

Watercolor Bootcamp

MATERIALS LIST & NOTES

Watercolor supplies seem basic enough, until you step into an art store. Then you are met with a dizzying number of choices for paints, paper, and brushes. Some are excellent, some good, and, frankly, some quite bad. Please review the materials list to steer away from making bad choices. If you are purchasing supplies for the first time, or if you are not getting good results to date, please review the information below on *Best Bet Watercolor Sets for Beginners*.



- 2B Pencil
- Kneaded eraser or white vinyl eraser
- Black or sepia waterproof **Pigma Micron** or **Staedtler** pigment liner: Size 01, 02, or 005.
- **Watercolor paper** size 7x10, 8x10, or 9x12 block. We will mainly use cold press paper, but if you want to try hot press or compare the two, get a small 4x6 or 5x7 block of hot press paper.
 - Cold Press 140lb: Fluid 100, Fabriano, and Arches are recommended.
 - Hot Press 140lb paper: New York Central Art Supply or Stonehenge Aqua
 - Avoid: Artist Loft from Michaels, Strathmore 400 series watercolor pads (brown cover), Canson XL watercolor pads. Why? Less expensive papers have no cotton content and tend not to yield good results.
- **Watercolor brushes-**
 - round 2, 6, and 8 or 10; I use Escoda Versatil travel brushes, but there are many good options
 - 3/8 inch flat (10mm) Cotman watercolor brush- useful for color swatches, making straight edges, and lifting.
- 2 jars of water- I use ball jars, an old mug, or yogurt container works fine.
- Paper towels
- Hair dryer to speed up drying process
- **Watercolor Paints**

When selecting paint, you will see “student grade” and “artist grade or professional” watercolors. Student grade colors have working characteristics similar to professional watercolors, but with lower concentrations of pigment and less expensive formulas. These are a good, affordable choice for getting started and you can upgrade later if you want. Cotman brand field box sets of “pan” watercolors by Winsor & Newton are the best in this category.

Popular brands of professional quality watercolors include Winsor & Newton, Daniel Smith, QoR, and Holbein. You can choose “pans” of color or tubes. **When you are starting, keep it simple.** Avoid sets with 24 colors -- It’s better to get to know a set of 12 colors and learn to mix them. Pan colors are much easier to take into the field.

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Good starter palette:

1. Ultramarine Blue
2. Cobalt Blue
3. Yellow Ochre
4. Hansa Yellow Medium or Cadmium Yellow Medium
5. Hansa Yellow Light or Cadmium Yellow Light or Lemon Yellow
6. Alizarin Crimson (permanent)
7. Cadmium Red Medium or Pyrrol Scarlet
8. Burnt Sienna (Winsor & Newton recommended)
9. Burnt Umber
10. Sap Green

See next page for *Best Bet Watercolor Sets for Beginners*.

BEST VALUE BEGINNER WATERCOLOR SETS

J. Mackay

BRAND/NAME	PRICE *	COLORS	PHOTO
Winsor & Newton Cotman Watercolors - Sketcher's Pocket Set of 12, Assorted Colors, Half Pans. Plastic box. Student grade paints. This is a decent, inexpensive option for beginners.	\$21	Lemon Yellow Hue, Cadmium Yellow Hue Cadmium Red Pale Hue, Alizarin Crimson Hue Ultramarine, Cerulean Blue Hue Viridian Hue, Sap Green Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Burnt Umber Chinese White <i>Jean says: Remove the white and replace it with cobalt blue (each watercolor half-pan runs about \$10)</i>	
Winsor & Newton Cotman Watercolors - Customizable Travel Set of 12, Assorted Colors, Half Pans. Student grade paints. This palette has more space for mixing colors and room to add another 12 pans of paint. Metal box.	\$36	Lemon Yellow Hue, Cadmium Yellow Hue Cadmium Red Hue, Alizarin Crimson Hue Ultramarine, Prussian Blue Viridian Hue, Sap Green Burnt Sienna, Burnt Umber Lamp Black, Chinese White <i>Jean says: Remove the white and black replace with yellow ochre and cobalt blue (each watercolor half-pan runs about \$10)</i>	
Daniel Smith Watercolor Half Pan – Set of 12 Artist Grade paints, Metal Box, Assorted; Rich Earth Tones and Primary Colors	\$69	Buff Titanium, Hansa Yellow Light, Hansa Yellow Medium, Hansa Yellow Deep Pyrrol Scarlet, Quinacridone Rose Cerulean Blue (Chromium), Ultramarine Blue, Sap Green Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber <i>Jean says: Add cobalt blue and alizarin crimson next</i>	

Daniel Smith Watercolor Half Pan - Set of 15, Ultimate Mixing Set Artist grade, smaller size good for travel, but mixing space is limited	\$84	Buff Titanium, Hansa Yellow Medium, Quinacridone Gold Permanent Alizarin Crimson, Pyrrol Scarlet, Quinacridone Rose, Indian Red Ultramarine Blue, Cerulean Blue Chromium, Phthalo Blue (Green Shade), Phthalo Green (Blue Shade) Raw Umber, Burnt Sienna, Goethite (Brown Ochre) Jane's Gray Plus one bonus travel case with 15 empty pans. <i>Jean says: Swap Indian Red for Hansa Yellow Light or Winsor Lemon</i>	
Winsor & Newton Professional Watercolor - Set of 14 Field Pocket Set Assorted Colors, Half Pans, Comes with a small brush	\$89	Winsor Lemon, Cadmium-Free Yellow Cadmium-Free Red, Alizarin Crimson Winsor Violet (Dioxazine), French Ultramarine, Winsor Blue (Green Shade) Winsor Green (Blue Shade), Permanent Sap Green Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Burnt Umber Payne's Gray, Ivory Black <i>Jean says: Swap Ivory Black for Cobalt Blue</i>	
Winsor & Newton Professional Watercolor - Set of 12 Customizable Travel Tin, Assorted Half Pans, Room to Grow, Lots of Mixing Space	\$98	Winsor Lemon, Cadmium-Free Yellow Cadmium-Free Red, Alizarin Crimson French Ultramarine, Winsor Blue (Green Shade- same as Phthalo Blue) Permanent Sap Green Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Raw Sienna Payne's Gray, Ivory Black <i>Jean says: Swap Ivory Black for Cobalt Blue</i>	

*All prices approximate as of 8/15/25