

Watercolor Tips & Techniques

Watercolor is a free flowing transparent medium, so it is important to have a relaxed approach to your work and to be familiar and comfortable with your brushes and paints. Watercolors are generally transparent in color, but you can produce an opaque quality by adding white. Prang watercolors come in a variety of colors including fluorescents. They are offered in boxed assortments with refills available.

Materials:

- Prang brushes - for watercolor; camel hair (Soft brushes are used for filling in color within outlines.) Prang brushes are available in sizes #1 through #12.
- Watercolor paper
- Prang watercolors
- Water containers
- Saucers or shallow dishes for each color of paint
- Masking tape to tape down the edges of your paper
- Paper towels
- Newspaper or cardboard to protect table surfaces

Learn To Handle Your Brushes

- New brushes are stiffened on purpose. Rinse the stiffener out before using a new brush.
- In watercolor painting you may have some drips and puddles. You can pinch the tip of your brush to wring out the excess water. A damp brush will draw more color than a wet brush.
- Never pull the bristles of a brush - it will ruin the brush.
- To create a point to your brush, hold the damp brush between your thumb and forefinger and roll it gently in the pan.



Practice Makes Perfect

- Take a clean piece of paper and dampen with a sponge. Dab a little watercolor on the wet surface... notice how the color spreads, creating soft, blurred edges.
- White patterns can be created by placing wax paper over your watercolor paper. Pencil a design on the wax paper, leaving an imprint on the watercolor paper. Remove the wax paper and brush watercolor over the drawing. The result is a white design on a field of watercolor, because the watercolors resist the wax imprint.
- Now dab a little watercolor on a dry surface. The edges are sharp and clear.



TIP

To create large white areas, leave the area unpainted, or coat with rubber cement. The rubber cement can be carefully rubbed off when the painting is finished and dry.



- For shaded areas, paint first with clear water, then brush on the color. Watch the color flow into the water. Let the blended watercolors dry before trying to redefine the areas. (Overworked areas will darken quickly and become muddy.)



Once you're comfortable with your brush and have experimented with your Prang watercolors, try some of these basic watercolor techniques.

Washes

- For a flat wash, spread a brush full of paint in a band across the paper. Immediately overlap that band with another band of color. As you repeat this process, you will begin to get the feel of the free flowing wash of color across the page.



Gradation

- Dip your brush in paint for the first band. Then dip your brush in water to overlap a second and lighter band. Alternate paint and water and watch your bands of color blend into dramatic shades.



Wet Washes

- Spread water over a large area of your paper and then dab spots of color to the page. Watch the wet-wash effect as blending colors create beautiful gradations. To magnify that effect, add another color or two ... or three!



Wet and Dry Techniques

- Wet entire surface of paper and start adding colors. Do not brush over, just allow the colors to blend and let the paper dry. Now, try the same add-on technique to the dry paper, using as very little water as possible to dab on spots of color. Notice that you have more control when you use both techniques, and that the effect is more detailed.



TIP

The drier the brush, the darker the paint tones. The wetter the brush, the lighter the paint tones.

Now that you've learned all these techniques, you can create your own watercolor masterpieces!