



WATERCOLOR ESSENTIALS CHECK LIST



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Do you love watercolor paintings, with their beautiful wet-in-wet mixes, inner glow that comes from multiple transparent glazes and fresh looseness?

Do you struggle with creating the look you want because you lack the skill to execute it?

Have you tried watercolor and given up too soon?

Watercolors' simplicity appears to be effortless but anyone who has tried to paint without learning the basics is sure to find painting in watercolor quite challenging.

But like anything that is worth doing, painting in watercolor is a learned skill. With the proper instruction and guidance, I've seen my students go from growling to great!

This Watercolor Essential Check List will lead you to the quickest, most pain free pathway to painting success.

Are you ready to start the journey?

ESSENTIAL WATERCOLOR TOOLS

THE RIGHT PAINT

Student grade paint can be a challenge even for experienced watercolor painters as the fillers can block transparency and glow and hinder mixing on paper.

Artist grade paints will flow better and are more concentrated, so you actually use less paint = less money.

THE RIGHT PAPER

It is so important to your success that you use the best watercolor paper.

There are so many variables to painting in watercolor. You have the best chance at success if you limit the variables. Working with the same paper makes all the difference in the world.

The best watercolor paper is 100% Cotton. Each brand of paper has different qualities that influence how the paint and water flow, absorb and react on the paper.

Understanding the differences and starting out with the best paper for beginners is essential.

PAPER QUALITIES

1. **Color**
Some are more creamy white, some bright white etc.)
2. **Texture**
Cold Pressed, NOT Cold Pressed, Hot Pressed, Rough
3. **Weight**
140-300gsm and up
4. **Layering Ability**
5. **Scrubbing & Lifting Ability**
6. **Absorbency**
7. **Length of time it stays dry**
8. **Surface finishing** which affects your initial wash

PRO TIP:
Stick to one brand and type of paper until you have mastered the basic techniques and skills



THE RIGHT BRUSHES

Having the right brush for the right job is essential to painting in watercolor.

The brush controls the amount of water it absorbs, and how it releases the paint and water on the paper.

Using the best brush for the job is so helpful in narrowing down the variables and learning how to control the amounts of water and paint.

These are the essential skills that you must learn to be successful in painting in watercolor.

ALL BRUSHES ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

You generally get what you pay for.

Watercolor brushes can seem expensive compared to brushes for other mediums, however with proper care your brushes can last for many, many years.



ESSENTIAL WATERCOLOR TOOLS

THE RIGHT TOOLS

Watercolor can be unforgiving if you don't follow its rules and can be delightfully surprising when you do.

Preparing your paper by stretching it on a board is a necessary evil for larger paintings but can be skipped when working with smaller sizes.

Your painting may need to be pressed if it does acquire some buckling, so it is generally best to stretch it to avoid that hassle on the other end.

Buckling also will affect your washes as the paint will tend to gather in puddles if your paper is not stretched flat.

You can purchase pre-stretched paper in a block pad that is gummed on all sides which comes with its own advantages and disadvantages.

There are many tools that will aid in your painting such as masking fluid, masking lifters, scrubber brushes, fan brushes, toothbrushes, iridescent additives, and mediums that increase flow, granulation, cover mistakes and more.

ESSENTIAL WATERCOLOR TECHNIQUES

THREE STAGES OF WET

The most difficult part of painting in watercolor is controlling the water and the paint.

This can only be learned through repetitive practice much like learning to knead dough and getting a “feel” for how much flour or water the dough needs based on how it feels and its elasticity.

It takes time and practice to learn how much water and how much paint to use and how each affects the other. Learning to read the wetness of the paper will help in determining the right timing to add paint.

Timing is everything! Humidity as well as the temperature of your environment all play a role in how long your paper will stay wet. The drier the environment the faster you have to paint!

THREE STAGES OF PAINT CONSISTENCY

Knowing how much paint is required based on its appearance on the pallet is essential to controlling its strength, release and flowability. This combined with understanding the wetness of the paper will help you master and control how your paint reacts on the paper.

10 UNBREAKABLE RULES *of* WATERCOLOR



There is the law of gravity - what goes up must come down - and so too there are laws in painting in watercolor. If you learn these rules in watercolor you will have less frustration and way more fun.

1. Wet goes to Wet
2. Wet against Dry gives Hard Lines
3. Opaque layers will cover Transparent layers
4. Color Temperature will affect each Transparent layer and can create Mud
5. Staining colors will Dominate Non-staining colors
6. The Order of Layers Affects the outcome
7. Heat Sets Masking Fluid
8. Staining Colors will not be able to be lifted back to the Whites of the Paper
9. All Paint Colours do not move or flow the same
10. Overworking Watercolors will destroy the glow

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Watercolor is all about
water + paint + paper

and how to control all three
of these at the same time.

If you get these essential basics down
you will have success
in watercolor painting.



WATERCOLOR PAINTERS

Watercolor painters tend to
enjoy the step-by-step structure that
is required to master its skill and
sometimes that very quality is in
conflict with a more loose,
experimental approach to painting.

Once you start to have success with
the basics you may want to journey
into more challenging techniques.



WAYS TO LOOSEN UP

- Paint bigger – try ½ sheet, or even a full sheet
- Paint with bigger brushes and reserve smaller brushes for the 1% finishing strokes
- Try Negative painting
- Try Plein Air Painting (painting onsite outside)
- Try Mixed Media - combine pen and ink, acrylic paint, acrylic absorbent mediums etc.
- Try Hot Pressed or Rough Paper to discover their different effects
- Try Abstract or Non-objective styles
- Try a different substrate like a cradled panel with GOLDEN absorbent ground for watercolor, crackle paste, or soft molding paste



PAINTING AS A LIFETIME JOURNEY

There is so much more to painting than just learning a few tips, tricks, skills and techniques. You will need an understanding of all the principles of design such as:

- A good composition and drawing before you even start painting
- An understanding of color mixing, understanding color harmony, color temperature and color theory
- Perspective
- Repetition of shape
- Balance
- Tonal Values
- Soft edges and hard edges
- Creating depth and form
- So much more...

It can be easy to compare your own painting to some more experienced painter and become discouraged or self-critical.

However by comparing your current work to your beginning paintings you can gain a clearer picture of your painting progress and artistic growth.

Everything looks hard until you learn the techniques and practice the skills and then you can say "I know how to do that!"

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Most artists don't progress quickly without some sort of outside training, encouragement or feedback.

It can be a lonely place to always be painting on your own without an objective voice to speak into your journey and help point out some areas that need attention.

We don't always know what we don't know!

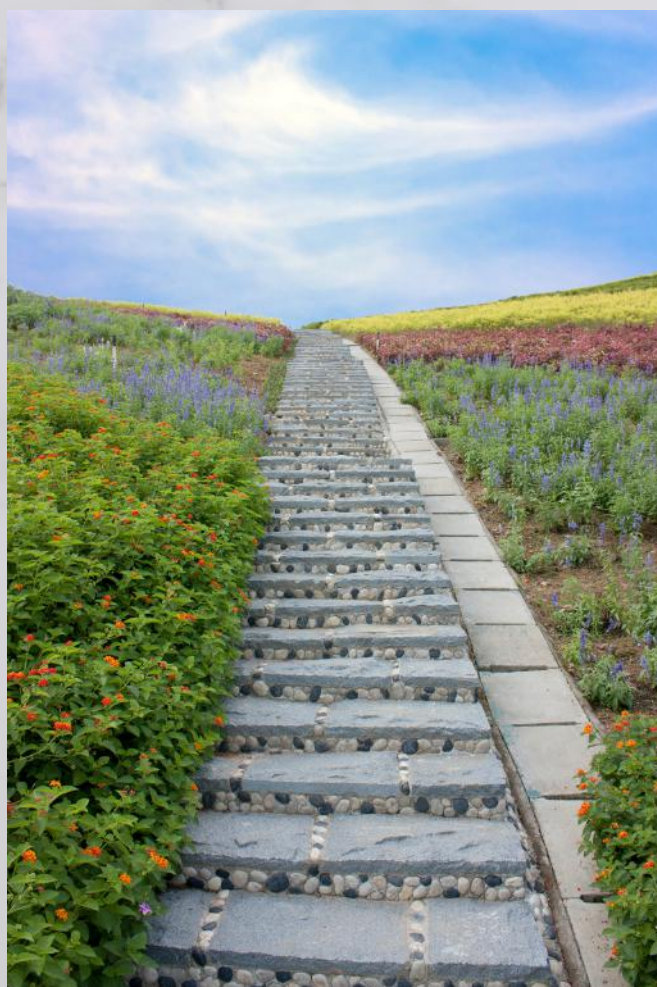


PAINTING PATHWAYS

That's why it is so helpful to have a clear pathway to follow that gives you the foundational skills and techniques you need to progress into the artist you hope to become.

If you are tired of working on your own and desire step-by-step instruction with feedback then you'll want to check out what Painting Pathways has to offer.

Your pathway to growing as an artist is just a click away.



ONLINE CLASSES WITH A DIFFERENCE

Imagine having a professional artist give you step-by-step easy to follow lessons that have been proven to take beginning artists to artists that are now selling their work!

Painting Pathways gives you the steps, the inspiration and the motivation to press on in your painting journey.

I'd love to journey with you as you discover how wonderful painting in watercolor can be.

Check it out at: www.paintingpathways.com



Debbie Reeve

DEBBIE REEVE is a professional watercolor and mixed media artist who has taught painting to eager students for the last 11 years.

She has a proven step-by-step method for teaching watercolor from absolute beginners to more advanced artists.

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