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# Watercolor: Doing a flat wash



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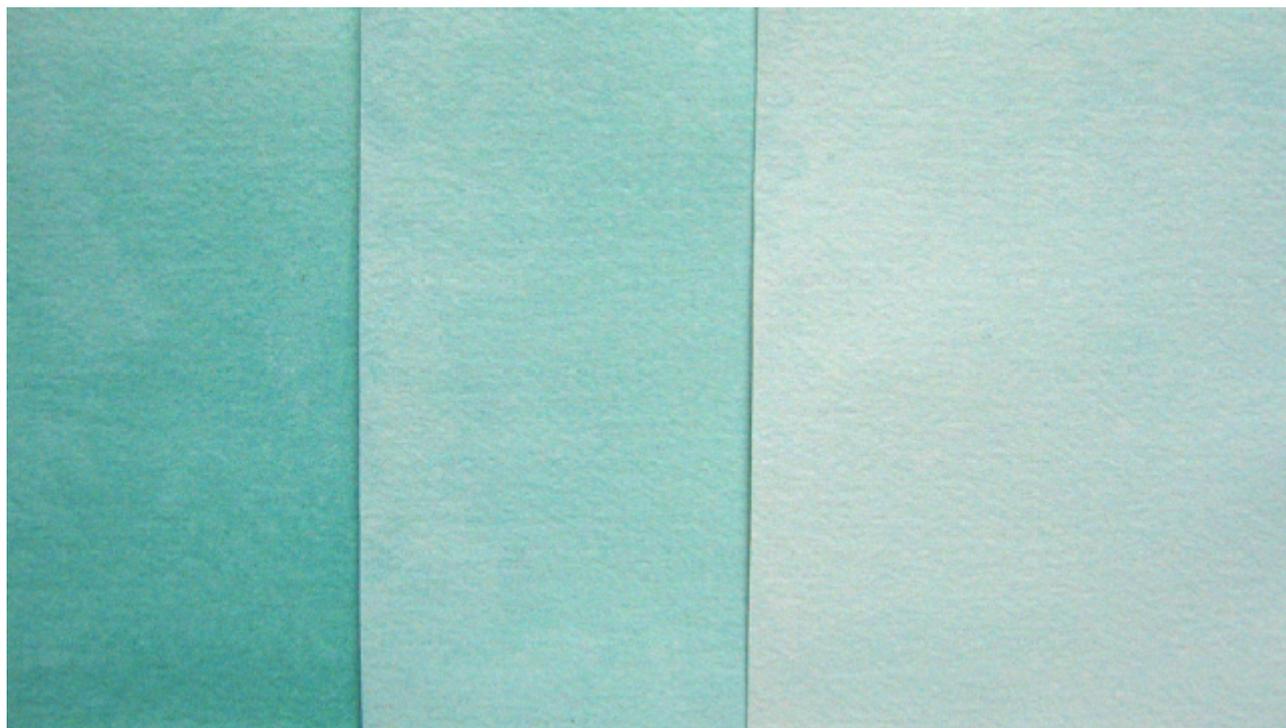
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Are you just getting started with watercolors? The wash is THE essential process to know and master!



## What you need to know

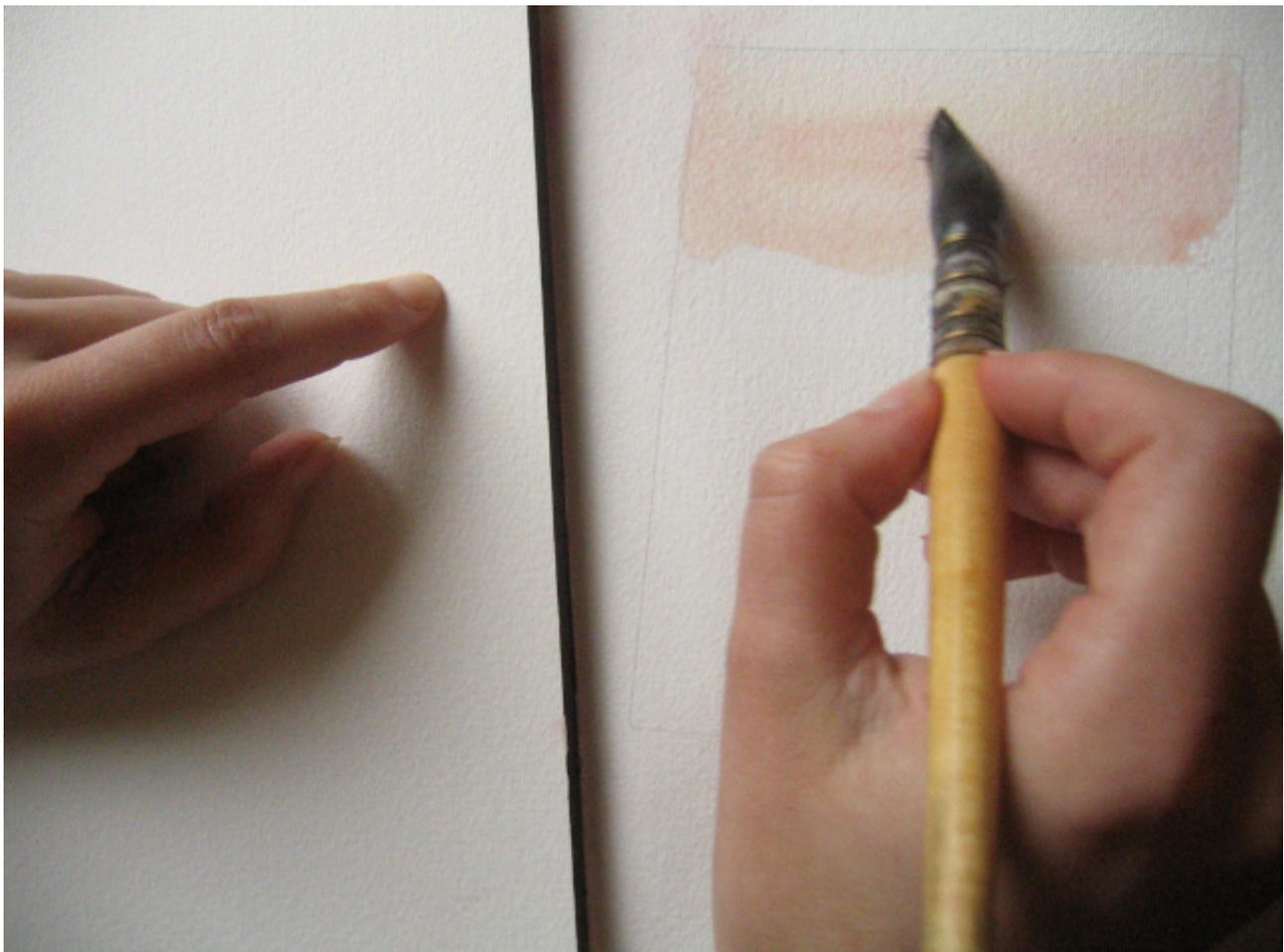
This is watercolor basics. To apply a flat wash, you need to dilute some color in water, then apply it uniformly to part of the composition (to paint a sky, for example) or to the whole sheet of paper (to create the background).

# 1. Mixing a wash

It just takes four steps!

- Fill two containers with water: one for mixing colors, the other for rinsing the paintbrush.
- Moisten your paintbrush and gently rub it on the surface of the cake of paint to pick up some color.
- Deposit the color in a small dish.
- Mixing water into the color: the more water you add, the lighter the color will be (to darken it, add some straight color instead).

**Trick of the trade:** before starting to apply your wash, test its strength on a piece of scratch paper, because watercolors tend to get paler when dry!



## 2. Doing a successful flat wash\_

**Reminder:** prepare your paper the way you would for any wet on wet technique! Attach it to a backing and wet it with a sponge by sweeping from right to left and from top to bottom. Otherwise, use a fairly rigid pad glued on four sides.

- Use a large paintbrush with flexible bristles.
- Apply the wash before the paper dries.
- Sweep the surface horizontally, starting at the top: alternate between a right to left stripe and an underneath, left to right, one.
- Make sure to go over the damp edge of the previous stripe, to make sure the wash is solidly uniform.

**Note!** Is the phone ringing? Is there someone knocking at the door? Too bad! Don't stop applying your wash or you'll be stuck with a sharp edge that's very hard to touch up!

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### See also

**Watercolor: Doing a graduated wash**



To liven up a sky or a background, or add style to major color areas: the graduated wash is THE technique! It lets you modulate a color's intensity by diluting it with more or less water.

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