

Watercolor Vocabulary

Acid-Free	Papers manufactured without acid (pH) in the pulp, high acidity papers degrade quickly
Analogous colors	A grouping of related colors next to each other on the color wheel (i.e., Red, Red-Orange, Orange)
Archival Paper	Pure 100% rag, cotton, or linen watercolor paper
Atmospheric perspective	Suggesting perspective in a painting with changes in tone and color between foreground and background
Back runs	When a fresh brush stroke hits a damp wash, forcing the original wash out in an irregular, often fractal, manner
Background	The area of a painting farthest from the viewer
Binder	Ingredients that hold the paint together
Blending	Fusing two color planes together, so no discernable sharp divisions are apparent
Blotting	Using an absorbent material (i.e., tissues, paper towels, or a dry brush) to pick up and lighten a wet or damp wash
Cast Shadow	The dark area that results when the source of light has been intercepted by an object
Cold Pressed (CP)	Watercolor paper with a mildly rough texture
Complementary colors	Colors at opposite points on the color wheel (i.e., red and green)
Composition	The arrangement of elements within an artwork
Deckle	The tapered rough edges of watercolor and drawing papers, also known as barbs
Dry Brush	An application of paint using a dry brush where the hairs of the brush, the angle of the stroke, and the texture of the paper create broken areas of paint
Flat Wash	Painting a series of multiple, overlapping strokes of a single color
Foreground	The area of a painting closest to the viewer
Fresco	Painting with pure pigments ground in water on uncured plaster (i.e., Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel)
Glaze	A transparent wash of color painted over a dry, previously painted area
Gouache	A watercolor painting technique using white and opaque colors
Graded Wash	A wash that smoothly changes in value
Grain	The basic structure of the surface of paper
Gum Arabic	A binder produced from the sap of the African acacia tree
Highlight	A point of intense brightness
Hot Pressed (HP)	Watercolor paper that is pressed for an extremely smooth work surface
Hue	The gradation or variety of a color

Landscape	A painting in which the subject matter is natural scenery
Lightfast	A pigment's resistance to fading on long exposure to sunlight, watercolors are rated lightfast on a scale of I-IV. I and II ratings are the most permanent
Masking fluid	A latex gum product that is used to cover a surface and repel paint
Middle ground	The area of a painting between the foreground and the background
Monochromatic	A single color in all its values
Muted	Suppressing the full color value of a particular color
Negative Space	The areas around and between the subject
Opaque	A dense paint that cannot be seen through
Palette	A paint mixing and storing surface or the selection of colors an artist chooses to work with
Pigment	A dry insoluble substance that is used as a colorant
Positive Space	The primary subject or object in an artwork
Primary colors	Red, yellow, and blue
Rice Paper	A generic term for Japanese/Asian forms of paper made for artist's use, used for sumi-e, brush calligraphy, and watercolor
Scumbling	Dragging an opaque color across another color to create a rough texture
Secondary colors	Colors obtained by mixing two primary colors: green, violet, and orange
Still life	Artwork whose subject matter is inanimate objects
Study	A comprehensive drawing or details of a subject that can be used for reference while painting
Texture	The actual or virtual representation of different surfaces
Tone	The lightness or darkness of an object
Transparent	A quality of a material that allows light to pass through it
Trompe l'oeil	A term meaning "Fool the eye" in French, it involves rendering a subject with such detail and attention to lighting and perspective that the finished piece appears real and three-dimensional
Underpainting	The first, thin transparent laying in of color in a painting
Value	The lightness or darkness of a color
Variegated Wash	Blending a variety of discrete colors so that each color retains its character while also blending uniquely with the other colors in the wash
Vignette	A painting which is shaded off around the edges leaving a pleasing shape within a border of white or color, oval or broken vignettes are very common
Wash	A transparent layer of diluted color that is brushed on
Watercolor	Painting in pigments suspended in water and a binder
Wet-on-wet	Painting wet color onto a wet surface

Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's most-trusted online dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved April 09, 2018, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Glossary. (n.d.). Retrieved April 09, 2018, from <https://watercolorpainting.com/glossary/>