

Tony Conner Classes & Workshops

Suggested Watercolor Painting Materials



The good news is that it doesn't take a lot in the way of supplies and materials to be able to paint successfully in watercolor.

But, watercolor is a tricky medium. Using inferior materials – especially paint, paper and brushes will make it even trickier. So, do yourself a big favor and purchase **professional grade paint, Arches 140lb Cold Press paper**, and the **best synthetic (nylon) brushes** you can afford. Skimp, if you must, on everything else – palette, sketchbooks, pencils, rags, water containers, and backing boards.

Paint

Keep It Simple! Especially if you are just starting out. Working with a limited number of colors from the start will help you develop a sensitive eye for color and lead to exceptional color mixing skills.

The best advice I can give about paint is to start with professional grade paint. The way it works and the way it looks will make the cost worth it.



CIGN Codes

One important, but often overlooked piece of info about the watercolor paint you are purchasing is the *Color Index Generic Name* or CIGN. Each pigment can be universally identified by its CIGN.

Every manufacturer names the colors they sell. These names are **descriptive** but they are not necessarily **comparative**.

The exact composition of a color with the same name can vary from one manufacturer to another. For instance, every manufacturer has their own unique formulation for Permanent Alizarin Crimson. Each looks and works somewhat differently than the others. Knowing the actual pigment components by their CIGN codes will you avoid unexpected and, perhaps, unpleasant surprises.

The enclosed list of suggested basic colors that follows, includes the CIGN code for the pigment(s) in each color.

Suggested Basic Color Palette

A recommended list of colors can vary greatly from one artist to another. Though seemingly limited, this set provides a tremendous variety of color mixes

The list includes fourteen basic colors defined by both color and temperature. For some, colors there is more than one suggestion. However, it is only necessary to purchase one – not all. This is essentially a set of primary colors – reds, yellows and blues and a couple useful neutrals that make it possible to mix virtually any color needed in your paintings.



| | Brand / Brand Color Suggestions | CIGN Pigment Code |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Cool Red | Winsor Newton / Permanent Alizarin Crimson Daniel Smith / Permanent Alizarin Crimson Blick / Permanent Alizarin Crimson | PR206 PR177, PV19, PR149 PR48:4 |
| Low Intensity Cool Red | Daniel Smith Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet | PR 206 |
| Warm Red | DaVinci / Cadmium Red Light Winsor Newton / Cadmium Red Blick Artists Watercolor / Cadmium Red | PR108 PR108 PR108 |
| Secondary Orange | Any Brand / Cadmium Orange | PO20 |
| Cool Yellow | DaVinci / Aureolin Any Brand / Azo Yellow | PY40/PY3 PY150 |
| Low Intensity Cool Yellow | Daniel Smith Quinacridone Deep Gold | PO48 / PY150 |
| Warm Yellow | DaVinci / Cadmium Yellow Medium DaVinci / Indian Yellow | PY35 PY97 |
| Primary Blue | DaVinci / Cobalt Blue Winsor Newton / Cobalt Blue Daniel Smith / Cobalt Blue | PB28 |
| Light Cool Blue | Winsor Newton / Cerulean Blue | PB35 |
| Dark Cool Blue | Winsor Newton Indanthrene Blue | PB60 |
| Warm Blue | Winsor Newton / French Ultramarine Blue | PB29 |
| Secondary Violet | DaVinci / Thalo Violet Winsor Newton / Winsor Violet | PV23 PV23 |
| Light Neutral | Da Vinci / Raw Sienna | PBr7 |
| Dark Neutral | Da Vinci / Burnt Sienna | PBr7 |



Palette

Any large – at least 10" x 12"- sturdy, deep wellled, white plastic palette with a cover will do. There are many manufacturers that produce good, low-cost plastic palettes that will perform well for many years. One of the recommended palettes is the *John Pike* palette, shown at right. It is made of a sturdier plastic than most, has large wells you can fill with paint, and has a large central mixing area.



Brushes



A handful of high-quality synthetic or synthetic/natural blend brushes are really all that are needed to do the trick. The most important characteristics in watercolor brushes are water absorption, springiness and, for rounds, coming to a fine point at the tip.

Brushes can be made of either synthetic material – usually nylon – as well as natural hair. In general, the natural hair brushes will be more expensive.

The bristles of nylon brushes can be either white or a golden brown color and are good choices to start with, as they generally combine the best characteristics of natural hair brushes at moderate cost.

The most commonly used brushes for watercolor painting are rounds and flats. Rounds are brushes that are round at the ferrule (the metal piece that holds the bristles) and are constructed so that they come to a point. There are many good quality brushes on the market. Purchase the best you can afford. Stay away from the low-cost, pre-packaged sets – they are usually inferior.

I recommend starting with three rounds, two flats and a rigger. The table below provides a guide to the sizes you'll need. Stick with brushes from these brands, at least at the start: **Escoda, Isabey, Loew-Cornell, Princeton, Raphael, Richeson, Robert Simmons, Royal-Langnickel, Winsor-Newton.**

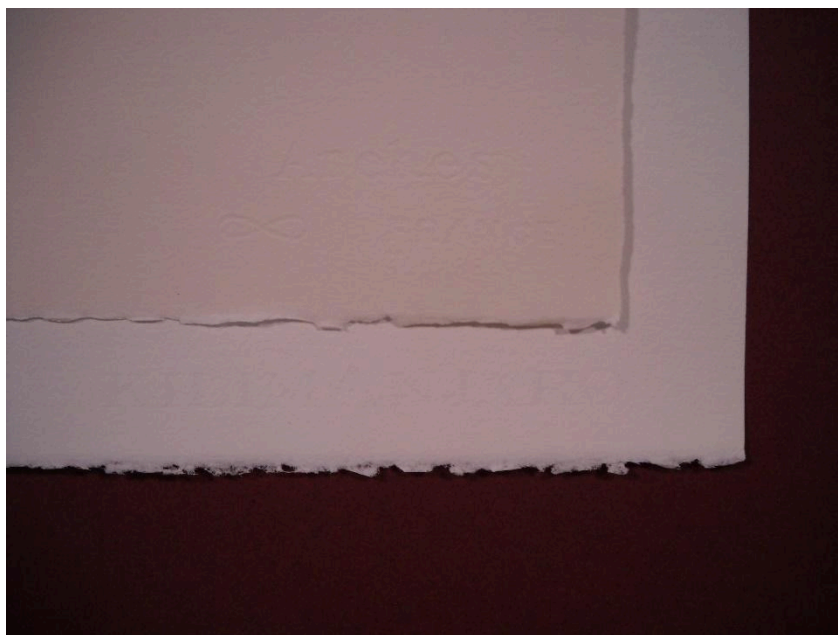


| Brush | Width At Ferrule | Typical Brush # |
|--------------|--|--------------------------|
| Large Round | ½" / 12 or 13mm | Can vary widely 18 to 38 |
| Medium Round | ¼" / 6 or 7mm | 14 |
| Small Round | 1/8" / 3 or 4mm | 6 or 8 |
| Medium Flat | 1" / or 25mm or 2.5cm | |
| Small Flat | ¼" / 6 or 7mm | |
| Rigger | get a #3 or #4 – don't worry about exact width | |

Paper

Watercolor paper is the one area to NOT try and save money!

If you are new to watercolor, start with **Arches 140lb Cold Press paper**. It will help manage those fluid washes that get the best from watercolor. It is great to start but is a terrific paper for the more accomplished work to come!



Minimize the cost by purchasing it in full sheets (22" x 30") and cut or tear them to a workable size – 11" x 15" (quarter sheet) or smaller. It is also available in pad and block form, although, neither is the most cost effective.

Mounting Board



Watercolor paper needs to be supported while painting. I recommend using a product known as "**Gatorboard**", a thicker version of foamcore board made from plastic materials to minimize warping. It is light, sturdy and durable. Paper can be taped, clamped or stapled to Gatorboard.

Scrap masonite, plywood or luan can be used - be sure seal any wood board, with several coats of varnish before using.



Other Related Materials



A sketchbook or two – one for pencil drawings and sketches, and perhaps, another one for color sketches. 9" x 12" is a good size. Almost any sketchbook with plain white paper will do.

For color sketches, choose a sketchbook with at least 90lb paper that is meant for watercolor or watermedia. The **Bee Paper Aquabee** sketchbook is good choice – high quality and reasonably priced.

Pencils - I recommend using **2B drawing pencils**.

You'll also need some rags for blotting and cleanup. Paper towels are popular and absorbent but old T-shirts, sheets or bath towels cut into rectangles is the more environmental friendly way to go!

I recommend using two water containers – one for clean water and one for dirty rinse water. Again, you can purchase water containers, but it's easier on the environment if you re-purpose used plastic containers.



On the next page you'll find a checklist to use as a guide for purchasing materials and supplies.

There are [short videos about these materials on Watercolor Methods](#), my online watercolor painting video lesson site.



Watercolor Supplies and Materials Checklist

Any well stocked art supply store should have all of these in stock. Prices are better if you shop online, especially if you are stocking up for the first time. Online art supply dealers include – dickblick.com, cheapjoes.com, artsupplywarehouse.com, jerrysartarama.com

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Paper - REALLY! Only get Arches 140lb Cold Press Paper to start. Full sheets – "22 x 30" are the lowest cost way to buy paper. Blocks are the most expensive.

Other Materials- Pencil Sketchbook, perhaps a **Bee Paper Aquabee** watercolor sketchbook, a few **2B drawing pencils** to start, a **kneaded eraser**, mounting boards, bulldog clips, water containers, rags.



About The Instructor



While primarily expressing and interpreting the landscape and seascape, Tony Conner's paintings reflect an interest in a variety of subjects. He prefers working from direct observation and reacting to the subject based on the pattern of individual objects, contrasts of color, value, or intensity and, most of all, the quality of light.

Conner's paintings are widely exhibited in juried, group and solo exhibits. His work has been included in many national juried exhibits including the New England Watercolor Society National Biennial, Adirondacks National Exhibition of American Watercolors, and the Hudson Valley Art Association Annual National Exhibition, among others.

He is a Signature Member of both the New England and Vermont Watercolor Societies and an Artist Member of the North Shore Arts Association. He is profiled in "100 Artists of New England", Schiffer Publishing, 2011, "Best of Artists' – American Landscape", Kennedy Publishing, 2012, and in "Three Who Nurture The Arts", Southern Vermont Arts & Living Magazine, Summer 2013 and "Learn From What Isn't Working", Plein Air Magazine Aug/Sep 2015, "In The Footsteps Of The Hudson River School", Plein Air Magazine, April 2021.

