

How to...

FREE
information

Watercolour

Introduction

Watercolour painting is one of the most popular hobbies in the UK. This can largely be attributed to the exquisite effects of depth, texture and light, which can be achieved through delicate washes.

Watercolour is also attractive because of its portability – all you need is a paint box, brush and a sheet of paper. This leaflet provides all the information you need to paint in watercolour.

Getting started

To begin painting in watercolour, you need three simple things;

- Some good beginners' materials
- A subject to paint
- A basic technique



Equipment needed

A beginner's palette of watercolours could consist of the following colours:

- Lemon Yellow Hue
- Cadmium Yellow Pale Hue
- Cadmium Red Hue
- Permanent Rose
- Alizarin Crimson Hue
- Ultramarine
- Intense Blue
- Viridian Hue
- Raw Umber
- Yellow Ochre
- Burnt Sienna
- Chinese White

Additional supplies

- Four main brushes
- Paper
- Pencil & eraser
- Board or hard surface
- Roll of masking tape
- Water pot or container
- Flat plastic palette/tray

Preparation

Choosing a palette of Colours

The common practice is to maintain a broad palette of about twelve colours and add to it for specific requirements.

Once you have this initial palette, the next stage is to find suitable brushes and surfaces.

Which Brushes?

Our range of brushes is ideal and economical for beginners. They are pure synthetic round brushes which, point well and have reasonable colour carrying capacity.

To begin with you only need four main brushes (see chart below).

Once you have chosen your brushes the next stage is selecting the best surface.

Brush Type	Brush Use
25mm Wash Brush	For washes and glazes
13mm Flat Brush	For edges and straight lines
Round Brush	For large surface coverage
Rigger Brush	For fine detail and thin lines

These are the recommended brushes but many watercolour artists use simply a large brush for coverage, a small brush for fine detail and a wash for effects.

Which Paper?

Watercolour paper is mould made paper and can be acid free giving it an extensive life without deterioration. The paper is pre-sized allowing the artist to sponge and erase (if necessary) without causing any damage.

Watercolour paper is available in pads, blocks and loose sheets. There are three main types of surface:

Hot Pressed.

Very smooth

Cold Pressed.

Pressed semi rough

Rough.

A rough surface.

Pads

(sizes 12"x 9" up to 16"x 12") are recommended for beginners.

Once you have the materials a few basic accessories are also required such as;

A pencil & eraser for sketching an outline;

A board or hard surface (though pads and blocks can provide ample support) to support your paper;

A roll of masking tape to secure the paper to the hard surface if required;

A water pot or container;

A flat plastic palette or tray to mix colour if required.



What to paint – Finding a Subject

Many artists find it difficult to be inspired by the ordinary everyday things. However, true artists can turn the very ordinary object into something special by simply looking at it creatively.

It may be a landscape, a building, an interior scene such as a kitchen, or a still life such as vases or bottles. If you feel really confident you might want to try portrait, botanical painting or even an abstract. Your painting doesn't have to be accurate or perfect, remember art is in the eye of the painter not the critic.

Painting a Watercolour Landscape

Landscapes are arguably the easiest for beginners and the following basic technique can be applied. Four general principles apply when painting a landscape.

Your View.

As an artist you are looking to create a visual representation of your chosen scene, it is not a copy but an illusion of what you are painting. Remember it is how you see it and paint it that makes it a unique work of art.

Aerial Perspective.

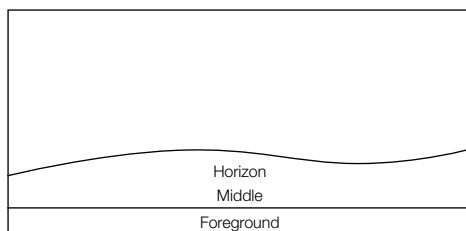
Take time to look at the scene you want to paint and you will see four aspects emerge. Firstly the objects in the distance will appear smaller. Secondly the distant objects will be less detailed. Thirdly colours become less vivid the further away they are. Fourthly, as objects recede their tones become paler and less contrasted.

Composition.

Using your pencil lightly sketch the outline of the landscape.

Ensure you set out a horizon, middle and foreground within your landscape. Normally this follows as the horizon being the background of the painting with the horizon line being about a third from the bottom of the page. Most beginners start drawing the horizon half way up the page – but our eye line only sees 30–40% of the “surface matter” in any given scene and the rest is sky. The diagram below outlines this perspective of landscape.

Once you have drawn the basic outline of your landscape you are now ready to apply the colour into your picture.



Basic Technique

Squeeze a pea-sized amount from your watercolour tubes or dab a wet brush into your watercolour pan – best to start with three primary colours – a red, blue and yellow.

Use a round brush and start putting some blue on the sky dabbing the colour with a wet tissue to create cloud shapes by lifting out the colour.

Then work onto the distant horizon line using muted colours (i.e. thinned blues, greys and yellows with water) then onto the middle-ground area using more blues-greens and then onto the foreground using yellowy-greens and stronger more vivid colours – not diluted with too much water.

Once you have built these colours you can then build up a series of layers to suit your style.

If you are really adventurous you might wish to try the wet-into-wet technique. This is where the colours blend while they are still wet. This creates beautiful subtle tones and is excellent for moody, atmospheric paintings.

Another technique is creating a watercolour wash which gives many special effects such as gradation, granulation and variegated. Without being overly technical a wash is really where one colour changes because of the water content mixed with the raw colour. To create such an effect, start at the top of a dry sheet of paper and paint a band of dark colour (ultramarine blue), then add more water to the brush and make a second band under the first. Continue doing this until you have a graded wash. i.e. the colour shifts from dark to light and in some cases transparent.

Some Final Tips

- ✗ Don't fiddle around with the painting; once it is complete don't add more touches thinking you will improve it.
- ✓ Let the colour dry between stages of application unless you are using the wet-into-wet technique. A hairdryer will speed up the drying process.
- ✓ Constantly refer to the subject you are painting and to your work of art.
- ✓ Start painting from the top of the paper.
- ✗ Don't let your palette become too wet.
- ✓ Always clean your materials with soap and water.
- ✓ Paint loose; don't get hung up on accuracy. Remember it's a painting not a photocopy.

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