

WATERCOLOR : MATERIALS AT A GLANCE UPDATE 11.25**PAPER**

Watercolor paper comes primarily in 2 weights. 140 lb (300 gsm) and 300 lb (640 gsm).

I prefer 300 lb. Other professionals work on 140 lb

SAUNDERS, ARCHES, BOAHONG, FABRIANO, HAHNEMUHLE THE COLLECTION, best papers

I prefer rough paper, others prefer cold press. Hot press is least often used but holds potential for painterly techniques.

Paper mills offer natural white and bright white. I prefer the newer, bright whites.

I do not recommend student grade paper, definitely NOT Strathmore. You will quickly become discouraged or feel like a failure.

You can buy pads or prestretched blocks or sheets. Sheets are economical: tear down to 1/2, 1/4 or 1/8 sheets and clip or tape to foam core, corrugated plastic or gator board. Need white artist tape, masking tape or bull clips to do this.

BRUSHES : SEE FINAL PAGES TO LEARN ABOUT THE CLASSIC STYLES USED IN WATERCOLOR : INCLUDES LINKS

1 ROUND SIZE 8 or larger: Hairs of the brush can be made from Kolinsky sable, red sable or synthetic

MOPS > Round Mop or Cat's Tongue Mop > would be the second brush to invest in. The hairs can be squirrel or synthetic.

As you progress see my full list of supply recommendations.

ESCODA and DA VINCI are my preferred brush manufacturers.

PAINT - no student grade paints, they are a waste of money**GRAHAM, SENNELIER, DANIEL SMITH, WINSOR & NEWTON, SCHMINCKE, ISARO > ALL PROFESSIONAL GRADE**

You can select individual colors or a set of preselected colors:

See full supply list for cheapest selection of paints: example > **3 PRIMARIES** like **VERMILLION RED, ULTRAMARINE BLUE, YELLOW**

Fuller palette: Colors should include similar to these: **Ultramarine Blue, Cobalt Blue, Viridian (can substitute the phthalocyanines); Reds > either cadmiums or synthetic alternatives; Yellows > either cadmiums or synthetic alternatives; Quinacrodone Violet, Permanent Rose or Helios Purple or similar;**
Earth pigments > Yellow Ochre, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna or Burnt Umber.

PALETTE, ETC

Yogurt container lids, white plastic plates, egg cartons all can be used as mixing palettes.

Robert E. Wood, Tom Jones, John Pike, Quiller Color Wheel & Travel are all classic plastic watercolor palettes.

Folding plastic and metal palettes are good.

You can find plastic folding palettes for very cheap. Metal folding palettes are very nice > some hold pans, some allow tube paints

WATER CONTAINER > you need 2, one to keep clean water

PAPER TOWELS, SPONGES OR RAGS

SKETCH PAD and PENCILS HB and or 2B

MIST BOTTLE HAIR STYLIST TYPE

EASEL not needed to start

richeson-italian-steel-tripod-easel or enpleinairpro

MAIL ORDER: Dick Blick (also in Sugarhouse but limited selection), ARCH, Jackson's Art, Jerry's Artarama

A DEEPER LOOK AT MATERIALS FOR WATERCOLOR updated 11.2025

PAPER

Watercolor paper comes primarily in 2 weights; 140 lb (300 gsm) and 300 lb (640 gsm).

I prefer 300 lb. Some professionals prefer 140 lb.

SAUNDERS, ARCHES, FABRIANO, HAHNEMUHLE (The Collection) AND BAOHONG ARE ALL GOOD MILLS

Arches is the most widely used paper.

SURFACES: COLD PRESS, ROUGH (my preference), HOT PRESS. Test options to find your preference.

Paper mills now offer natural white and bright white. I prefer the newer, bright whites.

You can buy pre-stretched blocks (expensive) or sheets which you cut or tear down to 1/2, 1/4 or 1/8 sheets and clip or tape to foam core, corrugated plastic or gater board. Need white artist tape, masking tape or bull clips to do this.

I do not recommend student grade paper, especially not Strathmore. You will quickly become discouraged.

Cheaper student grade paper is useful to warm up, practice some techniques, and create values studies. Professional grade paper truly is the key to beautiful watercolor. Practicing the techniques on the cheaper student grade papers will create a different effect compared to when you paint the final marks on your professional paper. Thus I highly recommend testing your marks on the good paper. You can paint on both sides of your papers, particularly 300 lb. Except Hahnemuhle paper is not designed to paint on the back of their 300 lb paper making it more expensive. You can paint on both sides of their 140 lb. paper.

HANDMADE PAEPERS: *Papelera Don Bosco* from Peru (trained by Fabriano Paper makers), *Twinrocker* in Ohio, *Two Rivers* in England, *St Armand* in Canada. *Fabriano* makes a handmade paper which is quite expensive. *Fabriano Museum* also makes one which I have not tried. **AQUARI made by **Sastres** in Catalonia/SPAIN**

BRUSHES : SEE FINAL PAGES TO LEARN ABOUT THE CLASSIC STYLES USED IN WATERCOLOR : INCLUDES LINKS

EXCELLENT BRUSH MAKERS : da VINCI and ESCODA

In order of importance

1 1 ROUND SIZE 8 or larger : I prefer larger brushes with good points : Brushes can be Kolinsky, red sable or synthetic for your round brush

2 MOPS/QUILLS : Round Mop or Cat's Tongue Mop > would be the second brush to invest in, ideally larger than your round brush : these are normally squirrel or synthetic

3 FLATS : 1 -2 inch flats for washes and hard edges > Examples: da Vinci 5080 2 inch / Richeson 7010 series :

My favorite "wipe out" brush is a Robert Simmons S55 Sapphire 1 inch : HAKES are goat hair

ESCODA: Perla, Ultimo < synthetic. **DA VINCI: Colineo, Casaneo** < synthetic

Feel free to contact me if you need help investing in more expensive brushes.

PAINT

NO STUDENT GRADE PAINTS : this will waste your time and money

PROFESSIONAL GRADE PAINTS ONLY :

GRAHAM, SENNELIER, DANIEL SMITH, WINSOR & NEWTON, HOLBEIN, SCHMINCKE, ISARO

> Colors should include similar to those listed below

> You do not need all of these colors, one red, one blue, one yellow plus a few others is a good start

Learn to identify pigments by their COLOUR INDEX NUMBER. For example: Ultramarine Blue is identified as PB29.

BLUES: Ultramarine Blue, Cobalt Blue or synthetic alternative, Cerulean or Zirconium alternative, Cobalt Teal or synthetic alternative

GREENS: Viridian - can substitute with synthetic phthalocyanine but will not be similar, make your greens!

REDS: Cadmiums or synthetic alternatives

YELLOWS: either Cadmiums, Bismuth is a safer alternative to Cadmiums, or synthetic alternatives

TRANSPARENT FOR CREATING DARKS : Quinacridone Violet, or Indigo, or phthalocyanines

PINKS: Permanent Quinacridone Rose or Helios Purple, Ultramarine Pink: check lightfastness of pink/rose family

EARTH PIGMENT OPTIONS: Raw Sienna, Yellow Ocher, Burnt Sienna, Burnt Umber, Raw Umber, Sepia (burnt umber + black), Venetian red by Sennelier, Earth Greens

SETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM PROFESSIONAL COMPANIES WITH PRESELECTED COLORS IN A PALETTE

EASEL > OPTIONAL

<https://www.dickblick.com/products/richeson-italian-steel-tripod-easel> < This easel will hold 22 X 30 inch watercolor paper.

An alternative which I have not tried: enpleinairpro: <https://enpleinairpro.com/collections/packages>

PALETTE, ETC

PALETTE > Tom Jones, Robert E. Wood & John Pike are classic palettes. Folding plastic and metal palettes are good.

Quiller COLOR WHEEL & TRAVEL made by Richeson

You can find plastic folding palettes for very cheap.

Porcelain butcher trays: I love mixing my paint on metal surfaces

WATER CONTAINER > you need 2, one to keep clean water

PAPER TOWELS, SPONGES OR RAGS

SKETCH PAD and PENCILS HB and or 2B

MIST BOTTLE hair stylist type

DRAWING OUT THE IMAGE FREE HAND IS IDEAL. AN ARTIST MUST LEARN TO DRAW WELL TO PAINT WELL.

1ST OPTION: Draw directly onto your good watercolor paper. Start lightly, plan composition prior. Erase gently.

2ND OPTION: NEED TRACING PAPER

Draw the image on good drawing paper, trace that, or draw directly onto tracing paper.

Then transfer that tracing to the good watercolor paper.

On a sunny day place the tracing on a window directly facing the sun. Hold or carefully tape the good watercolor paper on top of the tracing paper. Trace it.

You can also lay it over your watercolor paper, clip it snugly at top. Carefully and continually smooth down the tracing paper as you gently lift and trace it from below. Use caution with any tape, it will destroy the sizing (surface coating) on the watercolor paper. So that it does not look traced, go back over what you traced with your free hand way of working adding life to your lines.

MAIL ORDER:

Dick Blick ONLINE saves you money compared to Sugarhouse store: Sugarhouse store has limited selection

<https://www.dickblick.com>

<https://www.jerrysartarama.com>

<https://www.artxpress.com>

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/en-us/color/watercolor/watercolor-paint>

<https://shop.archsupplies.com/collections/watercolor-paints>

CLASSIC WATERCOLOR BRUSHES & THEIR SYNTHETIC ALTERNATIVES

A CLASSIC WATERCOLOR BRUSH IS CALLED A ROUND. IT SHOULD HAVE A FULL BODY WHICH TAPERS TO A FINE POINT. THEY ARE MADE FROM THE TAILS OF SABLES AND SQUIRRELS. BRUSH MANUFACTURES ARE ATTEMPTING TO REPLICATE THE QUALITIES OF NATURAL HAIR BRUSHES WITH SYNTHETIC FIBERS.

Natural hair has, depending on the animal, very individual properties, being more straight or crimped, soft or stiff, thin or thick, also there are different lengths or different types of hair that exist and work combined. A natural hair can be compared a little to a pine cone opening up when getting moist.

Kolinsky red sable for example is very special itself, for it has in opposite to most natural hairs it's widest diameter in the middle of the hairs and not at the end, which allows the very precise tip shaping.

~ Rebekka Fiedler
Assistant Marketing & Sales + Sustainability Officer
da Vinci Künstlerpinselwerk DEFET GmbH

I WAS TOLD THE NATURAL HAIR HAS HOLES IN IT THAT ALLOWS IT TO ABSORB MORE PIGMENT & WATER. THUS REBEKKA'S COMPARISON TO A PINE CONE. YOU THEN HAVE MORE CONTROL, BY VARYING THE PRESSURE ON THE BRUSH, OF HOW MUCH PIGMENT & WATER THE BRUSH RELEASES. THE VERY EARLY SYNTHETIC WATERCOLOR BRUSHES RELEASED THE WATER READILY, DRIPPING DOWN THE BRUSH, REQUIRING MUCH MORE CONTROL OF HOW MUCH PIGMENT & WATER YOU LOADED THE BRUSH WITH. THE SYNTHETICS ARE IMPROVING. HOWEVER, WITH ANY WATERCOLOR BRUSH YOU NEED TO LEARN ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND LEARN TO COMPENSATE FOR THE AMOUNT YOU LOAD AND HOW YOU RELEASE IT.

THE CLASSIC ROUND SABLE OR ITS SYNTHETIC COUNTERPART IS YOUR WORKHORSE. THIS IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT FIRST BRUSH.

THE CLASSIC MOP ALLOWS YOU TO APPLY MORE WATER/PIGMENT, AND CREATE FREER & LARGER STROKES. A LARGE SQUIRREL CAT'S TONGUE MOP BY DA VINCI IS THE BRUSH THAT HELPED ME LOOSEN UP. I WOULD SUGGEST STARTING WITH THE CLASSIC ROUND MOP TO GET A FEEL. THAT IS WHAT MOST ARTISTS WORKING IN WATERCOLOR USE. THE ESCODA ULTIMO MOP IS SYNTHETIC AND A WELL LOVE BRUSHED. CHEAPER THAN A SQUIRREL MOP.

YOUR SELECTION ALSO DEPENDS ON HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT SUPPORTING TRAPPING ANIMALS. I THINK THEY TAKE THE TAILS LEFT OVER FROM THE FUR TRADE.

NATURAL HAIR

ROUND : YOUR WORK HORSE

USE DA VINCI AS YOUR GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE CLASSIC BRUSH LOOKS LIKE

DA VINCI SABLE ROUND

My original MAESTRO was series 32

I am pulling up series 36, series 11 > do your homework and be careful with the points!

<https://www.davinci-defet.com/en/article/VA-11>

https://www.davinci-defet.com/en/article/VA-11_16

DA VINCI SQUIRREL MOP YOUR KEY TO WASHES AND FREE, LOOSE PAINTINGS

https://www.davinci-defet.com/en/article/VA-418_12

ESCODA

NOW YOU CAN SCROLL THROUGH THE ESCODA COLLECTION TO SELECT WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

<https://escoda.com/en/product-category/watercolour/all-series/>

SYNTHETICS

ALTERNATIVES TO THE NATURAL HAIR BRUSHES

DA VINCI

ROUND : YOUR WORK HORSE

I have not tried this line yet: I want to try the x-point Colineo: alternately look at the PERLA by ESCODA

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/en-us/brands/da-vinci/da-vinci-colineo>

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/en-us/da-vinci-colineo-x-point-synthetic-brushes>

https://www.davinci-defet.com/en/article/VA-522_12

MOP

I have not tried these yet but look good

https://www.davinci-defet.com/en/article/VA-498_4

ESCODA

ESCODA PERLA ROUND THIS IS GREAT BRUSH

<https://escoda.com/en/product/1430/>

ESCODA ULTIMO 1530 THIS IS GREAT MOP BRUSH

<https://escoda.com/en/product/1530/>