

Watercolour Mixing

All palettes are different, different makes and colour choices, so to get to know yours by making a graduated wash coloured grid to match the order in your palette.

Look at a colour wheel to analyse colour relationships – complementaries, tints, tones, shades

PRIMARIES are red, yellow, blue (lots of different ones) *Look at your own range, test them out.

SECONDARIES are orange (mix red and yellow), green (mix yellow and blue), violet (mix blue and red) *Try them out.

COMPLEMENTARY PAIRS are red and green; orange and blue; yellow and violet. Placed together these pleasingly enhance each other, and can be strategically employed to highlight an important feature.

Colours can be COOL or WARM, advancing or receding visually. Warm are yellows, reds, some greens. Cool are blues, pale purples, greys and tints generally. *Identify cool greens, cool blues versus warm greens and blues, useful for landscape painting
To warm a colour, add yellow or red to any colour/ to cool, add a cool blue or grey – *Try with one colour, side by side samples.

TINTS - add water to any colour (same as adding white) . *How pale can you make your colour?

TONES – grey can be added to make a tone, these are very subtle colours, often needed for landscape. What kind of grey have you in your palette?

*Test it; then mix one using Ultramarine and Light red, and one using vermilion, prussian blue and a tiny amount of gamboge yellow. Complementaries also mix to give muddy colours/greys.

*Choose a grey and add it to a medium strength colour to see how it modifies it – place these side by side.

SHADES – these are made by adding a black to create subtle but strong dark colours - good for dark, rich red/purple roses etc. *Test your palette black, then mix some from viridian and crimson; ultramarine and brown; vermilion, ultramarine and a little yellow. Mix a dark strong colour, then add a chosen black – place them side by side

BOTANICAL GREENS – these are usually quite vibrant, as in nature.

Try mixing prussian blue, a warm yellow, and a little raw umber OR prussian blue, warm yellow, and a little crimson.

Compare to using ultramarine in the mix, which do you like best and why?

SHADOW COLOURS – for creating three dimensional shading on top of existing washes, thus darkening areas. These are usually the 'local' colour of the subject with blue, grey, ultramarine, or its complementary added.

Mix a 'local' colour and let it dry, then brush over half of it with a shadow version of it.

PRACTICE You can often use your colour chart to select a colour that may be near the colour you need.
Allow for a bit of trial and error.

FLOWERS - Petals – mix 2 colour to use, a light one and a darker one
Leaves, upper surfaces – mix 2 colours to use, a light one and a darker one
Leaves, undersides – mix 2 colours to use, a light one and a darker one

FRUITS Choose a fruit and mix a couple of colours to try to match what you see

PEBBLES - These are usually very subtle tones/shades of grey – more difficult to mix.
Select a couple of pebbles and try colour matching them.
Look at the colour, is it near a tint on your colour chart?
Start with this and modify it by adding a grey or a black or possibly ultramarine to get the colour you see.

CONCENTRATIONS – these have to be paid attention to for wet into wet work.

Put a very diluted weak colour into a different diluted weak colour to see what happens and how it dries

Then put a concentrated colour into a weak colour to see how the paint behaves differently.

You can use these differences for variegated petals etc, choosing the appropriate concentrations for the effect you need

GLAZING – you can mix colours on the paper by adding one colour on top of another. This can be useful if you want to **either** recede certain components in a composition after it has been painted by adding blue, **or** bring some into the foreground, warming then by adding yellow. Try some glazing on a selected colour sample that has been left to dry to see how it changes.

MUDDINESS – often complained of. Usually due to too many colours having been mixed to get your required colour, or more simply, dirty water and dirty brushes. Always replenish water pots and rinse brushes well to keep colours clean.

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