



GRUNGY BACKGROUNDS

Jumpstart your art journal with these prompts for creating rich, grungy backgrounds and layered textures.

1. Collage + Wash Hybrid

Tear and layer your favorite found papers. Load your knife with glue mixed into your acrylic colors and apply in one stroke—glue, color and collage in a single, grungy move. Let bits hang off the edges, then press into the glue—no need to be neat!

2. Grunge Wash

Stick down one round of torn papers (any mix of textures). Once dry, scrape over them a thin dark acrylic wash with your knife. Wipe off while wet to reveal textures & seams.

3. Edge-Blend Collage

Cover the page in a patchwork of scraps. After it sets, use your fingertips (or the flat side of your knife) to push and smoosh each tear into its neighbor with a light neutral paint—creating soft, grungy transitions.

4. Grungy Abstract

Over a collaged + gessoed base, drop dilute acrylic or ink, mist with water, then spread & dab with a rag/tissue until it pools and streaks unpredictably. Once dry, add texture paste through a stencil for extra grit.

5. Gessoed Relief

Slather on thick gesso / texture paste with a palette knife. While still tacky, make marks with the knife scratching lines. Then drag a dark, thinned wash over the peaks—wipe off with a rag to make every ridge pop.

6. Mono-Print Texture

Press painted palette paper (or deli wrap) onto a collaged or gessoed page; peel it off to leave behind unpredictable paint-lift marks and ghost images.

7. Textured Tissue

Paint a rough layer of gesso + acrylic, brush marks visible. While still damp, tear and press thin tissue paper into the surface to mute down the color and also give textures. When dry, highlight the tissue texture to amplify peaks.

8. Debossed Overlay

Lay a stencil atop fresh gesso; press it in and peel away to reveal a raised pattern. Once cured, drag a fluid colored wash over the relief, then wipe back to highlight the shapes.

9. Brayer Blur

Collage an assortment of papers, then add small dollops of 2–3 acrylic hues on top using an old credit card. Roll brayer with light neutrals and white across the page to cover up the background color in an unexpected way. Finish with point-tool scribbles or asemic marks.

10. Tape Terrain

Tear strips of masking (or painter's) tape and press them onto your page—either smooth or deliberately wrinkled for extra texture. Layer thick gesso over the tape; once dry, continue with collage or a thinned wash.