Gold Leaf 101 with CBTV Live

Chapter 1 - Chapter 1
Gold Leafing 101
(cheerful music) - Hey everybody. It's Courtney from Creative Bug coming at you live like we always do on Tuesdays and Thursdays which means you can write in and ask questions, so please feel free to do so. We love it when you guys have questions for us. For today's live shoot I thought I would show you how to use and apply gold leaf. Gold leaf is really beautiful. I have a sample of it here. It should be blowing your minds right now because it's so reflective. It's actually a hammered metal. I believe it's copper and zinc in most cases. This is imitation gold leaf, so it's not actual gold. It's just gold colored, and the reason I thought I would show you how to do this is I have a shop called Long Weekend and we have a giant gold leaf circle right when you walk in the store, and pretty much every weekend someone asks me how he did it. Is that paint? Did you do it yourself? So, I thought I would show you how to use gold leaf. It's actually a very old artistic application. It's something that was used in paintings and on furniture, frames. If you go to a museum a lot of those frames are gold leafed, and in that case it was a hammered gold, and now imitation gold leaf works really well, and it's much more affordable. So, gold leaf comes in a package like this. This one happens to be 25 leaves or sheets, and there are little tiny, fine tissue papers between each sheet of gold. I don't know I you guys can see this, let me turn it around. So, it's super super fine. Here's a leaf or sheet that I used part of, and I wish you could hear it because if you got close enough to it you could actually hear the metal. Can you hear that? It's a really fine sheet of hammered metal, and it makes a really beautiful finish. I actually have a little test of gold leaf versus other types of gold paints and mediums, so I'm gonna show you that a little bit later, but first I want to show you how to use this. In addition to the gold leaf, you will also need sizing or adhesive. Let's put that aside for now. This is our gold leaf. Actually, a little bit of this goes a long way, so you can have a pack like this and use it for a single project or have it for many years and just do it a little bit at a time. The sizing is just adhesive size, and I actually like to use the same adhesive sizing that comes with the gold leaf brand. Usually this is in a special section in the art supply store. It's not gonna be with your normal paints. It's usually in a faux finishing section. It might be the section where they have stencils, and there's gonna be lots of options for gold leaf. I like the actual sheets and then the sizing itself, and it this is like a watered down glue, sort of, in consistency. It's white and then dries clear, but it is very very tacky. You cannot use watered down glue. You cannot use Elmer's glue. You cannot use Mod-Podge. You need to use gold leaf adhesive or sizing, so it comes in a little bottle like this. You want to make sure that you're also using a brush that is not too precious, so I'm using a watercolor brush, but I need to make sure that I wash it right after because this is very sticky. You need to wash it with soap and water otherwise you will ruin your brush. I have a little drawing here I did with Koi watercolor brush markers, and I also have a rock that I picked up. This has been dusted. It's free of any dirt or debris, and I wanted to show you on a rock too because it might be a little bit easier to see the sizing. On white paper the sizing is gonna go down white and is gonna be a little more tricky to see, but we'll apply sizing to both of these. I'm just dipping my brush in here, and what's really cool about using the gold leaf is you can be as detailed as you want because the leafing is only going to stick to where the sizing is. It will not permanently stick to any place there is not sizing. You do not want a super thick layer. You want the thinnest layer possible, but you want to get even coverage. I'm working on wax paper here, and it might be hard to see this. I'm gonna paint a little bit

© CBTV Live and Creativebug Inc., 2026

more, and then I'll show you in just a minute what it looks like. If I pick this up, you can see where it's glossy, that's where it's wet, and that's where I've painted so far with the sizing. Remember we're live, so you can write in and ask questions. Maybe share your experiences with using gold leaf if you have before. It's something that you can do on paper. You can do it on wood, you can do it on metal. You can even do it on glass. Anything that you can get the sizing to stick to you can gold leaf. - [Ally] We have our first question. - [Courtney] Question? - [Ally] Brianne says - [Courtney] Hi Brianne! - [Ally] She has seen silver leaf and copper leaf at craft stores. - Good question, Brianne is commenting that she has seen silver and copper leaf as well, and that's true. In the same section in addition to gold leaf you can find silver leaf. You can find copper leaf. You can find little bags of little leafy bits which gives it a different, more marble-y look. I prefer the sheets because you will get a lot of those little bits anyway, so you can make your own of that packet. There's also these really beautiful Moray style ones that have been heated, so it's still metal, but it's got this weird iridescent rainbow-y effect to it, and you can find that as well. All of those work in the same way, so you would apply the sizing or adhesive and then you'd apply the sheet or the little tiny powdery leftover bits. Good question. Brianne, what have you used it on if you have used it? Let us know what kind of project. This would be really fun to buy a very basic cement planter and then do a really cool gold leaf accent. You could do this on canvas. You could do it really large for wall decor like we have at my store, so you guys are literally watching paint dry here or sizing dry. I'm just applying it. I'm going for the thinnest coat possible because the reason we want it thin is we can't actually apply the gold leaf until this adhesive is dry, so that's a waiting game. The thicker it is the longer it's gonna take to dry. The other thing is if you get any lumps or bumps you might think everything else is dry, but anywhere where there's a little ridge or a little bump or a little puddle of this it won't actually be dry in the center, and you'll do all your leafing, and then in that spot it'll come up because it's not actually dry, so it's just as bad as not applying any adhesive in that area. If it's still wet adhesive it's not gonna stick. All right, I think I've got everything. I'm just gonna rotate it here. You can see what's glossy. This is still wet. This will dry fairly quickly because it's on an absorbent surface like watercolor paper, so we're gonna set that aside and apply our gold leaf once it's dry. Before I do that I want to come in and just add a little bit of sizing here in the center of these flowers. It's okay. It's picking up this ink because those are a water based marker. That's totally fine. I'm gonna set that over here to dry. - [Ally] We have our next question! - [Courtney] Next question. - [Ally] A couple of folks are asking how long does the sizing take to dry? - Yeah, okay so good question. How long does the sizing take to dry? On that surface, the white watercolor paper it's a little hard to see, but when it's wet it's going to be white, and when it's dry it's going to be fully clear, and I'll do a little sample on this. Actually, let's so that now. Why don't we paint a little bit of sizing on this black board, which you can see I've got all my different types of gold here which we're gonna talk about a little bit later. Just so you can see this go down on a really clear surface, that's the sizing. It's a milky white. I'm doing a thin even coat. You can see some air bubbles because of the texture of the canvas. That's not a problem. When this dries it's gonna go clear, and I'll show that to you so you can see that's when we apply our gold leaf, so let's put that aside. Good question. That's why I love the questions because it reminds me and prompts me to do things that make a little bit more sense visually, so that's perfect. When that's dry I'll show it to you, so you can see when is the right time to apply the sizing. Oh, I'm sorry the gold leaf after the sizing has dried. So, now I'm gonna add some sizing to the rock or stone, and you could just do dots. You could do a pattern. I'm just gonna apply it to a small section of this rock, and because this has a lot of little valleys or divots in it I want to make sure to go over those areas and make sure that one, they have sizing, and two, they're not

© CBTV Live and Creativebug Inc., 2026

puddling because that will take forever to dry. So, I have a little baby wipe here. I'm just gonna wipe off my brush and come back in and just make sure that's an even, thin coat. And again, we're gonna let this dry, so that's nice and shiny. I'm gonna go ahead and cap this. Now, you can see there's a little bit of rusting, and I've got a little bit of the sizing here. This stuff is no joke. It's like cement when it dries, so if you can try to remember to baby wipe off that edge or the inside of your cap. If you want to rub a little bit of olive oil or something there with your finger that would be really smart. I didn't think about doing that, and I've been using this bottle for a while so I actually have to soak this in hot water right before I want to open it again. So, we'll put that aside and make sure it's capped really well. While our sizing is drying, I thought we would look at this little gold chart. This is gold leaf after I've applied it, burnished it. You can see it picks up the texture of the canvas, and it's really shiny and metallic, so really reflecting the light, pretty consistent little patch there. All of this I applied with a brush, so we've got these brush strok-y edges. This is called Viva Decor Inka color. This is a cream. It looks like makeup or maybe something you would eat, like frosting, and that gives you a pretty opaque color. It goes on like a butter or a cream and it dries. It's an acrylic finish when it dries. This is Liquid Leaf and this is oil based, so it's made by the same people that make gold leaf. It comes in a little pot like this. It's really liquid metal, it's pretty amazing. It is oil based, so it's a little bit stinky, and you have to use mineral spirits or something to wash off your brush, so that's something to consider. The best substitute I found for this is a Japanese watercolor. It comes in a little pan like this, and it's not super cheap. It's $15 or so. I've added some water here. Actually, an ice cube because I couldn't find any water right before we started, and let me show you what that looks like, so you can see. It is pretty opaque especially for a watercolor. When I first used this I was like, "Oh my god, that really feels "like gold leafing or liquid leaf." It really feels like an oil based paint which is pretty impressive. Then you have your acrylic craft paints, so Folk Art multi-surface, and I love this brand of metallics. This is DecoArt, and you can see those here. So, they're a little more transparent. They're not a watercolor. They are an acrylic paint, so a little bit thicker bodied, but on the black you can see that you might need two coats if you want a really saturated gold, whereas something like the liquid leaf or the actual gold leaf you just do in one application. You get super saturated, really opaque, perfect results. - [Ally] We have our next question. - [Courtney] Next question. - [Ally] Do you need sizing for the liquid leaf? - Oh, the question is do you need sizing for the liquid leaf and the answer is no. That's a good question. It's kind of all in one for you, so it goes on like a paint, but because it's oil based you need to remember to use mineral spirits to rinse out your brush unlike water. The sizing is super super sticky. It does come out with water. You could use a little bit of soap. It's not a mineral spirits thing, but I would recommend using an old brush or a not too expensive brush just because it's very likely that you will ruin your bristles over time especially. So, this guy is almost dry if you guys can see this. It's pretty glossy. I can still see a little bit of white in there, but I think I'm gonna give it 30, 40 seconds more, and then it should be nice and dry. You can feel it and it's pretty tacky. I wouldn't recommend putting your hands too much on the sizing because the oils from your hand will create that sizing to not be as effective. We want this to be nice and even, fully dry before we apply our gold leaf because that's what's going to adhere to the gold leaf. All the companies that make the gold leaf sheets, they also make a sealant, and I don't usually use the sealant, but you totally can. If you're working on something that's gonna be handled a lot, it's gonna be exposed to a lot of sun or light, then you might want to use the sealant to protect it. The gold leaf will oxidize over time because it is actual metal. For my shop, we made these sandwich boards where we did this big gold leaf circle, and it was out in the rain and out at night and out in the wind and exposed to all the elements, and it tarnished to this coppery green

© CBTV Live and Creativebug Inc., 2026

color because the imitation gold leaf is made with a large part copper and a little bit of zinc, so good things to keep in mind depending on your application. All right, I think this is pretty good. You really want this to be nice and glossy, no longer white, fully dry. I wouldn't do this and then go away for a day because the dust can settle and then ruin your adhesive and you have to start the whole process over, so you want to be mindful and working actively, but you don't want to be too quick and try to apply your gold leaf when this is still wet. Let's do our gold leaf here in a little patch, and then we'll go back and do our little floral and the rock that I applied sizing to earlier once they are dry. All right. Now, gold leaf will and does stick to everything. It sticks temporarily from static because it's so so thin, and then it will stick permanently when there is sizing, so if you have wet hands, or you've painted this entire canvas with some other kind of paint the gold leaf is gonna stick to that temporarily, so you don't want anything to be wet or have any stickiness. I was just getting to a sheet that I have here. This is a partial sheet which is fine. There are a couple of ways to pick this up. I often just use my hands, but I've got a little bit of sizing on my hands, and I can feel it's very sticky. This gold leaf is gonna stick to my hands. You can use a palette knife to pick this up, so you would just shimmy your palette knife underneath. There are a couple of other methods that I have seen. One of my favorites is an old school sign painting method where you use a really soft bristled brush, a wide one, and you want to get some static on it. So, you can rub it right on your shirt or on your arm. I actually saw a dude rub it on his beard which was pretty awesome, and that picks up the gold leaf. So, if you need that again this is being picked up with static, so you can use a brush like this. This is an old sign painting method. You can rub it on your shirt. This old guy I saw rubbed it on his beard, which was pretty awesome, and then that creates static and allows you to pick up that gold leaf sheet and then place it down. We don't need this whole sheet, so I'm actually gonna do what I often do is just tear off a little piece here. I don't want to get too many little broken bits and bobs because it does change the look of the gold leaf, so I'm just getting a small scrap, but it still fits over. I'm gonna close this just for now, and just with my finger I'm gonna burnish this. You could use a soft brush to burnish this a little bit. You can see how that gold leaf is picking up the texture of the canvas, and then you need a stiff bristled brush, like a stencil brush, an inexpensive brush, and you want to use that to get rid of all the excess gold leaf, and you can recycle this. This is like what comes in those bags of little gold leaf scraps. You can if you want. It's hard to move around because it sticks to everything via static, so if you go to throw this in the garbage can it'll actually stick to the bag in the garbage can, and you can see it's sticking to my wax paper, so I actually don't worry too much about that. You can see that's super bright, nice, shiny. Now here, you can see there's a little bit of adhesive that's dried. It may not have been enough adhesive. Maybe I put too thin a coat, but I can also try to go in with these little scraps and work them in with my finger, and usually that is enough to get them to stick and be there permanently and then go back in. You can see that we filled up that little space here. So, it's a little bit of a process. I actually like some of the cracks and things that happen in the gold leaf, and I'll show you when we get to a bigger piece, so let's move that aside. - [Ally] We have our next question. - [Courtney] Yes, our next question. - [Ally] Can you use a heating tool to speed up the drying time of sizing? - The question is can you use a heating tool? Yeah. In general, I don't recommend that because you can burn the sizing in which case it's gonna discolor. You are putting gold over it, but depending on the surface below you could actually burn the surface that's below it. You can cause a bubble which then will peel off the sizing. The gold leaf is not gonna stick to that area, and then you have to start over by reapplying your sizing. If you were to do that I would do it with a little bit of caution. It doesn't take that long. Set yourself up with another project. Just make sure you put a really thin, even coat. Don't

© CBTV Live and Creativebug Inc., 2026

do it on a rainy day. Try and do it on a drier day just so that it dries quickly and evenly, but it's not rushed. You can try it. I don't recommend it, just because I feel like you'll wind up spending more time having to repair all the little bits that you might have burnt or bubbled in the process. Good question though, thank you. Let's go back to our little floral. It's still a little bit satiny gloss. It's not a high gloss, so it doesn't look super wet. I feel like the centers that I did last still might be a little bit wet, and I want this to be tacky but dry, so let's give this one more second or another minute rather, but my rock by comparison looks great. It's shiny, but it's not milky in any section, so we can gold leaf this guy. Let's go back. We have that partial sheet we were using. I'm just gonna pick up this whole thing. Again, I could use that method. It's pretty staticky still in there, let's get a little more, rub a little more. There we go. That's also sticking to my wax paper a bit, and then you can lay it down right onto your rock. I'll pick this up a bit. You can pat it down. It's not gonna stick where there is not sizing. You can just tear away at the edge of the rock or the edge of the paper, the edge of your canvas. If you want to save any of those little bits you can. When you open this, these little bits fly everywhere, so if you are wanting to save these because this feels so precious, maybe stick them in a little Altoids tin or something else because it's kind of hard to work with as you can see as things get smaller and smaller. I'll just put a lid on that for now. - [Ally] We have our next question. - [Courtney] Yeah? - Natalie is asking if you recommend using gold leaf over the sidings of book pages? - Question from Natalie is do you recommend using gold leaf for the sides of end pages? Yeah, gold leafing is a technique that is used for that. That feels a little bit trickier. If you make a perfect bound book, and Faith would be a good person to ask. She's also on our live shoot. She has a Master's in bookmaking if you didn't know, and a great class on bookmaking on Creative Bug. A perfect bound book is where you stack all these pages. You clamp it down really super tight, all those pages line up perfectly, and you apply glue on an edge, and that's kind of how those yellow legal tablets are made, where you just tear sheets off and they have a gummy edge. I think applying gold leaf would be something similar to that where you'd be applying the adhesive, but you'd have to make sure that those pages are perfectly aligned, and that they're clamped down super tight, so that you don't glue your four edges together in the process of adding the sizing. Try it. If it's your first time doing something like that, and you haven't done a perfect bound book where you go through a similar process with glue then I might use a gold paint instead, just because if the gold gets into those pages it's not gonna glue them together in the same way that the sizing will. Let's take a look at my rock. Good questions, thank you, and that is really nice and in there, so pretty. I'm using my really stiff bristled brush to get any extra. If you could only feel how awesome this feels. It's so lovely and shiny and pretty. I think that would be such a nice paper weight and such a fun way to jazz up some of those rock souvenirs you get on your beach vacation or your lake vacation. So so pretty, so that's super easy. You can cover this with a sealant. Sometimes the gold leaf manufacturers recommend that. I probably would actually let it lie how it is because I think I might like the way the patina would occur because this is metal and it will oxidize. You could always apply a second coat of gold leaf after. You could reuse your sizing and add another sheet of gold leaf if it was feeling too dull, so that's something to consider. All right, I'm gonna clean up this space a little bit more, and we'll do one last sheet of gold leaf on our little floral. This time I'm gonna use a bit of wax paper, but I'm not gonna use it as my surface. I'm gonna use it to pick up my sheet of gold leaf, so let's put our floral here. It's already been coated in the sizing, and the sizing has dried. It's a nice satiny finish, but it's not super glossy. (coughing) Excuse me. (coughing) We're gonna open to a new sheet of gold leaf. We're gonna use our wax paper. Just lay it down and then using your fingers wipe across to create some static to pick up the sheet. Look how awesome that is! Close this, and

© CBTV Live and Creativebug Inc., 2026

here is our little floral with the sizing, and we're just gonna put this straight back down onto this image, and before I burnish it too much I don't want it to stick to the table just so you get the full visual, so let's put one more sheet of paper under us, and let's burnish here. Just using our fingers. I don't know if you can see this, but when I burnish here it's really sticking, and under here it's bubbling because that's where the painting is. (coughing) Let's burnish some more, and I'm just gonna use my fingernail to cut the gold leaf here. I think it'll be better in releasing the gold leaf sheet from the painting. All right, let's see. We'll remove that. It looks like maybe there was a little bit of sizing here that wasn't fully dry, but let's just see because if we can get this to stick then that might be good enough. All right. Use your really course bristled brush to get the rest of your gold leaf off the edges, and then what about our image in the center? Oh my god, there it is. Using that course bristled brush continue. That is pretty much the prettiest thing ever. We're also getting gold leaf everywhere. Just so you can see that, and I painted really loosely around my motif. If you are wanting a perfect edge, you can go back in with your sizing, try this again, let it dry entirely, and then do another bit of gold leaf. You do see a little bit of seams almost, but even in the most precise and perfect gold leaf methods you will see those because the sheets are square, so you will see these square seams. If you look at this big guy, you can kind of see that here, so if you were to walk down the decorative arts section of a museum and see a huge panel of gold leaf you would still see those seams, so even the most precise appliers of gold leaf still get those edgings, but I want to show you a little trick for using those imperfections to your advantage. Let's just clear our table off here. Although, that is so pretty. I love my Koi brush pens, you know this because I use them in my surface design class. You could pick a dark color and go into all these little sections. The marker is going to resist the gold, so it's only going to stick to the exposed paper which is really fun and allows you to get a vintage-y feel. You could go in with a hot pink if you wanted. I can show you that here. You can use a paper towel to wipe away the excess that's sitting on top of the metal, and you're just left with the marker or the water color down on the paper. I like to do it with something really dark, so you can really see that contrast. We can go in here. (scratching) I don't mind a little bit of white space, but just so you can see the effect, and then I'm gonna wipe away. I don't want to wipe into my marker drawing because I don't want it to discolor my flowers. I'm just gonna wipe toward the gold, and there you have two watercolor and marker pen florals that have been totally dressed up and in some way aged too. I feel like when I was showing this to Liana she's like, "Oh, it looks so Italian or Florentine or something," which is really fun. I like how we were also able to get the gold leaf in the center of these flowers, so really you can be more precise with it in tiny little areas, or you can use it as backgrounds and for large areas as well, but I think it adds another layer to a painting or mixed media. You could, of course, do this in a book. You can, like I said, do it on wood or glass or metal. Anything that sizing can stick to, you can do the gold leaf with. Do we have a few more questions? - [Ally] Do you? - You may not be able to see me yet, but you can hear me. We have a couple of questions and Ally is gonna hand those off to us. - [Ally] Robin is asking can you apply sizing over paint so the contrast is less dramatic between the image and the leaf? - The question is can you apply sizing over paint, so that you don't have this stark contrast? The answer is yes. So, you could do watercolor, you can do this on colored paper, you can do this on acrylic paint, you can do this on oil paint. Instead of starting with a white background you could do a dark background, you could do a medium tone, and then apply your gold leaf. In fact, I think a Russet-y red underpainting which is really popular for Italian underpaintings of the Renaissance that is a really common and really beautiful color to use under this gold leaf. It's kind of a Russet-y color. You can experiment with that. I could have started with this indigo color. I like the white paper because

© CBTV Live and Creativebug Inc., 2026

in this case I was using the watercolor, and I needed that white paper for the luminosity in my flowers, but that's an excellent question. - [Ally] We should announce our Craft-cation winners. - Oh! We have two Craft-cation winners. How did people apply for that? - [Ally] We posted it on our blog. - That was posted on our blog. If you haven't checked out or blog you can find that at creativebug.com, and we have two winners. They'll go to Craft-cation which is an awesome conference in Ventura, California, hosted by some very lovely ladies who also put on Patchwork Craft-cation, and who are our two winners, Ally? - [Ally] Andrea Miller. - Andrea Miller, congratulations you're one of our winners. We're sending you to Craft-cation. - [Ally] And, Darlene Campbell. - And, Darlene Campbell. Congratulations. If you haven't been to Craft-cation before it's so much fun. I've taught there a few times. We have lot of Creative Bug artists who are gonna be there including, I think, Lisa Solomon. - [Ally] Lisa Solomon. Who else? - [Ally] Pam Garrison. - Pam Garrison. - [Ally] Twinky Chan. - Twinky Chan, we love her. She's a local gal. - [Ally] Anna Joyce. - Anna Joyce will be there, does some fabulous surface design and indigo dyeing. - [Ally] And, Anne Wheel. - And, Anne Wheel. And, our friends at Simplicity I think are gonna be there too. So, you can follow along probably on Instagram if you did not win, but keep an eye on those contests for our blog and thank you for joining us live. We'll see you next time on our live shoot which happens every Tuesday and Thursday at 4:00 pm. Thanks for tuning in. (cheerful music)

© CBTV Live and Creativebug Inc., 2026