**Watercolours – some basics…**

* To ensure the longevity of your work always work on acid free paper.
* Watercolour paper comes in different weights and textures. Heavier paper absorbs more water, stays wet longer and buckles less when wet in comparison to lighter papers.
* Common Paper weights are:

**\*190gsm (90lb):** most economical, needs stretching.  
**\*300gsm (140lb):** will buckle less therefore less need for stretching when working with drier techniques.

**\*640gsm (300lb):** minimal buckling, rarely needs stretching, most expensive.

* Paper Textures:

**\*NOT (or Cold pressed):** medium textured finish. Paint spreads evenly and the surface allows reasonable detail, a popular choice.

**\*Rough:** heavy textured surface. Good for loose textural effects, but not for fine detail.

**\*Hot pressed:** smooth surface that is great for finer details but be aware the paint can be prone to sliding around on the surface, however, this can create some interesting effects.

***Stretching Paper***

When watercolours are used on watercolour paper, the moisture in the paint causes the surface to expand slightly on the ‘worked’ side. As the other side remains dry with no expansion, the paper buckles. This buckling can cause the paint puddle in valleys on the paper. Typically, the lighter the weight of paper, the more susceptible to buckling it is.

***Method 1 – Stretching paper to use later:***

Equipment:

* Watercolour paper
* Large clean tray for water: should be slightly larger than your paper
  + If you don’t have a tray, you can use a spray bottle instead
  + Clean water
  + Gummed paper tape/ butcher tape
  + Paper towel or a sponge
  + Sturdy board that won’t bend or warp that is just larger than your sheet – examples:
    - Polystyrene Board
    - Gatorboard
    - Plexiglas
    - Lexan
    - Marine Ply

1. Soak sheet of paper in tray of clean, cold water. If your entire sheet does not fit inside the tray, hold the sheet at both ends and dip one end into the water. Pull the sheet through the water multiple times until each part has been fully submerged and the sheet is evenly soaked. If your sheet fits completely in the tray, set it inside to be fully submerged in the water. Sheets that are 90lb/190gsm or lighter can soak for about 3 minutes. Sheets that are 140lb/300gsm or heavier can soak for up to 8 minutes.   
     
   Do not touch the surface of the paper while it is soaking. The paper becomes more fragile when wet and the oil from your fingers can show up as finger marks on the final painting. Consider wearing latex gloves during the soaking process.
2. Remove paper from tray, allowing excess to drain from surface whilst holding over tray and place the soaked sheet on a clean, sturdy board.
3. Use a clean paper towel or sponge to blot excess water from the sheet.
4. Lightly wet gummed paper tape or butcher tape with a sponge or paintbrush (do not soak or use too much water on the tape as it will wash away the adhesive). Place along all four outer edges of the paper, covering just about ¼” of the paper.
5. Let the paper dry overnight (do not be tempted to try and speed the drying process with a hair dryer or radiator, as this will result in the paper drying unevenly and buckling). Once the paper is dry, it will be stretched tight on the board and will not warp when wet media is added. Create painting while the sheet is still taped to the board. Once painting is completely dry, cut away the taped edges using a ruler and a craft knife. If you want to keep the existing edge of the paper, you can re-wet the tape and very carefully pull it up from the paper.

\*If you don’t have a tray to use, you can place the sheet directly on your clean, sturdy board. Use a spray bottle with clean water to fully soak both sides of the sheet. Then follow steps 3-5 above.   
  
***Method 2 – Stretching paper to use immediately***

Equipment:

* Watercolour paper
* Large brush
* Clean water
* Paper towel
* Sturdy board that won’t bend or warp that is just larger than your sheet – examples:
  + Polystyrene Board
  + Gatorboard
  + Plexiglas
  + Lexan
  + Marine Ply

 Lay your sheet of watercolour paper over the board.

1. Using a large brush, saturate the front of the sheet completely with water (you can’t use too much, so be generous). Turn the paper over and do the same on the other side.
2. Turn the sheet back over and let it sit face up for about 15 minutes.
3. Roll 2 layers of clean paper towel or newsprint paper over the sheet of paper and firmly press on all areas of the sheet to soak up any excess water.
4. Start your painting while the sheet is still damp.

**Watercolour Paints**

* Watercolours come in tubes, pans, and pencils. Tube paint is most commonly used with pan colours being useful for travelling and outdoor work. They consist of finely ground pigments mixed with gum arabic, glycerine and a wetting agent. The gum arabic and glycerine allow the pigments to adhere smoothly to the paper while the wetting agent makes the paint flow evenly when diluted.
* Student grade are fine when starting out but are not as light fast and will start to fade over time. A few tubes of artist quality paint are a great investment. Artist quality paints are archival with higher pigment levels, lasting over 100 years.

**Brushes**

Watercolour brushes have a softer bristle to allow for the easy flow of paint from brush to surface. There are both synthetic and natural bristles available, with many watercolour Artist’s asserting their favourites are the best! Be prepared to experiment to find your favourites. Brush sizes and shapes vary greatly and again you will need to experiment to find the right ones for your way of working. Mop brushes are great for washes, filberts and fans work well for blending and riggers/rounds are my preference for detail.

Useful materials list:

* + - Masking fluid (never shake) – I like pebeo drawing gum
    - 2B pencil and sharpener
    - Spray bottle and water container
    - Hair dryer
    - Box of tissues, small towel, newsprint paper
    - Masking tape
    - MDF backing Board, 6mm
    - Staples and staple gun or gummed tape
    - Paint roller
    - Pallet knife
    - Small Natural sponge and/or synthetic sponge
    - Paint palette with deep wells