

Basic Watercolour Materials

Support (Life's too short to paint on cheap paper)

- This is the surface that is painted on. It can be a paper or the new watercolour canvas.
- The best watercolour paper is 100% rag (cotton) fiber with a neutral pH of 7 (acid free) and are handmade or mould made. It is available in sheets, rolls or different size blocks. I prefer a support that is durable and so use Arches. Waterford, Saunders and Fabriano are also quality brands.
- It is available in different weights. Heaver paper absorbs more water, stays wet longer and buckles less when wet that lighter papers do.
- The most common weights are: 185gsm, the most economical, needs stretching
300gsm, very popular as a quarter sheet or less will not need stretching
640gsm, minimum buckling, rarely needs stretching, most expensive

Stretching Paper

Stretching paper prevents buckling and a lighter, cheaper paper can be used.

- **Step 1-** the paper is soaked in water, the time to saturate depends on the weight, from 5 to 30 minutes.
185gsm can be sprayed thoroughly on both sides, instead of immersing.
- **Step 2-** remove the support diagonally form the water, allowing the surplus to run off and place on the backer board (6mm MDF board available for a hardware store)
- **Step 3-** use a new paint roller to gently flatten, from the centre out, removing air pockets and excess water. Some prefer to roll a towel over it.
- **Steps 4-** fasten to the backer board with either staples or pre gummed tape. Staples (4mm) should be placed at least 1 cm in from the edge of the paper and approximately 10 cm apart. . The larger the paper sizes the further in the staples have to be, as a larger size will have more tension.

Gummed tape is cut to length, dampened with a spray and the width of the tape is split evenly between the board and the paper. Roller the tape or smooth it to ensure good adhesion. Lay the board flat until completely dry. The drying time will depend on the temperature and humidity. Heavy paper will take all day.

Staples: - more expensive to initially purchase, always works but takes time to remove

Tape: - It sometimes let's go and has to be redone, has to be cut from board and some tape remains on the painting to be framed out. The tape builds up on the board and has to be scraped off.

Paper Texture

- *Cold pressed:* - medium textured finish. Paint spreads evenly and the surface allows reasonable detail making it a popular choice.
- *Rough:* - heavy textured surface, good for loose textural effects, but not for fine detail. The easiest for beginners to work with.
- *Hot pressed:* - smooth surface that is good for detail but the paint tends to slide around on the surface for a unique effect. The most difficult to work with.

Paint or pigment

- Watercolors come in tubes, cakes, and pencils. Tube paint is most commonly used with cake or pan colours being useful for travelling and outdoor work. They consist of finely ground pigments mixed with gum arabic, glycerin and a wetting agent. The gum arabic and glycerin allow the pigments to adhere smoothly to the paper while the wetting agent makes the paint flow evenly when diluted.
- Buy the best quality that you can afford. Student grade are OK to begin with but are not light fast and will fade over time. A few tubes of artist quality paint are probably a better investment. Artist quality paints are archival, lasting over 100 years.
- Winsor & Newton, Art Spectrum, Maimeri or Daler-Rowney all manufacture artist grade paint.
- Colour terms and a suggested palette are set out in the colour notes.

Brushes

Natural bristle brushes such as goat, sable or squirrel hair hold more water, are more durable and are often preferred. They can also be much more expensive. As a rule the performance of a brush matches the price you pay for it. Synthetic brushes are also very useful. Watercolour brushes have a soft bristle.

Because brush sizes vary greatly with each manufacturer it is handy to measure them by the diameter of the ferrule. (Where the bristles are bound onto the handle) The following brushes are recommended.

- Round brushes in at least 3 sizes from a large to small. The largest round can be a mop brush, the other two taklon.
- Flat brushes in 3 sizes e.g. 1 ½, ¾, ¼. (Taklon recommended)
- Rigger, long handled No 4

Other materials

- Masking fluid, I prefer Art Spectrum
- 2B pencil and sharpener
- Spray bottle and water container
- Hair dryer
- Box of tissues, Small towel
- Colour shaper, post office pen and nib
- Masking tape
- MDF backing Board, 6mm
- Staples and staple gun or gummed tape
- Paint roller
- Pallet knife
- Small Natural sponge and synthetic sponge
- Colour wheel, small
- A large palette with deep wells