

2026 May, CALIFORNIA WATERCOLOR ASSOCIATION WORKSHOP

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS

Plein Air painting means leaving the art studio. This is why I try to streamline my materials and equipment. I also remind myself to keep the attitude that anything can be lost or left behind and that everything is replaceable.

OK, let's get ready!

PALETTE

If you have an empty watercolor palette because you are new to watercolor, or are experienced in watercolor and are trying a new palette: **bring it empty**.

If you already have a watercolor palette already filled with paint, bring it and your tubes of paint, **without** refilling your paint wells

Eldajon palettes have the kind of mixing wells I like: you'll need 2 Eldajon palettes to get enough paint wells for a full color range. Note: I have seen ingenious artists with 3 Eldajon palettes: 2 for the paint and 1 for a lid that nests on top, bound together with a rubber band for transport!

Otherwise, any palette that can hold a wide selection of paint colors and has good sized mixing wells is fine.

PAINT

If you are buying watercolors for the very first time, these are the colors I have on my palette: **Winsor & Newton**: Permanent Rose; Permanent Magenta; Cobalt Violet; Ultramarine Violet; Ultramarine Blue; Cobalt Blue; Cerulean Blue; Cobalt Turquoise; Cobalt Green; Winsor Green-Blue Hue; Aureolin; Quinacridone Gold; Yellow Ochre; Cadmium Yellow; Cadmium Orange; Cadmium Scarlet; Cadmium Red; Burnt Sienna

However, you don't have to buy every color! Bring the paints you do have, and if you are interested, try a few of the colors that students are most curious about: Cobalt Violet, Cobalt Blue, Cobalt Green, Aureolin, Yellow Ochre, Cerulean Blue.

I use a Robert Simon Goliath #36 Round Watercolor Brush but they are no longer being manufactured! If you already have one, bring it, if not Goliath #30 and #26 are still available if you want to try out this size. There are many other manufacturers of similar brushes, natural hair as well as synthetic. What's most important is to have a large, round brush that goes to a pointed tip.

If you already have a variety of watercolor brushes, rounds and flats, bring those!

PAPER

I use Arches watercolor paper, Cold Press #140. It measures 22" x 30" and then I fold and tear it into quarter-sheets, 11" x 15". You'll need a minimum of 4 quarter sheets for the workshop, 8 is better. If you are ambitious and are able, bring even more paper! If you have a favorite weight or surface of paper, bring it. If you already have a watercolor block about the size of a quarter-sheet and want to use it, bring it.

BOARD

Painting Board to clip your watercolor paper onto. Approximately 12" x 16", made of wood, plexi, or super-stiff cardboard

Clips: 4 artists clips, alligator clips, even clothes pins!

SKETCHBOOK

Sketchbook: whatever you already have is fine. I use a spiral bound 11" x 14" sketchbook

Pencils: 2B is fine, 3B is even better.

WATER

Water containers. You'll need 3. 1 with a secure lid for use with painting brush. Another one with a secure lid for transporting extra painting water and if it's large enough, could also be used as drinking water. Or bring a 3rd one just for drinking water.

RAG

Painting rags or towels, cotton or linen works best. I don't use sponges because they can get funky, and paper towels are just wasteful.

STOOL

I sit when I paint watercolor so I usually need two stools: one to sit on and one for my palette.

Sometimes I use a large, lidded contractor bucket as my stool: a cushion makes it comfortable to sit on and I carry extra supplies, jacket, hat, lunch, etc. inside the bucket.

Some artists prefer to stand, so bring the easel set-up you usually use.

SHADE

Painting in direct sun can be brutal, so bring a plein-air painting umbrella. I've had the best success clamping mine to a French easel or a heavy wooden stool, so I bring that along too. Yes, they are heavy but they are paid for!

If you don't have an umbrella that's okay too. This is what I do: first find shade, then scan the view, and decide what I want to paint

Brimmed hat, fingerless gloves and clothing to protect skin from the sun: sleeves and collars. Layers, for variable weather and temperatures. Sunblock.

I've taken to using old socks as my painting "gloves." I slice a hole in the heel for my thumb and cut off the socks' toes for my fingertips. Neutral colored socks work best: my current pair are dark grey.

REFRESHMENTS

Bring a lunch, beverage and/or water. Depending on the location, nearby eateries may, or may not, be an option.