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# Watercolor: colors and water dilution



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Water is integral to watercolors: this is what gives pigments their lightness and luminosity. Mastering water dilution and its effects on colors is one of the major difficulties in watercolors.

## 1. Color values: a matter of intensity

Value is the level of light intensity of a color. With watercolors, all you need to do to vary a hue from dark to light is add water. The more you dilute a color, the more transparent it becomes, allowing the white paper "lightening" it to show through.

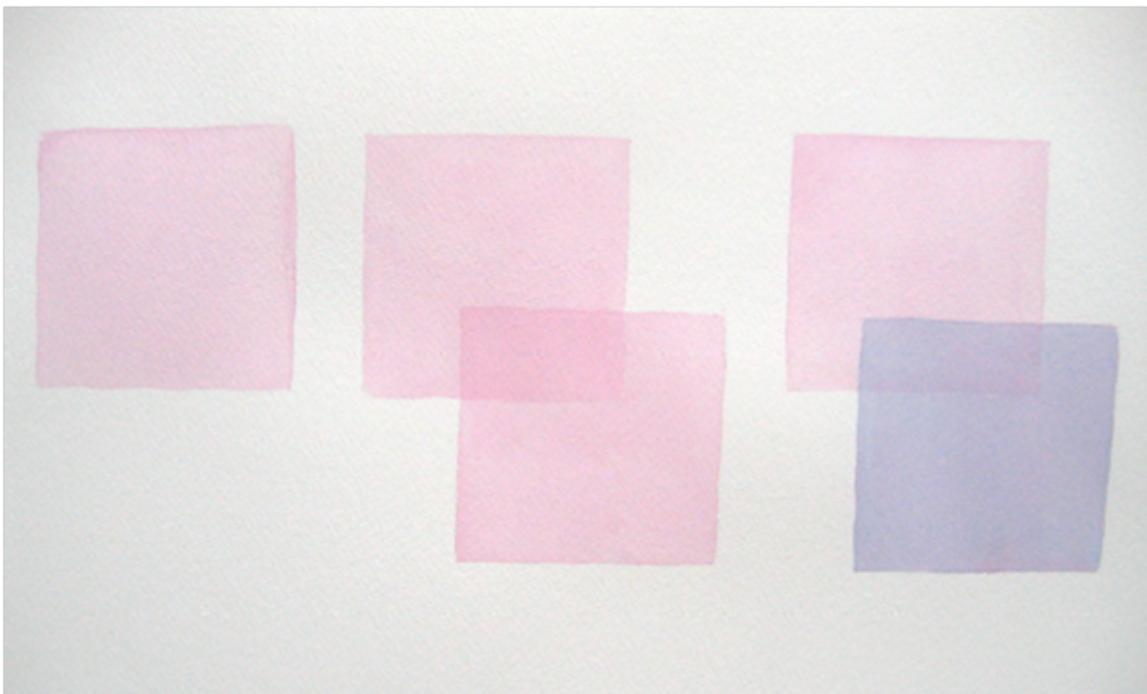
### Practical advice: Creating your color chart



By creating your own color chart, you can check the actual paint shade, depending on its dilution level.

- Pick up a small amount of paint with your paintbrush and spread it on the Palette.
- Add a little water to your palette, then paint a square of color on a sheet of paper.
- Paint several more color squares the same way, adding a little more water to your palette each time. This will produce a color chart ranging from the darkest to lightest shades.
- Do the same for each of your palette colors.

## 2. Overlaying colors: Playing for transparency



Due to the

transparency of watercolors, it is not possible to cover one shade with another. By overlaying colors, you can systematically obtain a new mix. Three pointers:

- To save on paint, add the darkest color to the lightest: it takes a lot more light paint to change a dark color!
- Quickly apply the second color on top of the first. Do not paint over it again.
- Note that overlaying a third color to the mix, even if it is lighter, will just darken it.

### Getting it right:

Remember to keep your sheet of paper slightly tilted while working. This will keep the paint from spreading unevenly on the paper or spotting it where the liquid accumulates.

## 3. White and white spaces



There is no white in

watercolors! White paper, the medium generally used, replaces the color white used in other techniques. To paint white, simply don't add paint to the particular surfaces: this is what is called white spaces.

There are two tools you can use:

- **Drawing gum:** this liquid can very effectively isolate a form; it is applied with a brush, forming a thin protective film, and is readily removed by rubbing once it is dry.
- **Chinese white:** an opaque white paint, it is used when the white space technique proves delicate (i.e.: a snowy landscape, a field of daisies, the sun sparkling on water).

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Whether you're doing a landscape, a still life or a portrait? more than technique, it's your interpretation, through your choice of colors and composition, which makes the difference.

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