

# Watercolor Materials Handout

## Paints:

The most common types of watercolor paints are either in cake form (solid) or tube (liquid). They can be either student grade or artist grades. The artist grades are more expensive, because they contain more of the expensive pigments and less filler than the student grades, and generally their colors are more intense and true.



I would suggest starting out with a limited number of basic colors (6-10), and then adding additional colors gradually as you wish to experiment. For beginners, a small pre-packaged set of colors will get you started. Look at books about watercolor painting, especially those that show a style and type of painting you would like to create yourself, and see what colors the author used that you might wish to try.

You will need to experiment with your paints to see how transparent or opaque they are, which are staining and which are non-staining (non-staining pigments can be lifted off the paper).

## Palettes

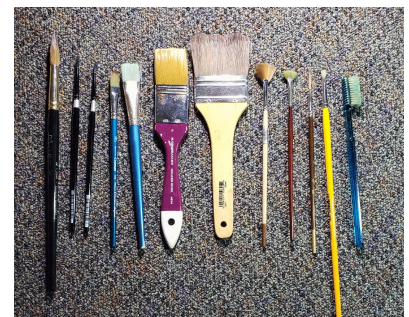


Palettes come in many shapes and sizes, and you should find one that suits you. You might end up with more than one kind: one for use in your regular painting space and a more portable one that you use when traveling or painting away from your work area. If table space is limited, one that has a thumb hole for holding in one hand while painting can be very useful.

## Brushes

Brushes come in a variety of shapes, sizes and material. Generally speaking, you get what you pay for, and better quality brushes will cost more but will be worthwhile in the long run. **It is better to have three or four quality brushes than large assortment of cheap brushes. They are key in controlling paint.** Start with a couple of the types and sizes you will use most, and gradually add new brushes as your budget and inspiration permit. The size of your brushes will depend on how large you paint. I would suggest a Large or medium round, a small round, a medium flat, a large flat, and either a liner or a fan brush, as a good starting assortment.

Watercolor brushes are made from natural material, (such as sable, red sable, camel or squirrel hair) or synthetic (such as nylon, white Taklon, or Golden Taklon). Some artists swear by a certain type of brush. I have a collection of various types. The important factor is whether they hold their shape, point or edge with use, and the bristles are securely anchored.



Basic: Flat, Rounds, liner (rigger),  
Specialty: Lg. Flat, Fan, Filbert, Bright, Shader, Angled Shader

## Paper



Watercolor paper varies by weight (thickness) and by texture. The heavier the weight the more it can be worked and the less it will buckle with water washes. Although paper of 70 lbs. and 90 lbs. is available, **I recommend Arches 140 lbs for working with watercolor washes.** 300 lbs. paper is even better, but the price jump is quite significant. With 140 lbs. paper, it is advisable to stretch the paper when working in a large size (to prevent buckling).

Depending on the amount of texture you want, you can buy paper that is rough (most texture), cold-pressed (medium texture), or hot-pressed (smooth).

Watercolor paper comes in sheets, pads (individual sheets, bound in a notebook style) and blocks (sheets that are glued together around the edges, used one at a time, the top page being separated with a razor blade once your painting is complete). Blocks are very convenient for traveling, as no drawing board is needed and the paper needs neither stretching nor taping. However, you pay a price for the convenience. It is possible to turn your pad into a block with a careful application of book-binder's glue.

## Tools for creating texture

Besides brushes, you will want to try various other tools for applying paint and creating texture. These include sponge (for stamping), toothbrush (splattering either paint or masking fluid), salt, plastic wrap, scraping or scratching tools such as a palette knife, butter knife or stick, a razor blade, pen knife or X-acto knife.



## Miscellaneous



Other materials needed include water containers, masking tape, paper towels, pencil, eraser, ruler, scissors, and a drawing surface that can get wet for taping your paper down.

You might wish to have masking fluid and a masking fluid “pick-up”, brown gummed packing tape, a small pair of pliers, a small piece of bar soap and a good sized super-absorbent cloth (in case of spills).

**Tip: To take full advantage of the portability of watercolor you will want to assemble a portable kit of your basic materials. This may be a subset of your materials, or a carefully packed carrier for all your supplies.**

## Suggested Materials to start:

Watercolor Paper  
Water Containers  
Paper Towel  
Ruler

Brushes  
Paint (cake or tube)  
Masking Tape  
Pencil

Palette  
Eraser  
Sponge  
Masking Fluid\*

Board or surface on which to paint.  
(that can get wet)

\*I find masking fluid very useful, but since it is expensive, you might want to try it before you invest in a bottle. There are several brands and types. If you buy some, I would also recommend getting a “Pick-up” at the same time. This is a hard rubber square used to remove the masking fluid from your paper once you have let your paint dry.

### **Paint**

Suggested colors to start: Windsor Red, Lemon Yellow, Hooker’s Green (dark), Ultramarine Blue, Raw Umber, Burnt Umber, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Prussian Blue and Payne’s Grey.

Some of my favorite colors not on that list: Van Dyke Brown, Sap Green, Cerulean Blue, Permanent Rose, Quinacridone Gold, Quinacridone Scarlet, Cobalt Blue, and Neutral Tint.