

Methods of Applying Watercolor to the Paper

There are basically 5 ways to apply paint to the watercolor paper:

1. Wet paint on wet paper
2. Moist paint on wet paper
3. Any thing in between the top two
4. Wet paint on dry paper
5. Moist paint on dry paper

It is vital for a good watercolor artist to know how to handle all the techniques listed above. They play an important role in any painting. One of the wonderful aspects of watercolor are precisely the first 3 applications. This is what this medium is known for. However, most novice artists avoid working on wet paper because they find it difficult to handle. Also if this technique is not applied, the result of the painted subjects will contain sharp edges, therefore giving the impression that things are cut out and pasted on rather than painted on. If you learn how to create diffused and soft edges in your painting, you will be using watercolor to its fullest potential. This tutorial will shed some light on how to work on wet paper to achieve this goal.

If you apply only the last two methods for the sake of using this medium only because it's easier to clean, then you are not taking advantage of its properties. You'd better resort to oils and take the extra time to clean up.

Take into account that the degree of wetness in the brush versus the degree of water in the paper will determine how blurry or defined your edges will be. It's like shifting gears in a car. You select the gear you want to use by extracting the water from your brush or waiting for the water to be absorbed into the paper.

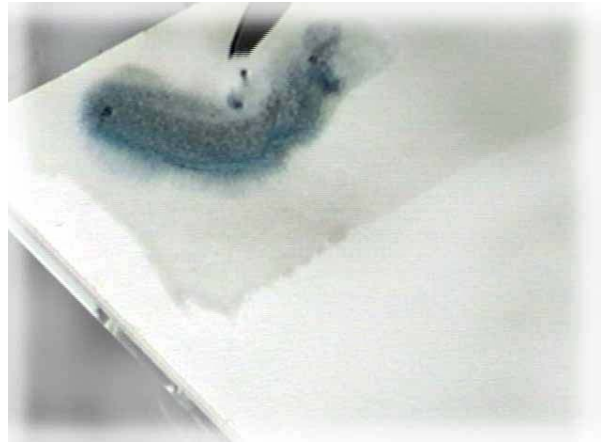
Why are soft, blurred, diffused, or fuzzy edges so important in a landscaping?

One way to convey the idea of distance in your painting besides all the other well-known techniques is by softening your edges. When your background contains blurred edges rather than crisp hard edges, the viewer will be convinced that area is in the distance. This aids to convey three dimensional space in addition to aerial perspective. This will also help to keep the eye away from the center of interest. In general terms hard, defined or sharp edges should be reserved for the center of interest. The viewer's eye tends to gaze at defined edges. Applying the wet on wet technique to get defused edges in your background plane as well as for non important areas is a good policy.

Wet paint on wet paper

Suggested applications:

- Skies (including clouds)
- Merging colors to slow the transition of color shift
- Reflections in water
- Rolling snow banks
- Inside foliage areas
- Gradation in values in lakes
- Anything containing mist



of

Step 1. Wet the paper thoroughly. The amount of water should be like a sidewalk after a rainfall. Beads of water should collect at the bottom. If you tilt your paper the water should run down.

Step 2. With a wet brush, pick up paint and apply it to the wet area without waiting. The pigment will run practically where ever it wants. If you wish, you can push the paint around so you can guide it to where you intend to.



Here is the final result. As you can see there's a lot of bleeding of the paint into the wet area.

Moist paint on wet paper. (Fuzzy, soft edges with definition of a silhouette.)

Suggested applications:

Background hills

Trees in the background

Grass meeting objects

Good option for evergreens

Jaggedly edged mountains (preferably blurred by rubbing with q tip or moist brush)

Rocks under water

Waterfalls (water running alongside rocks)



Step 1. Wet the paper thoroughly. The amount of water should be like a sidewalk after a rainfall. Beads of water should collect at the bottom. If you tilt your paper the water should run down. Then wait for about three to five minutes for the paper to absorb the water. The waiting time is relative to the control you want.



Step 2. Load your brush with pigment. Suck out the excess water with a damp paper towel at the ferrule (where the bristles meet the metal part that's attached to the handle). Apply the paint as you would normally do on dry paper. If your brush picks up too much moisture as you paint. You will know this when you start to lose control of the edges. You can always suck out more water in between applications.



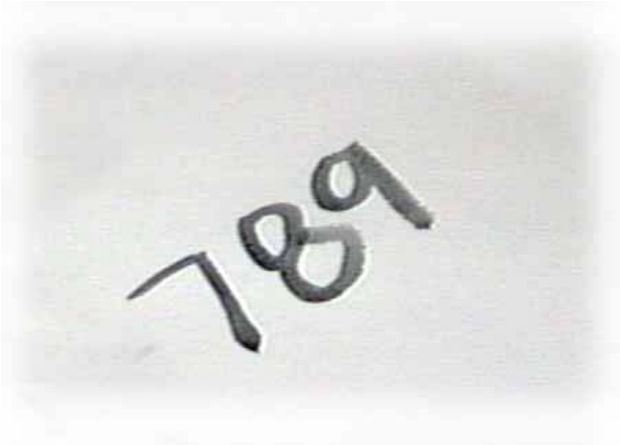
Here's a final result. You can see that the letters hold their shape but the edges are not crisp or sharp, rather they are fuzzy, giving a soft look.

Hard defined edges (Wet pigment on dry paper)

This application will result into having hard edges. This is suitable for subjects that are within the center of interest.

Suggested applications:

- Rocks and stones
- Cliffs
- Close up trees especially in the center of interest
- Branches, tree trunks, dead trees, etc
- Almost all man made structures

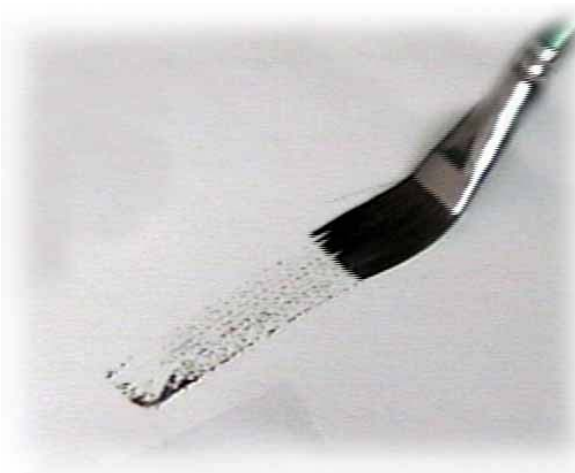


Compare the edges in this figure to the one above. You'll see that this number seems to be cut out and pasted on. The one above looks painted on.

Moist paint on dry paper (dry brushing)

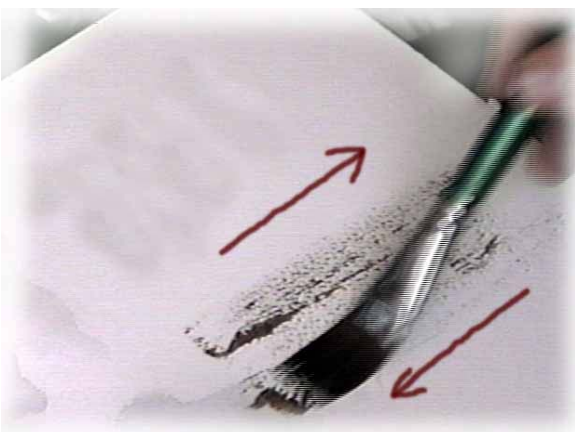
Suggested applications:

- Texture on rocks, old wood, tree trunks, unpaved roads, sheen on lakes
- Foliage can be done this way to express the outer leaves
- Helps convey aging stucco
- Will age practically anything such as chapels, concrete bridges
- Helps convey rust
- Glisten on water



To get the dry brush effect, place your bristles flat on the paper and drag it lightly on top of it. The lighter the touch the more broken paint you get. The more you press down the texture will close in. You can use your brush like a shovel and go backwards as well. This will give you a different effect. For wooden boards, follow a linear motion.

For rocks dry brush in a circular motion.



Here's an example of dragging the brush back and forth. This way you result into unpredictable textures.