

# The Mighty Mini-Masterpiece: Painting a Nutcracker!

## Materials Needed

- Wooden, ceramic, or thick cardboard cutout Nutcracker figure (pre-primed white if possible)
- Acrylic or Washable Tempera Paints (Suggested colors: Red, Royal Blue, Black, White, Gold/Yellow)
- Paintbrushes (1 medium flat/square brush for big areas, 1 small pointed brush for details)
- Water cups for cleaning brushes
- Paper towels or old rags
- Palette (paper plates, Styrofoam trays, or dedicated palette)
- Surface protection (newspaper, craft mat, or plastic tablecloth)
- (Optional for extension) Glitter, paint pens, or sealant spray (used by adult)

## Introduction: Getting Ready to March

**Hook:** Imagine a tiny wooden soldier standing guard, wearing a fancy uniform! Who is he? The Nutcracker! Today, we are going to become master artists and bring our own brave Nutcracker to life with color.

### Learning Objectives (Tell them what you'll teach):

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Identify the main parts of the Nutcracker figure (hat, uniform, boots).
2. Use two different sized paintbrushes correctly for big spaces and tiny details.
3. Successfully paint your Nutcracker figure, covering all the big areas neatly.

## Body: The Painting Workshop

### Success Criteria:

You know you are successful when:

- Your Nutcracker is painted with at least three different colors.
- You used your medium brush for the big areas and your small brush for the tiny details.
- You cleaned your brushes between colors so the colors don't mix and get muddy!

### Step 1: I Do (Modeling the Technique)

#### Focus: Safety and Base Coat

**Educator Action (Modeling):** "First, we need to learn how to make our paintbrush march correctly! Hold the brush gently, not too tight. Watch me as I show you how to 'base coat' the Nutcracker's jacket."

A base coat means painting one color over a big area first. I dip my brush lightly, wipe the extra paint off the edge, and paint smoothly in one direction (up and down or side to side) to keep the paint flat."

### **Demonstration Points:**

- Proper brush grip (like holding a pencil).
- Demonstrate using the medium brush for the biggest section (the jacket).
- Demonstrate rinsing the brush completely in the water cup and blotting it dry before switching colors.

## **Step 2: We Do (Guided Uniform Painting)**

### **Focus: Large Area Coverage**

### **Activity: The Big Colors**

**Educator Guidance:** "Now it's your turn! We are going to paint the biggest parts of the uniform together. Choose your colors for the uniform jacket and the pants. Remember to use your medium brush!"

1. **The Jacket:** Select a main color (like red or blue) and cover the jacket area fully.
2. **The Pants/Trousers:** Select a different color for the pants (often white, black, or blue).
3. **The Hat:** Paint the main color of the hat.

**Formative Assessment Check:** Circulate and observe. Are learners using the correct brush size? Are they cleaning their brushes properly when switching colors? Provide immediate, positive feedback on technique.

**Transition:** "Great job getting the big colors down! Now, let's let those areas dry a little while we prepare for the tiny, exciting details!"

## **Step 3: You Do (Independent Detail Work)**

### **Focus: Fine Motor Control and Creativity**

### **Activity: Adding the Sparkle**

**Educator Guidance:** "It's time to switch to the small, pointy brush! This brush is mighty, but we must use a very tiny amount of paint for the tiny spots. Look at your Nutcracker—what details does he need? Think about shiny buttons, big black boots, a gold belt, or maybe some hair!"

### **Learners work independently to add:**

- Boots (usually black).
- Buttons down the front (tiny dots of gold or white).
- Belt (a thin line).
- Facial features (eyes, eyebrows, beard/mustache—if applicable).

## Conclusion: Standing Proud

### Closure and Recap (Tell them what you taught):

"Look at your magnificent Nutcracker! They look ready to march in a parade! Let's quickly check off the things we did today."

- **Q&A Recap:** What was the first thing we painted? (The big parts/base coat). Which brush did we use for the tiny buttons? (The small brush).
- **Display:** Have learners carefully place their Nutcrackers in a safe space to dry completely. Encourage them to title their masterpiece (e.g., "The Brave Red General").

### Summative Assessment:

The successful completion of the painted Nutcracker figure serves as the summative assessment. Evaluate against the success criteria:

1. Did the learner use a variety of colors?
2. Are the large areas covered (base coated)?
3. Are the small details added (demonstrating control of the smaller brush)?

## Adaptations and Differentiation

### Scaffolding (Support for Learners Needing Help):

- **Pre-Drawing:** Use a pencil or thin marker to lightly draw guidelines (lines for the belt, where the jacket ends, etc.) directly on the Nutcracker figure before the painting begins.
- **Color Choice Limitation:** Limit the palette to 3 or 4 primary colors to reduce decision overload.
- **Hand-Over-Hand Guidance:** Physically guide the learner's hand to help them feel the correct pressure and movement of the brush during the "I Do" phase.

### Extension (Challenges for Advanced Learners):

- **Complex Patterns:** Challenge them to paint stripes, polka dots, or checks on the uniform using the small brush.
- **Unique Characters:** Instead of a traditional soldier, design a themed Nutcracker (e.g., a Superhero Nutcracker, a Pirate Nutcracker, or a Rainbow Nutcracker).
- **Layering:** Introduce the concept of layering paint (painting gold over dry red) to create depth or shine.