

Painting with Liquid Watercolors

If you've never used liquid watercolors before, take some time to experiment with them yourself before setting them up for children.

These paints will wash from *most* surfaces and fabrics with soap and water. *They may stain*, especially at full strength.

Watercolor brushes have softer and more absorbent fibers, so they are better able than other paintbrushes to hold the paint as it's applied (rather than just dropping it onto the paper). Similarly, watercolor paper is highly absorbent. It is also expensive; use it judiciously.

Setup

- Liquid watercolors can be used at full strength or diluted. They will last longer if diluted, of course, and will still produce rich colors.
- Start with a half inch of water in a container with one squirt of paint. Adjust from there.
- Provide one container for each color. Use clear containers.
- Either:
 - place one brush in each container of paint, or
 - have a container of clean water and a paper towel next to the paints so that brushes can be cleaned and then dabbed on the paper towel before entering a new color.
- Provide a space where wet paintings can lie flat while they dry.

Notes for wet painting:

- Soak paper for a few hours before use. Set the paper in a tray of water, submerging it one sheet at a time so that water gets between the sheets; this keeps them from sticking together.
- It is especially difficult to keep the colors from combining with each other on wet paper. How does this impact efforts at representational painting?
- Introduce a limited number of colors to begin. With the primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—children will notice that secondary colors are created as the colors flow together.
- Use a dull pencil to write names on the finished, still-wet paintings. The color of the lead won't show, but the imprint will.

Notes for dry painting:

- Many watercolorists sketch very lightly with pencil before applying any paint.
- For resist, oil pastels should be used first, before paint is applied.