

## Chapter 3

# When the Paint Hits the Paper

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Preparing your paint
  - ▶ Brandishing your brushes
  - ▶ Playing with water
  - ▶ Trying out techniques
  - ▶ Displaying your art
  - ▶ Painting a miniature landscape
- 

**Y**ou have all your supplies at the ready; now it's time to do something with them. If you have a few butterflies in your tummy, relax. You'll be transferring those butterflies to your paper in no time. This chapter gets you started with some basic watercolor techniques and introduces you to some simple terminology.

You can't improve your skills without using up some paper. So as not to break your budget, I designed the projects and practices in this book for small pieces of paper you can get by dividing a full sheet of watercolor paper (see Chapter 2 for more on dividing your paper). The paintings you make may be gems, and you may frame a mini-masterpiece. Or they may be learning experiences that only you want to see.

Keep an open mind, have fun, remember to breathe, and grow with each exercise. If you've never attempted watercolor, you're in for a treat. You'll be building new skills before you know it.

## *Activating Your Paint*

Before you paint, you need to get the paints in your palette ready for painting, or as I say, you need to *activate* your paints. (Chapter 2 shows you how to put your pigments into your palette using the color wheel as a guide.) When paint sits, it dries out. You can still use it; you just need to get it juiced up and ready to go. Add water by dropping it in with your brush or spraying the paint with your spray bottle. You can mix the dry pigment and water in the well, or you can make a puddle in the mixing area of the palette until the paint is the consistency of ink and the color is what you want.

Get in the habit of having paint ready so you don't have to stop in the middle of painting to mix more. When you're starting out, you may not know how much paint to mix, so mix more than you think you'll need if you don't want to stop and make more in the middle of the painting. If you have to call a halt while you're in the middle of a wash, the wash may dry and cause you to miss the opportune time to add paint while it's still damp. I often spray my whole palette so all the colors are damp and ready to paint. If you know you only need a couple of colors to execute a painting, then just activate those.



To activate your paint,

- 1. Dip a clean, damp #12 round brush into the well of pure pigment and get a half pea-size amount out.**

If the paint is dry or in pan form, gather paint by wriggling the wet brush hairs on the pigment and the paint will transfer. You won't get a measurable size (like a pea), but you'll pick up enough paint to move to the mixing area.

Use a clean brush every time you change colors. Clean the brush by swirling it in your filled water container to remove any previous paint. You want to keep the wells of pure pigment uncontaminated by other colors.

- 2. Place the pigment on the mixing area and add a little water by dipping the hairs of the brush into the water container and bringing it back to the mixing area.**

Add this brush load of water to your pigment in the mixing area. Water dilutes the paint. You can get a wide range of *value*, light to dark, by the amount of water you add to paint. (Chapter 5 explores values.) You can adjust the color by adding more water or more pigment. The paint should become liquid.



After a bit of time, paint dries out and forms little chunks of hard pigment. If you apply paint straight from the well onto your paper, the brush may pick up a chunk of pigment that can leave a streak of color behind. This all happens in the blink of an eye. Avoid streaks by pulling the paint into the mixing area and adding a little water and mixing it until it's smooth and chunk-free.

- 3. Swirl the water and paint together with the brush.**

You should have a nice even mix of color with no lumps. Test the color by painting a brush stroke on a scrap of paper. Add more water if it's thick and too dark. Add more pigment if the color is too pale. Evaluate the color after it's dry because it will dry lighter.



Use several brushes — one for each color — to activate your paint. You save pigment by not constantly rinsing out all the color. Just set the brush by the color without rinsing, and it will be ready to go when you need that color.

The mixing area should be large enough to be able to mix several puddles of color without them flowing together. If you need more mixing area, use the lid from your palette.

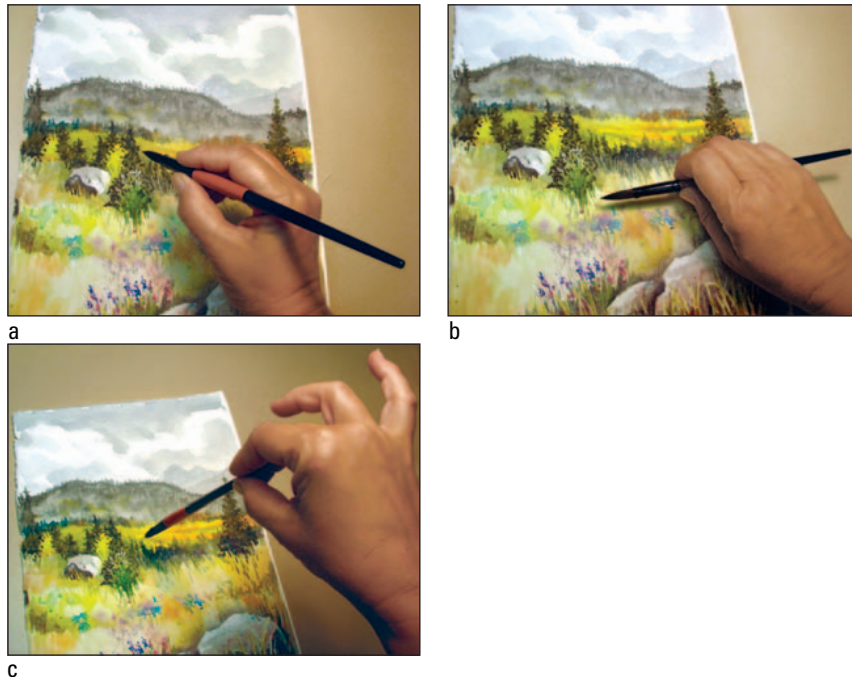
## Getting a Grip on Your Brush

For most applications, you hold and use your brush like you do a pen or pencil (see Figure 3-1a). However, holding your brush other ways produces other techniques:

- ✓ **On the side:** Try holding your brush like you would grip a stair railing. The bristles should come out next to your thumb as you use all four fingers to hold the handle (see Figure 3-1b). The brush lines up parallel to the paper so that when you apply paint, the side of the brush creates wide strokes.
- ✓ **Toward the end:** You can get more movement when you grip the brush loosely near the end of the handle (see Figure 3-1c). Think like an artist here and step away from the paper. Stand back, hold your arm out, and use your whole arm to paint.

## Beginning with Brush Strokes

The way you apply paint is called a *stroke*. Because oil paint is thick, the strokes are visible, and an oil painter has to think about brush strokes that remain in the paint. As a watercolorist, you don't have that concern. Watercolor strokes don't show because the paint lies flat. You can get several types of strokes from the same brush, and the many types of brushes can help you produce a vast array of strokes. (See Chapter 2 for more on brushes.)



**Figure 3-1:**  
Several  
ways to  
hold your  
paintbrush.

c

## Cleaning your palette

The mixing area of your palette can get messy. When it's too messy, you may not be able to mix fresh clean colors. The solution is easy: Take the damp sponge that always sits by your water container and sponge up the dirty watercolor. Don't forget to rinse the sponge until it's clean again.

If the palette is really dirty, you may want to clean it beside the sink. Scoop any old and chunky paint out of its well, clean the well with your water-soaked sponge, then put in fresh paint.

After you use a palette for a long time, it may become discolored by staining paint. If the stain bothers you, scrub it with a little bleach mixed with water to make it white again. Clean the bleach off completely so it doesn't influence future paint.

Like your house, cleanliness is a matter of style and taste. I have seen beautiful paintings come from disgustingly dirty palettes. I have also seen artists who keep their palettes neat and tidy at all times. Most of us live somewhere in between.



TIP

Experiment with your brushes to explore the strokes that are possible. You may want to use brush stroke paper available in art supply stores. The paper is gray but turns black when clear water is applied to it, so you can see what your stroke looks like. When the water dries, the color reverts to gray, so you can use the paper over and over. And water is all you should put on this paper; you can't use it again if you put paint on it. If you don't want to buy special paper, you can do the same thing with water and regular watercolor paper. If you want a permanent record of different strokes, use paint on regular watercolor paper.

Most brushes fall into one of two categories: rounds and flats. The following sections tell you how to use different types of brushes to produce different types of strokes.

## Using your flat brushes

Flat brushes are good for wetting paper for backgrounds and foregrounds and for applying color quickly to large areas. Flats are good for making buildings and other rectangular shapes. The edges make lines, and the corners make details.

Bigger brushes work for bigger spaces and paper. If you're working on a big painting, a ¾-inch flat brush makes painting a big, sweeping sky go quicker. For a looser style, use a bigger brush than you think you need for longer than you think you should. Start big and work your way down in brush size as you develop detail. Some artists simplify shapes and leave the detail out altogether, so they need big brushes. Some artists like to paint every hair on the cat, so they need itty-bitty brushes for loads of detail. I keep a ¼-inch, a ½-inch, a 1-inch, and a 2-inch flat brush in my brush kit.



TRY IT

Try a variety of brush strokes with your flat brush (see Figure 3-2):

- ✓ For a **wide stroke**, hold the brush so that the wide part is flat against the paper and pull down.
- ✓ To get a **thin line**, have the wide part of the brush facing you, then pull the brush either left or right so that you're painting with the thin edge.

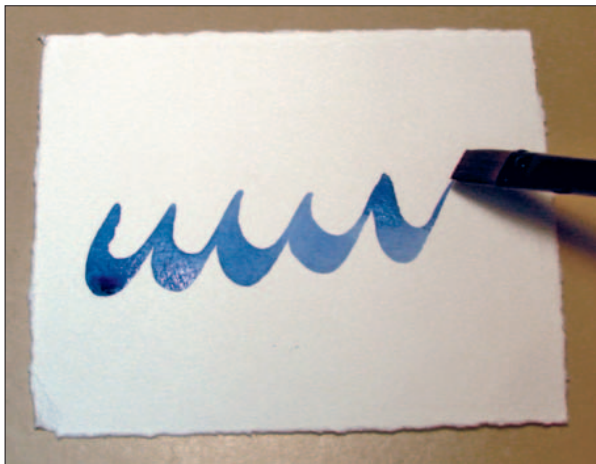
**Figure 3-2:**  
Brush  
strokes  
using a flat  
brush.



- ✓ Make **circle, fan, and hourglass shapes** by holding the brush handle perpendicular to the paper and touching the brush hairs lightly to the paper so that they remain flat and don't get mooshed out of shape. Turn the handle in place. Keep turning for a complete circle, or stop halfway for hourglass and fan shapes.
- ✓ Achieve **fine detail** by tilting the brush so that only the corner touches the paper.
- ✓ To make **scallops**, shown in Figure 3-3, hold the brush at a 45-degree angle (so that the thin edge points to opposite upper and lower the corners of the paper), pull down, round off the bottom, and curve the brush stroke to pull up moving toward the right (or to the left if you're left-handed).

A calligrapher uses this same stroke to make thick and thin lines in a single stroke. Make a whole border using this stroke. It will look like a scalloped edge of thick and thin lines.

**Figure 3-3:**  
Painting a  
scalloped  
line.



## Running with rounds

Even though the ferrule on a round brush is round and holds the hairs in a round shape, the brush tip is very pointed. You use this pointed tip for tiny detail, and then you can push the brush down to use all the hairs for a big mop area. I can paint an entire painting using a #14 round sable brush. It looks big, but it has a delicate tip.



Try some brush strokes using your round brush (see Figure 3-4):

- ✓ See how small you can get. Make a line using just the tip of the brush.
- ✓ See how big you can get. Push the hair down to the paper and pull a stroke.
- ✓ Make a combination of small and big. Start small and grow big.
- ✓ You guessed it. Do the opposite. Start big and diminish the area.
- ✓ Make a row of commas and apostrophes by pulling up and down on the brush.
- ✓ Put your thumb at the base of the hairs right at the ferrule and splay the hairs out like a fan brush. You use the brush like this for ratty texture like grass.



**Figure 3-4:**  
Brush  
strokes  
using a  
round brush.

The *liner brush* is a relative of a round brush, only the hairs are twice as long. Use a liner brush to make long thin lines. Hold this brush near the end of the handle and flick your wrist to make the line. These brushes are great for drawing sticks, twigs, grass, and any long lines.

## Painting with the Brush's Other End

You do most of your painting with the paint on the hairs of the brush. But the other end of the brush is a great tool too. Following are a couple of tricks for the other end:

- ✓ **Round ends:** A brush with a normal round handle end can make polka dots or just a quick dot. Dip the end of the handle in paint, then touch it to paper for a dot. Different size brushes make different size dots.

You can also draw with this end. It may be jagged but that looseness may be pleasant.

- ✓ **Chisel ends:** Some brushes have a slanted or *chisel* end. This type of end is a functional tool for scraping paint. When paint is wet, just before the shine is about to dry, use the chisel end to scrape away paint and leave a light line. You hold the brush nearly parallel to the paper and push off paint with the curved edge of the chisel end.

If you use the sharp edge instead of the curved edge, you'll carve a line in the paper that will fill in with paint and make a dark line. If the paint is too wet, you get the same result.

If you don't have a brush with a chisel end, try using a plastic knife or a credit card to scrape paint. This technique is perfect for quickly creating veins in a leaf or blades of grass in a field. It will look as if you spent hours painting around the lines.



## Controlling the Water

Remember the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, in which the porridge was too hot, too cold, and just right? Switch the porridge with water, and the same is true for watercolor paper and brushes. It's too wet, too dry, or just right. When you know how to deal with each condition, your watercolor painting will be much easier. That's what I help you do in the next sections.

When you paint, you'll start with a damp brush. Sometimes you'll dampen the paper with water and thereby make the brush damp. Next scoop up some paint in the hairs of the brush. Apply the paint to the paper that is dry or wet, depending on the look you want. When changing the color, first rinse the previous color in water, and then pick up the next color.



A big key to success is even wetness. And sometimes to achieve that, you have to let everything dry and start fresh on the next layer. Especially if you're painting a large area, it's difficult to have the same wetness everywhere. You



may get puddles in one area, while another is beginning to dry out. When you see parts of the painting becoming dry, the best plan is to let everything dry and start again in another layer. Say this with me: “When in doubt, dry it out.”

Watercolor has a *magic time*. It’s just as the shine is about to leave the paper, when the paper is damp with no puddles or dry spots. This is the perfect time for all the techniques described in Chapter 4 or using a chisel-ended brush to scrape paint away as described in the “Painting with the Brush’s Other End” section earlier in this chapter.

## Dropping wet-in-wet

One way to let watercolor work for you is to paint *wet-in-wet*. The paint is wet and the paper is damp. The paint travels a little on damp paper. You can even paint on damp paint. I sometimes think that what scares people from using watercolor is the perceived lack of control — the paint moves! But that movement is precisely the fun of watercolor. Lose control and enjoy it.



This wet-in-wet technique can be a garden of flowers, an abstract, or a cool background. What will yours be?

1. Use a quarter sheet of watercolor paper.
2. Choose and prepare as many colors as you want to use.

By having your colors ready, you won’t waste valuable time mixing paint while your paper dries prematurely.

3. Dampen the paper with clear water.

Apply the water with a brush or sponge. Wet the back of the paper, too, so that the paper lies flat and stays wet for a while. This gives you plenty of time to play with paint before the paper starts to dry.

4. Apply your colors by dropping them randomly onto the wet paper, dripping color from a #12 round brush, or painting a line and letting it spread.

Let the colors mix. Rinse your brush between picking up new colors. If your paint doesn’t drip, lightly touch the tip to the paper to see if it will transfer the paint to the paper. More water may make the paint drip better. The drier the paper becomes, the less spreading the paint does.

Wet-in-wet technique is a great way to make backgrounds that have a softer edge and are less detailed. I painted the following painting in two stages. The first stage (see Figure 5-3a) was painted wet-in-wet using a blue-gray mixed from ultramarine blue and burnt sienna. I painted all the trees, fields, and hills while the paper was very damp. Then I let the background dry. I added the pheasants, fence, and grasses when the paper was dry so the paint would hold a hard edge (see Figure 5-3b). The hard edge and details help create the illusion of space.





a



b

**Figure 3-5:**  
A landscape  
using wet-  
in-wet for a  
soft, less  
detailed  
background.

## *Stemming the flow of water*

Too much water on the paper creates *puddles*. Puddles are loads of water. Having puddles and lightly damp areas together creates uneven wetness. The puddle will travel into the dry area and create a line where it can't travel anymore. Puddles also can take forever to dry. To solve this, pick up the paper and pour the water off. Or you can blot it off with a damp brush, a paper towel, a clean sponge, toilet paper, the sleeve of your shirt — whatever's handy.

When your brush is too wet, you introduce more water than you need into the painting. To limit the amount of water, tap the brush on the damp sponge

after you rinse it. The sponge absorbs any dripping water, and you don't go back into the painting with more water than is there already.

### *Watering blooms*

When you get more water than pigment, the water dries at uneven rates and creates blooms, blossoms, cauliflowers, backwashes, or happy accidents, an example of which is shown in Figure 3-6. Sometimes these look really cool and create a fun, juicy watercolor look, especially in a sky. Enjoy and have fun creating them. But trust me on this: If you want a smooth, flat wash and you get a bloom in the middle, it's no "happy" accident. So figure out how to control blooms right now so you get them only when you want them.



**Figure 3-6:**  
Blossoms  
created by  
uneven  
wetness.



You need to know how to control or create blooms (or whatever you choose to call them), and the first step toward that is knowing how they form:

- 1. Get a 4-x-6-inch piece of watercolor paper.**
- 2. Activate your choice of pigment color.**

Add water to make a puddle of color in the mixing area of the palette.

- 3. Using a large flat brush, cover the entire surface of the paper with paint quickly so it's all the same dampness.**

If the paper absorbs the water and dries, reapply the paint until it's damp everywhere.

- 4. Wait until the paint shine is just about to disappear. Drip a brush of clean water on the painted surface.**

Because the water is introduced into the damp paint, you get uneven wetness, and you should get a bloom, probably immediately. Resist the temptation to fiddle with it.

If you don't see a bloom, you probably dripped the water too soon or too late. Let the whole thing dry and try Steps 3 and 4 again.

- 5. Let the paint dry.**

## Fun with a blow-dryer

Any hair dryer is a friend to the impatient watercolorist. It speeds up your waiting time until the next layer is dry. When you use a blow-dryer, dry from the front and back of the paper. Hold the dryer about a foot away and move it around for gentle, even drying. Any temperature seems to work. I've even used the high temperature from a distance and for short amounts of drying time.

You can even experiment with pushing paint with air. If the paint is liquid enough, you can push it into running shapes. Remember blowing around paint with a straw in school to make an oriental art copy? Another experimental technique is to put the dryer close to the puddle of paint and force dry it so the paint makes concentric circles as it dries.

Try the exercise again with other colors to see what blooms look like in a rainbow of shades. You can also try dripping wet color into nearly dry color to see the results.

### *Repairing an unwanted bloom*

The easiest way to fix a bloom is to avoid making one. And the best way to avoid making one is to ignore those who speak ill of watching paint dry and baby-sit your painting as it dries. Until it's dry, your painting can change and do some weird things. If you can see a bloom forming where you don't want one, nip it in the bud by using your brush to pull the wetness and pigment around the perimeter of the area so it's evenly wet.



Never leave a puddle unless you plan on a bloom. Blot puddles and excess liquid from the painting's edges and especially table surfaces. You are in control of the painting. You can enjoy the surprises that blooms can deliver, or you can make even, smooth washes. You control the water so it will deliver the result that you want.

Blooms can be fun texture in the right place: trees, clouds, mountains, water, you name it. But sometimes a bloom happens where you don't want it: on a face, in a smooth area, or some other surprise.

Depending on the pigment and paper, fixing blossoms may be easy or impossible. You can try three possible solutions:

- ✓ **Add another layer of color.** If the pigment is pale, another layer of paint may camouflage the blossom.
- ✓ **Try to lighten the blossom.** Wet the entire area with clear water. Take a stiff paintbrush and nudge the offending area. Blot with a towel to lift the paint.
- ✓ **Scrub the area using a stiff brush — even a toothbrush.** As a last resort, if you're using 100 percent cotton rag paper, dampen the area with clear water. Let it soak a little. Gently take a toothbrush that you have designated to watercolor and scrub. When little paper bits start to pile up, stop. It's possible to rub a hole in your paper, and if you're using cheaper paper, you can rub a hole even quicker, so keep an eye on the paper. Cotton rag paper can take a lot of abuse, though, so if that's what you're using, try it.

Of course, you can always start over. Remember, experience is what you get when you don't get what you want.

## Dealing with dry

Some techniques require wet paper, but for hard, crisp edges, you need drier paper and a drier brush. Of course, a dry brush in watercolor painting is a relative term because it's watercolor and everything is wet. But having your sponge absorb most of the water from your brush before you dip it into paint lets you execute those very controlled, every-hair-on-the-dog type paintings for the control freak in you. To stay in control of your detail, stay dry.

To dry your brush, touch the base or heel of the hairs on the damp sponge beside your water container. This absorbs excess water from the brush but leaves pigment in the tip of the hairs to paint with. Choose a small brush when you want lots of detail and control.

If you want a hard edge, you must be patient. If one area of your paper is wet and you touch it with another wet, the wets will run into each other. Goodbye hard edge. Have patience, or use a blow-dryer to dry your painting so you can keep working.



And, speaking of dry, to test the paper to see if it's dry yet, use the back of your hand to gently touch the surface of the paper. If it's cool to the skin, the paper is still wet. Notice that I said the *back* of your hand. If you use the palm of your hand, the paper may feel dry before it really is dry. The palm of your hand has been used so much — burned, blistered, lotioned, and so on — that it's no longer as sensitive as the back of your hand.

## Tackling Three Basic Painting Techniques

Master these three watercolor painting techniques, and you'll know all you need to paint anything you want. These techniques really are all you have to work with. I have no idea why it took me 40 years to figure that out. Truly, the rest of this book is just refinement and details. Here are the basics:

- ✓ **Flat wash and hard edges:** A *wash* is pigment in water. A *flat wash* is an even color with no variation in color value (light or darkness). A *hard edge* is a crisp, abrupt change, like a line.
- ✓ **Graded wash and soft edges:** This wash is a *gradation* of color from light to dark. The *soft edge* is a slow change that may not even be perceptible.
- ✓ **Rough texture:** You need a paper with some texture — a cold-press paper or one with a bumpy surface (see Chapter 2 for more on paper textures) — to stand up to the rough texture technique.

To achieve rough texture, use paint that is slightly dry. Make a quick stroke with the side of your brush so the paint just coats the paper's surface bumps and leaves the pockets between the bumps paint-free. You want white paper showing through. This rough texture can simulate sparkle on a lake or tree bark.



Make a chart to explore the three techniques on wet and dry paper. Figure 3-7 shows what you're aiming for.

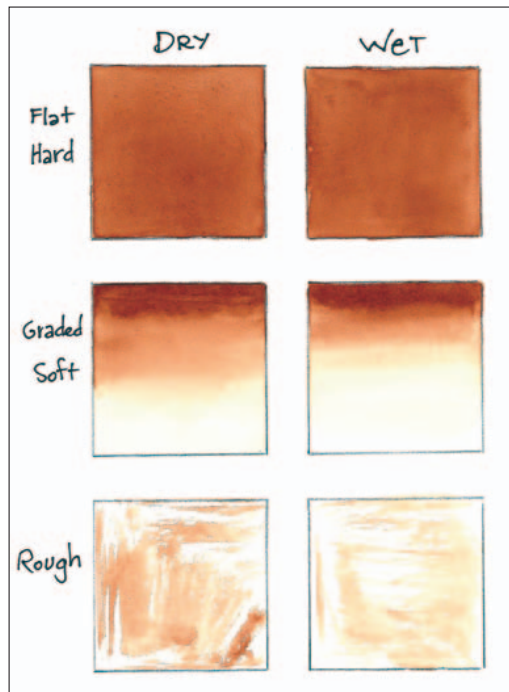
**1. Draw six 2-inch squares on cold-press or rough watercolor paper.**

Make two 2-inch-wide columns that are 6 inches long. Divide each column into thirds. You have three rows of 2-inch squares.

**2. Label the columns *dry* and *wet*.**

The first column will be techniques on dry paper, so write *dry* at the top. Label the second column *wet*, because you're going to do the same techniques after you wet the paper.

**3. Label the rows *hard-edge*, *flat wash*; *soft-edge*, *graded wash*; and *rough texture*.**



**Figure 3-7:** The three basic paint techniques on dry and wet paper.

**4. Prepare your paint.**

Use a paintbrush of your choosing to gather one color of pigment and mix it with water in the mixing area of your palette. I used burnt sienna, but any dark color works. You want a dark paint, but not so dark that

you can't see through it. Add just enough water to make the pigment move like ink, but still remain dark.

**5. Paint the top square in the dry column with a flat wash with hard edges on dry paper.**

Fill in the square with the paint. Try to fill it in with even color. If you use a flat 2-inch brush, this could be one stroke. If the brush is smaller, it may take several strokes. If you get puddles, dry your brush with a paper towel. This makes the brush a *thirsty brush* that absorbs liquid from the paper instead of dispensing it. Or if you touch the top of a puddle with the edge or corner of a paper towel, it will absorb just water, leaving the heavier pigment on the paper.

**6. Dampen the top square in the wet column with clear water and paint a flat wash with hard edges on wet paper.**

Use your brush to paint clear water over the square. Try to make even wetness, no puddles, just a shiny surface. Absorb any excessive puddles with a paper towel. Apply paint as you did in Step 5. The object is to make an even tone throughout the square.

**7. Paint the middle square in the dry column with a soft-edge, graded wash.**

Paint at the top of the square. Rinse your brush and apply a stripe of clear water at the bottom of the square, leaving dry paper between the two. Dry the brush on the sponge to make a damp, not drippy, brush and use it to introduce the two stripes by painting a stripe of clear water between them. Your goal is to make a dark-to-light gradation from top to bottom. The transition is a smooth, soft edge. Here, the soft edge is in the middle of the square, as opposed to the hard edges on the outside edges of the square.

**8. Dampen the middle square in the wet column and paint a soft-edge, graded wash on wet paper.**

Paint clear water over the square as you did in Step 6. Then apply your pigment to the top of the square. Rinse the brush and move the paint down the square making the color lighter as it approaches the bottom of the square. Pick up unwanted puddles with a thirsty brush. Apply more paint if needed. Your goal is dark to light, top to bottom.

**9. Paint the bottom square in the dry column with rough texture on dry paper.**

Pick up some pigment in your brush and touch the base of the hairs near the ferrule on the sponge to absorb excess water. Use the side of the brush and quickly stroke over the square, leaving little valleys of white paper. Try again until you get some rough texture.

**10. Dampen the last square in the wet column and paint rough on wet.**

Dampen the square first (as you did in Step 6), then apply paint as you did in Step 9. This technique works better on dry paper and may not work on wet paper, but because you already have a square, you may as well try it.

Along with hard and soft edges, both of which you need in every painting to make it interesting, you may hear about lost edges. Who lost them? Where



did they go? A *lost edge* is a type of soft edge that disappears into another area. A lost edge makes the viewer decide where the edge is because the artist doesn't spell out every detail. The viewer gets to participate in the painting experience. "Lose that edge" might be an artistic directive. To do so, gently nudge a hard edge with a stiff bristle brush to soften it. If you completely soften it so it disappears, you make a lost edge.

## Lifting, Layering, and Glazing

This section covers the three techniques every watercolorist uses to modify his basic painting. You can erase watercolor. It's called *lifting*. You can continue painting to improve your work by adding *layers*. You can create focus and dimension on a final painting by *glazing*.

### One, two, three, lift!

Want to remove or erase paint? You can! At least you can make an area lighter. You can *lift* (remove) paint to correct excess paint or create a highlight.

How much paint you can lift depends on the paper and pigment. Some papers lift more easily than others. Some paper brands have a softer finish and lift very easily. Some brands absorb the pigment and are more difficult to lift; however, these papers can be layered with paint without disturbing what lies underneath. Your paper dealer can advise you on which brands to purchase for your needs. Earth-colored pigments are pretty forgiving and lift easily; staining pigments are a bit less forgiving and may never lift completely. (See Chapter 2 for more on pigments.)

You can lift paint wet or dry:

✓ **Lifting wet paint:** If paint is damp on the watercolor paper, use a clean, damp brush and touch the area that you want to remove paint from. Follow the shape you need lightened with the damp brush: Draw a line, touch a dot, or use the side of the brush for a large area.

After you lift out the paint, blot the area with a paper towel. If you want it lighter still, wait until the area is dry and then follow the instructions in the next bullet point.

✓ **Lifting dry paint:** Use a round brush with clear water to dampen the area you want to lift and blot the area with a towel. Turn the towel to a clean spot and rub the area vigorously and quickly using a bit of pressure. This usually is enough to lift what you want, but if you want more lifting, use a damp brush with stiff bristles and rub the area. Blot with a towel. Continue until the paper peels up in little crumbs. At this point, stop and let the area dry.



Watercolor dries 30 percent lighter than it looks when wet. So wait to see if the area you want lifted is light enough when it's dry before trying to lift more paint.



## Layering on top

You can, and often will want to, paint on top of other paint. You usually wait until the *underlayer* is dry before adding another layer of paint.

What you put on top influences what is underneath, and layering is one way to mix colors. Keep the paint transparent so you can see through it and into the layers. This makes deep, interesting paintings.



Create several rainbows of color with this layering exercise.

**1. Get a quarter sheet of watercolor paper.**

This can be a square piece of paper.

**2. Activate all your paints.**

You want to become familiar with the entire palette of colors, so use them all.

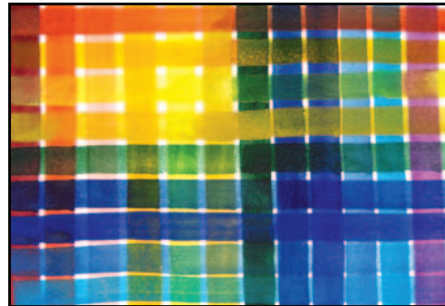
**3. Paint a stripe of each color on your palette from the top of the paper to the bottom, leaving a small stripe of white between each color so they don't mingle (see Figure 3-8a).**

A ½-inch flat brush is just the right width for each stripe. Keep the colors strong by not diluting them with too much water. You could make another chart with pale colors and see what happens with those, too.

**Figure 3-8:**  
Exploring  
your palette  
by making a  
layer chart.



a



b

**4. Let the stripes dry completely.**

Use a blow-dryer, or be patient and make a cup of tea.

**5. Paint a stripe of each color horizontally, moving left to right across the paper (or right to left, your preference). See Figure 3-8b.**

This puts each color underneath and over the top of all the others.

**6. Let the paint dry and analyze the results.**

**7. Label the paint names for a handy reference chart.**

This simple chart gives you a wealth of knowledge about colors and color combinations. Each intersection displays a new color. Look at the differences