How to Prepare **American Easel** Cradle Boards for Painting

1. **FOR ALL MEDIUMS** - First finish the sides of the cradle board. You have a couple of options:  
   a) Do this by either painting the sides with a clear acrylic water-based varnish such as MinWax Polycrylic finish which dries fast. OR,  
   b) You can paint the sides with a color such as black. You will need to paint the sides with at least 3 coats of clear varnish or paint. It is recommended to lightly sand (220 grit) in between coats for a smooth finish. Be sure wipe up any drips that may have gotten on the front surface.

2. Once the sides are painted and dry tape them off right up to the edge of the front surface. This way paint slopped on the sides can be wiped off and the finished sides will stay clean.

3. **FOR OIL or ACRYLIC PAINT** – It is recommended that the surface be gessoed with 3 coats. It helps to sand in between coats but isn’t necessary. An ALTERNATIVE for Oil or Acrylic paint is to carefully glue a sheet of pre-gessoed canvas or canvas paper (Canson Canva-Paper is ready for oil or acrylic without priming or preparation) to the surface with PVA glue*.  

4. **FOR WATERCOLOR** - Glue watercolor paper to the surface of the cradle board after finishing the sides.*  

5. **FOR PASTELS** – Pastel paper can be glued to the surface of the cradle board using the same method as oil, acrylics or watercolor. However, the surface of the pastel painting must be protected somehow. Clear Lucite is an option. An ALTERNATIVE is to reverse the cradle board and then cut the pastel paper to the interior dimensions of the back side of the cradle board. Glue the finished pastel to the inside of the cradle board and secure a piece of Lucite over the top to create a sort of shadow box. *  

6. It is perfectly acceptable to create on either side of the cradle board just don’t extend your creation outside of the 6”x6” perimeter. You can build out the surface of the board to form a 3 dimensional work of art. Be creative – sculpture, collage, wood carving, clay, etc.

7. The FINAL step is to attach **D-rings and wire** to the back of the cradle board for hanging – Please NO SCREW EYES, ALLIGATOR HANGERS or OTHER FUNKY HANGING SYSTEMS. Drill holes for the screws 4 inches down from the top. Pull the wire taut when securing it to the D-rings. This way the cradle boards will line up evenly on the wall when they are hung in the gallery.

*To glue canvas or paper to the surface of the cradle board coat the entire board surface with PVA (Polyvinyl Acetate) glue. Now lay a sheet of slightly bigger (8”x8” will give you a 1” border) canvas or paper on to the surface of the board. Carefully wipe the canvas or paper from the middle to the outer edge to remove any air bubbles. Now turn the cradle board upside down. Place a flat board at least 6”x6” on top of the prepared cradle board. On top of the flat board place several weighs. I use 2 or 3 full gallon paint cans. This will press the canvas or paper tightly to the cradle board surface. Once the PVA glue is dry you can carefully trim the extended edge of the canvas or paper with a sharp exact-o blade. PVA glue is acid free, dries clear and flat, sets fast and is archival. PVA glue works well with paper, wood, vinyl, collage, boards, crafts.