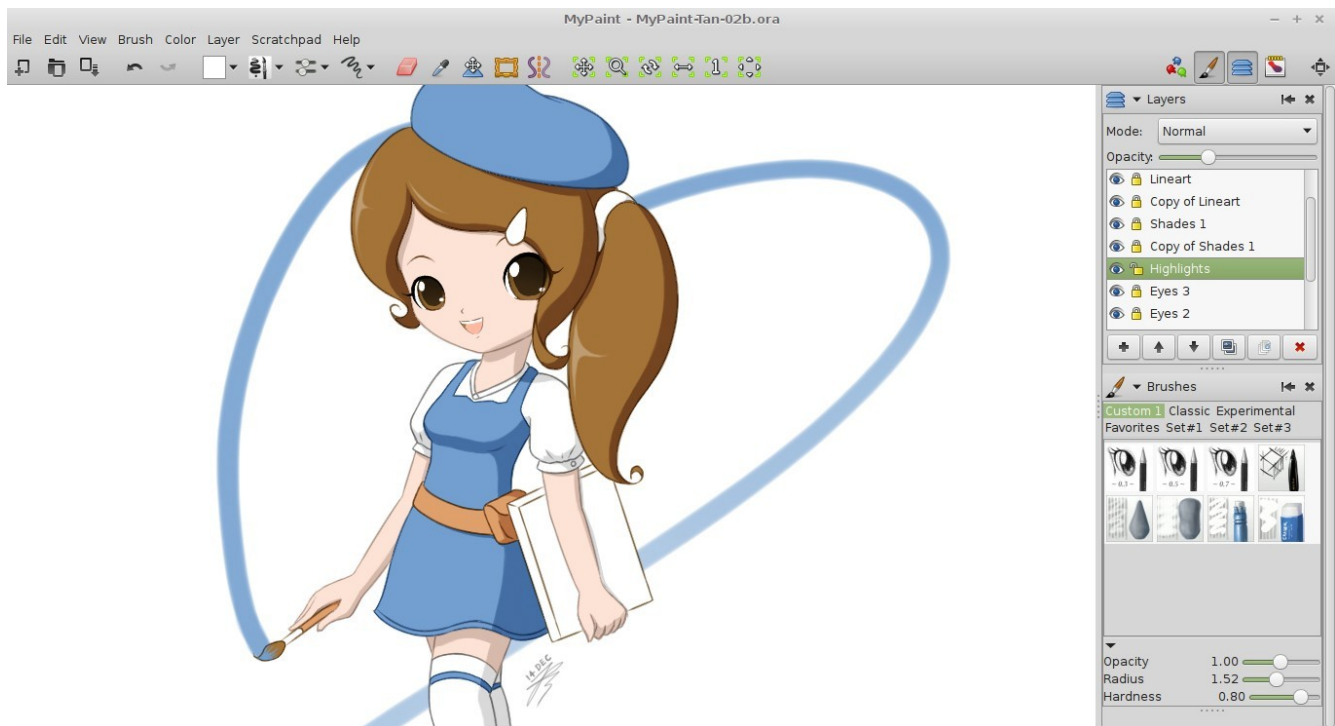# Getting Started with MyPaint

Welcome to MyPaint, the free and open source drawing and painting program!

In this tutorial, we will go over some of the basic tools and features MyPaint has to offer. It's not meant to be a comprehensive overview of all the available functions, but hopefully it can explain some of the most helpful features and get you started on drawing or painting with the program!

*MyPaint 1.1 was used for this tutorial, some features may vary for earlier/future versions.

The Workspace

MyPaint is designed to be a lightweight painting program that provides a clean, minimal interface to let you focus on your work.

Above is my default workspace. Usually, I only need the panels for layers and brushes to the right when working, but you can also customize the workspace to have the color panel and/or the scratchpad using the icons above the right panel. The panels can be fixed to the right or appear as separate pop-up windows, which you can switch by clicking the small left/right arrow icons on the upper right of each:

Colors
Opens the colors panel and gives you a range of tools for color selection, including color wheels, fixed palettes and component sliders.

Brushes
Contains the brush presets currently installed. You can quickly switch between different sets, organize your favorite presets and change the opacity, radius and hardness of the current brush.

Layers
Allows you to organize, duplicate and merge layers. You can also set each layer to different blend modes like screen, multiply and overlay.

Scratchpad
Opens a small, separate window that you can also draw on. This basically serves as a smaller, secondary canvas that you can use for anything, like color swatches or reference pics.

I usually hide the top toolbar when working in full canvas view (toggled by F11), but also make it visible from time to time to access some tools and settings.

From left to right, the buttons above are:

Current Color - This allows you to change the current swatch and also see the recent colors you've used.

Current Brush - Allows you to switch brushes, like the brush panel. Also shows the recent brushes you've used.

Brush settings - Provides advanced options for your current brush.

Line Mode - Allows you to switch the brush behavior: freehand, lines, line sequence or ellipse.

Erase mode - Remove strokes using the current brush settings.

Color Picker - Picks a color from the screen.

Move Layer - Reposition the current layer on the canvas.

Edit Frame - Define a frame that limits the canvas size.

Symmetry Mode - Mirrors your strokes along a vertical axis.

The other buttons to the left are used for navigation, which can also be done with keyboard/button shortcuts.

The Drawing Canvas

MyPaint's canvas has two notable features: nondestructive rotation/manipulation and the fact that it can go on infinitely.
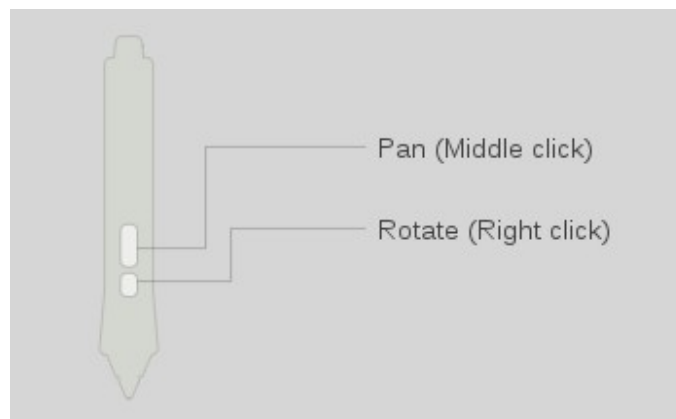
Nondestructive Rotation
When drawing, you can freely rotate the canvas to any angle using shift + middle button (by default) or by using control + left/right. This process is nondestructive, which means the rotation of the drawing itself is not modified/saved, only your view of the image. You can also mirror the canvas horizontally and vertically with I and U to change your view without modifying the image file.

Infinite Canvas
If you try to zoom out the view, you'll find that the canvas/drawing area has no set borders and can go on infinitely. Your drawing can extend for as much as you want, and MyPaint will save your project according to the size of the canvas that's already been drawn on.

I use a Wacom Bamboo tablet, and have set up the stylus buttons for navigation as follows:

You can edit button and keyboard shortcuts under Edit > Preferences > Buttons (I've also switched the buttons on my stylus under the main system settings).

Keyboard Shortcuts

Here are some of the keyboard shortcuts I use the most:

- and + - Zoom out/zoom in.

F11 - Switches between default and full canvas view. Switching to the latter eliminates all menus and toolbars, letting you focus on your work.

F12 - Resets the zoom and rotation of the image.

Tab - Hides or shows the right panel and/or pop-up panels. I often use this in full canvas view to still have access to layers and brush presets.

I/U - Inverts or mirrors the image horizontally and vertically. As previously mentioned, it's also nondestructive like canvas rotation.

Z/Y - Undo/redo, no need to hold control.

X - Scrolls through the last few color swatches you've recently used.

R - Enables the color picker when held.

E - Toggles erase mode for your current brush.

K - Toggles line mode to draw straight lines/curves.

Numbers 0-9 - Customizable shortcut buttons for different brush presets. Use control plus the number to assign the current brush, and press just the number to recall.
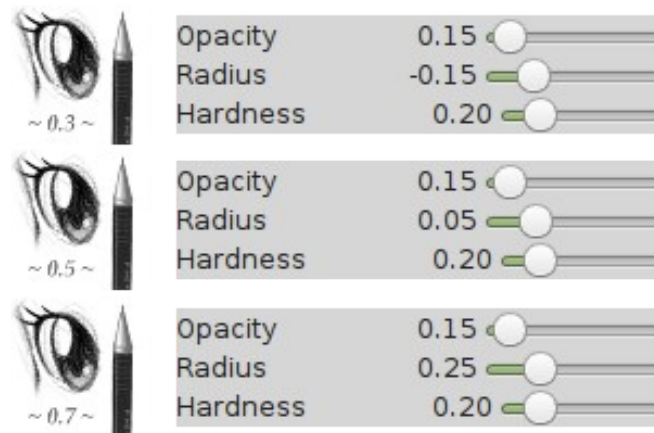
Brushes

Below are the brushes I use most often, along with the custom presets I've set them to (using the number shortcuts for some).
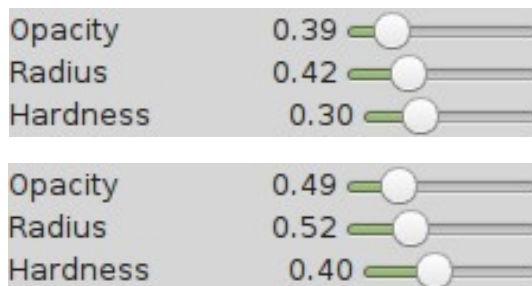
Deevad/2B pencil -
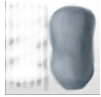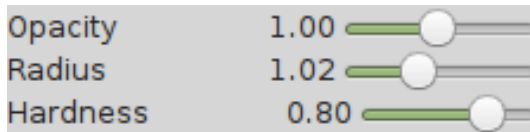I use three custom presets of this brush to mimic drawing with mechanical pencils:

	Opacity	0.15
~ 0.3 ~	Radius	-0.15
	Hardness	0.20

	Opacity	0.15
~ 0.5 ~	Radius	0.05
	Hardness	0.20

	Opacity	0.15
~ 0.7 ~	Radius	0.25
	Hardness	0.20

Deevad/Pen
For digital inking. I use two settings for thin/thick lines:

Opacity	0.39
Radius	0.42
Hardness	0.30

Opacity	0.49
Radius	0.52
Hardness	0.40

Deevad/Brush
For precise color fills, usually in cel shading. This allows me to fill in gaps while having fine control over the brush's thickness:

Opacity	1.00
Radius	1.02
Hardness	0.80

Deevad/various erasers
Kneaded erasers for soft/gradual erasure, usually to lighten sketches or make minor edits. Hard erasers for areas that need to be cleaned up completely.

Ramon/100% Opaque - For large areas that need to be colored in. Also useful for selectively changing a layer's colors (usually line art or shading) when set to "lock alpha" mode (Shift+L or Brush>Blend Mode>Lock Alpha Channel).

These brushes in particular help in creating clean, cel-shaded drawings. MyPaint offers a lot of other brushes that realistically replicate different art styles, from pencil drawings to watercolors. Feel free to experiment and find the ones that work best for you!

Saving and Exporting

You can save your work in three file formats: Openraster (.ora), JPEG and PNG.

Openraster - This is MyPaint's default file format that saves layer information (much like PSD files in Photoshop). The file format is also supported in other open source art programs like Krita and the GIMP.

JPEG - MyPaint exports all currently visible layers to a merged jpeg image at high quality settings.

PNG - Same as jpeg, but allows lossless image exporting and supports layer transparency. You can also export all the layers of your current project to separate PNG images.

That about covers the basic functions used when working with MyPaint. I hope this tutorial has been helpful!

Created using MyPaint, the GIMP and LibreOffice Writer.
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