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Making Watercolor Paint, Oil Paint, and Gouache



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The subtle, sparkling shades of watercolor paint? You only need a few minutes to create homemade watercolors. If they aren't better than manufacturer colors, they are certainly just as good

What You Need to Know

- Like all paint, watercolor paint are composed of pigments and a binding agent, typically diluted gum arabic.
- The more finely the pigments are ground, the brighter the resulting shade will be.



1. Preparing the Binding Agent

There are two types of gum arabic: in solution, ready-to-use, or dry. Prepare the dry gum arabic as follows:

- Put it in a glass dish and add two parts water. Heat the mixture in a water bath, in a casserole dish with hot water.
- Mix well to completely dissolve the gum. Allow to cool. It should be a thick liquid.
- Your solution is ready. Keep out of light, in the refrigerator. Some artists keep their gum arabic solution for at least a year. However, it's best to prepare in small quantities, adaptable to your needs.

Trick of the Trade: In the Kitchen?

Several optional ingredients come straight from your kitchen:

- Some drops of white vinegar will extend the life of your gum arabic solution.
- Sugared water or a spoonful of honey will increase the transparency of watercolor paint.



2. Mixing by the Rules

The resulting paste is ready for immediate use. You can also transfer it into small pots, fitted with an airtight seal, and then use them as classic watercolor paint.

- Place a spoonful of pigment in powder on a glass plate, then add the same amount of gum arabic solution. Mix carefully with a fine spatula until all of the pigment is wet.
- Grind this mixture with a spatula or with the aid of a small wheel to crush the pigments entirely.

The amount of gum Arabic depends on the nature of the pigments and the rendering of color that you want to produce. The higher the proportion, the more brilliant the color. On the other hand, paint containing too much gum arabic has a tendency to crackle. Since organic pigments are the most difficult to moisten, add a few drops of ox gall, a wetting agent.

To prepare larger quantities of paint, use a mortar and pestle.



3. Creating Gouache and Oil Paints

- Gouache is prepared like watercolor paint, by adding kaolin, talc, or zinc oxide to the pigment-binding agent mixture.
- Oil paint is created by mixing pigment with an oil characterized as siccative. Why siccative? During the act of oxygenizing the air, it passes from a liquid state to a gel, then it solidifies.

Did You Know? The Invention of Watercolor paint

If Albrecht Dürer took his place as one of the first European masters of watercolors in the 16th century, the origins of this medium can be traced to the beginnings of artistic expression itself. The first cave paintings used a blend of natural pigment, ocher or black, and a binding agent?saliva, for example. In Antiquity, the walls of the pyramids were decorated with watercolor frescoes. In China, its invention was contemporary with that of paper, about 2000 years before our time.

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