

Watercolor Affair

Recommended Watercolor Supplies



What Supplies do I need for Watercolor Painting?



This is a list of all the basic supplies a watercolor artist needs for happy painting !

One of the biggest problems when you're a beginner is knowing which painting supplies to put on your list. The best advice is always to get only what you need, keep it simple, and choose the best quality items you can afford.

There's no need to buy a lot of expensive items you may never use, but in order to paint successfully you need some essential pieces of equipment.

If you want to make the right choices from the beginning, below you'll find the art supplies that I recommend which are among my favorites. These are things which I use myself, so I'm happy to endorse them because they were chosen after a lot of time and consideration. They include materials and equipment which I've tried and tested.

If you'd like to read a more in-depth article about watercolour supplies I suggest you read this article on my blog – [click here...](#)

Anthony

So what supplies do you need for watercolor painting?

Of course, the fundamentals are paint, paper, and brushes. All of these are available in a wide range of qualities and prices. Beyond that you also need a few other bits of equipment for happy painting.

For me, the minimum list of supplies is as follows:

- **Paint**
- **Paper**
- **Brushes**
- **A palette (for mixing and/or storing paints)**
- **Water jars**
- **A flat board**
- **Masking tape & masking fluid**
- **Cloth or absorbent paper towels**

Let's have a look at each of these in detail and I'll give you my recommendations on the best alternatives for each.

Watercolor Supplies List

Note: Artist quality supplies can be pricey ! Especially paper, paint and brushes. I know a lot of us are on a budget and want the best value possible. For that reason, I've spent a long time searching for what seems to me the best source for watercolor equipment.

In the list below I have partnered with **Jackson's** and **Dick Blick** art supply stores.

Blick is a great place to source supplies especially if you're in the US. They have very competitive prices and often offer free e-coupons, or promotions such as free shipping when you spend a certain amount. And their range of products is vast.

BLICK
art materials

Jackson's are also pretty competitive on price. They're very good if you're in the UK. Also, thanks to my affiliation with Jackson's, by using the links in the list below **you will receive a 10% discount on your first ever order.**

Jackson's

I've bought from Jackson's many times in the past. They have very good shipping rates, and they almost always seem to stock the materials I'm looking for. Using the special offer discount provides very good value prices for supplies.

Paints

Without going into detail, below are the colors I recommend you start with. I have a preference for Daniel Smith professional watercolors.

Tips & Tricks:

Again, paints can be expensive, which is why the list below includes a minimum number of colors for the widest range of mixing possibilities. I recommend the bigger 15ml tubes which are better value. But if you're on a tight budget you'll also find links to smaller tubes, or ready made pans if this is what you prefer (keep in mind that half pans contain less paint than a small tube).

Whichever brand you choose, I recommend you get at least some **warm and cool primary colors** in artist grade paints *(the pigments found in student grade paints are generally lower quality).*

Warm and Cool Primary Colors



Blicks Art Supplies:

warm red: [Pyrrole scarlet](#)

cool red: [Quinacridone rose](#)

warm yellow: [Hansa Yellow Deep](#)

cool yellow: [Lemon yellow](#)

warm blue: [French ultramarine](#)

cool blue: [Phthalo blue GS](#)

Jackson's Art:

warm red: [Pyrrole Scarlet](#)

cool red: [Quinacridone rose](#)

warm yellow: [Hansa Yellow Deep](#)

cool yellow: [Lemon yellow](#)

warm blue: [French ultramarine](#)

cool blue: [Phthalo blue GS](#)

Recommended additional Colors

To extend the mixing capacity of your palette you can add these extra paint colors. They are extremely useful for mixing a versatile range of greens and neutral colors.



Blicks Art Supplies:

earth color : [Burnt Umber](#)

green: [Phthalo Green BS](#)

convenience gray: [Paynes Gray](#)

Jackson's Art:

earth color : [Burnt Umber](#)

green: [Phthalo green BS](#)

convenience gray: [Paynes Gray](#)

Paper



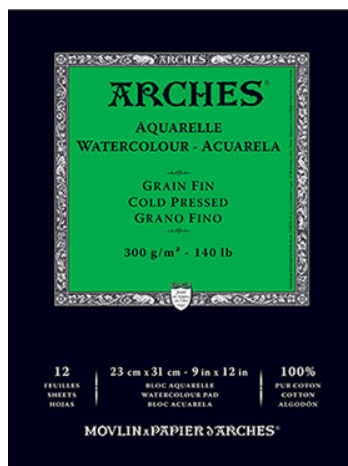
The best type of watercolor paper is **100% cotton, acid free and pH neutral**.

But good quality paper is expensive. For this reason I use two types of paper... high quality 100% cotton paper for more finished work and student grade paper for sketching.

Here are my recommendations:

High quality artist grade cotton paper:

Arches 100% cotton / cold press / 140 lb : 300 gsm (Small pad)



Arches 100% cotton / cold press / 140 lb : 300 gsm (Large pad)



My go-to choice for inexpensive student grade paper:

Note: you will see a big difference in handling quality with this paper. I demonstrate the difference between artist grade and student grade in the lesson about watercolor paper.

Canson XL Watercolor Pad



Brushes

A **large round brush** is the most versatile type of brush you can possibly own. In fact you will probably use this type of brush 90% of the time. If you invest in at least one good quality brush then this should be the type of brush you get.

The round brushes I recommend are **Kolinsky sable** which are the best type of hair for watercolor painting as you'll learn in the lesson dedicated to brushes. They are springy and elastic, have a sharp point, and hold a lot of water. Here are a couple of brushes that are, in my opinion, the best value for money compared to other brands.

[Rosemary & Co Kolinsky sable series 22 - size 8](#)



If you can't afford natural hair brushes, go for a synthetic mix brush like this one:

(The best brushes for watercolor use natural hair. These are the most expensive. "Synthetic mix" brushes use a combination of synthetic fibers and natural hair. They are a good compromise and perform well).

[Rosemary & Co Sable Blend Series 402 - Size 12](#)



A **small round brush** is the next most useful type of brush to own. This is ideal for painting small details:

[Rosemary & Co Series 33 Pure Kolinsky Sable Pointed Round - Size 6 or 4](#)



Finally you'll need a wash brush of some kind. Wash brushes hold a lot of liquid and let you cover large surfaces of the paper easily. For this purpose you can either go for a flat brush or a mop brush. One of my favorites is the Da Vinci Squirrel mop:

[Da Vinci Squirrel Hair Mop - size 4](#)



or for an economic flat brush you can use a synthetic mix like this:

[Rosemary & Co Series 48 Pure Squirrel Flat Wash - Size 1"](#)



Vegan Friendly Brush Options

This is something I've been considering recently and I know a lot of people prefer to use animal-friendly products. So here are my suggestions for vegan watercolor brushes...

[The Da Vinci Casaneo Synthetic Watercolor Brush - Series 498 - Size 4](#)

This is a slightly stiff pointed brush which gives more control over detail.

[The Escoda PERLA round - series 1430 - size 12 or 14.](#)

This brush is also a stiffer option with a good point. I've seen these brushes used by well known artists like Joseph Zbukvic and Iain Stewart.

[The Princeton Neptune synthetic squirrel - Series 4750 - size 12 round.](#)

This is a softer brush designed to yield in a similar way to natural hair (they also exist as flat brushes if you want a bigger brush head for large washes).

(By the way... Daniel Smith watercolor paints are vegan...)

Palettes

My favorite palette for working in the studio is [the John Pike palette](#)



I really appreciate the big mixing area on this palette, plus the fact that it has a lid to protect the paints from dust (*dust contamination is really annoying*). The first basic rule of mixing surfaces is that it should be white ! Anything else and you could end up mixing the wrong color appearance.

If you have less space or you need to travel around with your paints, you can find some perfectly good folding palette boxes.

I recommend you get an empty palette box and fill it yourself, so you have control over your choice of pigments. You can buy empty pans (the little plastic tubs that hold the cakes of paint) and fill them yourself.

Whichever palette you choose, think about the size of the pans you want to use. I find half-pans a bit small and fiddly, so I prefer full pans. The full pans are big enough for dipping the full brush head. Some palettes are restricted to taking only half pans ! So try to get one which gives you the choice of putting either size of pans [like this metal fold out palette](#) .

Backing Board & Masking Tape

When you paint you'll need to fix the paper down onto a surface, otherwise the sheet moves around and this can ruin your brush strokes.

A board is very useful for keeping your paper in place while you work. There are also many occasions when you want to turn the paper around for easier access to a part of your painting. You might even want to tilt the board for certain techniques. A board allows you to manipulate your painting without the risk of touching the damp paper.

I often use wooden boards, but you can also use gatorboard which is lightweight. Just be sure to buy the heavy duty version of gatorboard which has a rigid surface.

[This is the kind of plywood board I use:](#)



Masking Tape

Masking tape is the quickest solution for fixing down the edges of your paper to the backing board. Look for products called "artist tape" or "painters tape". These masking tapes are less sticky than normal masking tape (*also called "low-tack"*), so there's less risk of ripping the paper when you remove it. But you can sometimes use standard masking tape if you're careful when removing the tape.

[This type is my preferred choice](#) of masking tape which I find sticks the paper down well even when it gets wet.



Water Jars

I recommend using 2 jars, one for rinsing and cleaning your brush and another as a source of clean water. I use ordinary "mason jars" which I find are a good size.



Absorbent Cloth for Blotting

I use cotton washcloths for blotting my brushes. I find they are a handy size and have the right kind of absorbency for controlling the amount of moisture on brushes.

[I buy them in bulk from IKEA !](#)



Absorbent Kitchen towel is another useful thing to have around. This is particularly good for cleaning down the surface of your mixing palette when you start afresh, or any other messy wiping up !

Masking fluid

Masking fluid, (*sometimes known as frisket*) is basically a liquid latex solution which is used to protect the underlying paper and thereby preserve the white color of the sheet. In watercolor painting the color white comes from the white paper. But there are occasions when it's easier to mask the paper first so the underlying surface remains unchanged while you paint over it.

I use [Pebeo blue tinted masking fluid](#) because it's easier to see what you're doing ! (*You will also need something to apply the masking fluid such as a small cheap synthetic brush - the dried fluid sticks to the hairs and can ruin good brushes*).



Gouache

Gouache is equally useful for adding in white details after a painting is completed. Gouache is still a water-based paint, but it's less transparent than watercolor. So you can paint over an already colored surface to create lighter highlights for example.

I use [Winsor and Newton permanent white gouache](#) because it has a pure white appearance.



Blicks Art Supplies:

gouache: [Permanent white](#)

Jackson's Art:

gouache: [Permanent white](#)

Pencils

I prefer slightly soft pencils for sketching an outline onto watercolor paper. I generally use a 2B grade of pencil. Hard pencils tend to leave an indentation in the paper surface and are almost impossible to erase. Softer graphite pencils only need a lighter touch so you don't ruin the paper, but avoid anything too soft (above 4B) because it will smudge.



My favorite brand of pencils is [Staedtler Lumograph](#). I always have loads of these lying around my studio and they are my go to pencils for drawing and sketching.

Kneaded Eraser

I find that [kneaded rubber erasers](#) are best for correcting pencil marks on watercolor paper. They do not leave crumbs or residue on the surface which is very welcome, and you can mold them into any shape you please.



Optional extras

Spray Bottle

A [plastic spray bottle](#) is a handy accessory to have from time to time. You fill this with clear water. This is useful for re-wetting paints in a palette, or sometimes for wetting the paper. It can also be used to spray a colored wash to produce texture effects.

Pipettes

This is my preferred tool for reactivating paints in my palette. They are also handy if you need to add a large amount of water to your mixing palette for making big wash puddles, or any time you need to transfer water. You can [buy pipettes in bulk packs](#) like this.

Gummed Tape

At some point you will need to stretch your watercolor paper. Most artists use [gummed tape](#) during this process. This kind of tape has glue which is activated by water, so it's ideal for sticking onto soaked surfaces. Get something which is at least 2 inches wide so you get a good overlap when stretching paper.

Small Mixing Plates or Dishes

These are a handy addition to your main mixing surface. You can use anything from a porcelain plate to a set of dipping dishes. Just make sure they're white like your main watercolor palette. These are useful because you can hold them in your hand while painting, making access to mixed paint very quick.

I also use a separate mixing surface for using gouache. you don't want to get gouache mixed in with your watercolors or it will take away the transparency!

Have fun with your watercolors !

Anthony



www.watercoloraffair.com