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watercolor painting: supplies for plein air

[Note: As you put together your supplies and equipment to paint outdoors, think lightweight and portable, find creative ways to simplify everything you carry with you on a painting trip.]

Watercolor Palette

Empty Metal Watercolor holding 24 Half Pans or 12 Full Pans (preferably Daniel Smith 12 Full Pan Watercolor Travel Box, Empty). Bring your watercolor set or buy one of these:

- Daniel Smith | [purchase](#)
- Empty Half Pans | [purchase](#)
- American Journey Voyager | [purchase](#)
- Empty 12 Full Pans | [purchase](#)

Watercolor Pigments

Winsor & Newton Full-Size Pans, Half-Size Pans, or 5ml Tubes | [purchase](#)

Warm Colors:

- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Yellow
- Burnt Sienna
- Raw Sienna
- Permanent Rose
- Chromium Oxide Green
- Raw Umber

Cool Colors:

- Winsor Blue Green Shade
- Winsor Blue Red Shade
- Hookers Green
- Paynes Grey
- Winsor Violet
- Chinese or Titanium White

Mixing Complements:*

- Ultramarine Blue or Winsor Blue Red Shade —*mix with*— Cadmium Red or Burnt Sienna
- Chromium Oxide Green or Hookers Green —*mix with*— Permanent Rose or Burnt Sienna
- Chromium Oxide Green or Hookers Green —*mix with*— Winsor Violet
- Paynes Grey —*mix with*— Permanent Rose or Cadmium Red or Winsor Violet
- Winsor Violet —*mix with*— Cadmium Yellow or Raw Sienna

More Complex Mixtures:*

- Ultramarine Blue —*mix with*— Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber
- Winsor Blue Green Shade —*mix with*— Raw Sienna, Cadmium Red, Raw Umber
- Winsor Red Green Shade —*mix with*— Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber

* These combinations provide perfect grays and green, violet or neutrals, and provide various contrasts. I can choose among a very wide range of neutral mixtures by thinking in terms of these warm/cool pairings.

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Brushes

What you will need is a 1" Flat, #2, #6, #8 Rounds Sable or Synthetic Artists Watercolor Brushes. Here are some options:

- Utrecht Basic Brushes | [purchase](#)
- Utrecht Sable Blend Brushes | [purchase](#)
- Utrecht Synthetic Brushes | [purchase](#)
- W&N Artist Brushes | [purchase](#)
- Blick Studio Sable Brushes | [purchase](#)
- W&N Cotman Brushes | [purchase](#)

Brush Holder

A simple canvas brush roll, which absorbs any excess water in the brushes and bundles them firmly without pinching the tuft hairs (as with the bamboo roll carriers).

- Utrecht Canvas Brush Roll | [purchase](#)

Paper/Pad

6x9," 6x12," 9x12," 10x14," or 12x16"
Cold-Pressed Pads (preferably Arches Blocks)

- Arches Blocks | [purchase](#)
- Arches Watercolor Album | [purchase](#)
- Strathmore 400 Series Watercolor Pads | [purchase](#)
- Strathmore 300 Watercolor Pads | [purchase](#)
- Strathmore Windpower Pads | [purchase](#)

Boards

Boards cut several inches larger than paper size (if you don't buy Arches Board) to tape the paper on.

- Gatorfoam Board | [purchase](#)
- Pre-Cut Foamboard | [purchase](#)
- Black Foamboard | [purchase](#)
- Crescent No. 200 Illustration Board | [purchase](#)

Tote Bag

A tote bag, flat and rectangular in shape and same dimensions as a laptop computer bag (roughly 14x12x4" when packed), available from many art/photo/bag retailers.

- Canvas Tote Bags | [purchase](#)
- Creativo Messenger Bags | [purchase](#)
- Martin Just Stow-It Messenger Bag | [purchase](#)
- Moleskin Tote Bag | [purchase](#)

Drawing for Compositional Studies

- 0.9mm Mechanical Pencil | [purchase](#)
- Lamey Safari Fountain Pen | [purchase](#)
- Tombow Dual Brush Pen | [purchase](#)
- Parker Jotter Ball Point Pen | [purchase](#)
- Kneaded Eraser | [purchase](#)

Small Sketchbook

A sketchbook can be as small as 4x6." Here are some options:

- Field Sketch Journal | [purchase](#)
- Moleskine Notebook | [purchase](#)
- Holbein Multimedia Book | [purchase](#)

Necessary Accessories

- White Plastic or Metal Butchers Tray 7½ x 11" | [purchase](#)
- Small Misting Bottle | [purchase](#)
- Nichiban Tape 2" wide | [purchase](#) | [purchase](#)
—or—
- Artist Tape (white) | [purchase](#)
- Paper Towels | [purchase](#)
- Knitting Needle or Straight Skewer | [purchase](#)

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- View-finder: Make one of cardboard. Make two “L” shapes, about 7”-8” on the leg and 1½” wide. Hold together with binder clips.
—or *purchase*—
- View Catcher | [purchase](#)
- Hat with Brim

Optional Accessories

I bring an umbrella, chair, and a mahl stick in most of my plein air outings.

Umbrella (I have one that clamps onto the side of my easel):

- BestBrella | [purchase](#)
- Artwork Essentials | [purchase](#)

Chair or stool (folding) — If you want to sit while you paint:

- GCI Outdoor Seat | [purchase](#)
- Mahl Stick | [purchase](#)