

# Gilding: Basic Instructions

## Supplies

- Gesso
- Acrylic paint
- Gold leaf size (oil-based or water-based adhesive)
- Imitation leaf (booklet is 25 sheets of 5"x5")
- Soft hair brush for applying gesso and size
- Squirrel hair brush for burnishing gold leaf
- Scissors



## Method

1. Prime the surface with gesso.
2. Paint a dark-coloured acrylic or metal leaf basecoat.  
For gold leaf choose red oxide or burnt sienna.  
For silver choose black or dark green.  
For copper choose red oxide or burnt umber.  
Let the base coat dry before continuing.
3. Use a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " or 1" brush to apply gold size. The metal leaf will only adhere to the surface where you apply the size so be sure to check that you have not missed any areas.  
For imitation leaf, use either water-based or oil-based size. For real silver leaf, use only oil size.  
Let this application reach the proper tack (the necessary degree of stickiness to be ready to receive the leaf.) This should be between one and eight hours. Follow the manufacturer's directions on the label.
4. Apply the sheet of metal leaf to the sticky surface.  
**Tip 1:** If you have trouble transporting the sheets of leaf from the book to the surface, you can use this alternative method. Cut a piece of wax paper to a slightly larger size than your sheets of leaf. Place the wax paper over the sheet of leaf and rub the back to create static and then lift the wax paper up and the gold will cling and be easily transported over the tacky surface to be gilded.  
**Tip 2:** If leaf is too large, it can be easily cut with scissors. Note a single sheet is too delicate to cut separately. It is better to cut 5 or more sheets together (with the tissue interleaving still attached).  
**Tip 3:** Chances are, if it is your first attempt at leafing, the leaf will crumble or tear as you lay it down. Don't be discouraged; you'll get the hang of it — it just takes time. Be sure to gather all scraps and pieces and save them in a little box for other projects and touch-ups.
5. While you protect the leaf with tissue, press it onto the surface with a soft blending brush.
6. When the leaf is dry, burnish it with a soft, flat brush to remove the excess, then polish the surface with a soft cloth to buff to a shine.
7. Apply a coat of gloss varnish to seal and protect the fragile metal leafing.