


A decorative border of watercolor flowers and foliage in shades of blue, purple, and green, framing the central text. The flowers include large peonies and smaller blossoms with green leaves and stems.

# Watercolor Paper Comparison Chart

Free Printable  
by [Artsydee.com](https://www.artsydee.com)

# How to Use This Guide



**1** **Read through all sections.**

Start by familiarizing yourself with the entire guide from beginning to end. This will provide a comprehensive overview of the concepts and methods before you dive into the details.



**2** **Follow the steps sequentially.**

Work through the instructions in the order they are presented. Building on each step is crucial for achieving the best results and understanding the progression.



**3** **Refer back to previous tips.**

As you progress, don't hesitate to look back at earlier sections. Concepts and tips are often interrelated and revisiting them can clarify later instructions.










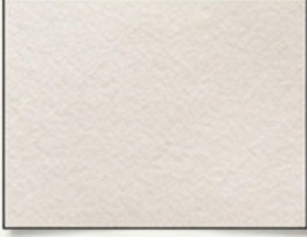

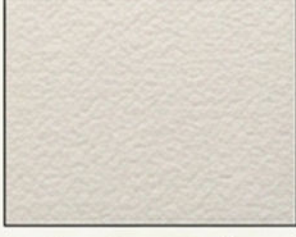



**4** **Apply to your own projects.**


Finally, take the knowledge gained and implement it into your unique creations. Experimentation and practice are key to mastering the techniques.

# COLD PRESS PAPER COMPARISON: TEXTURE, ABSORBENCY & BEST USES


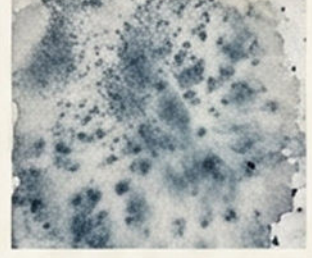






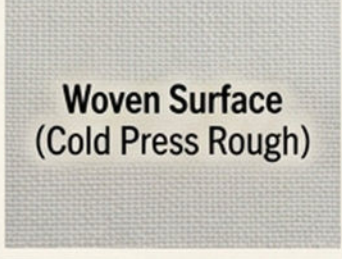
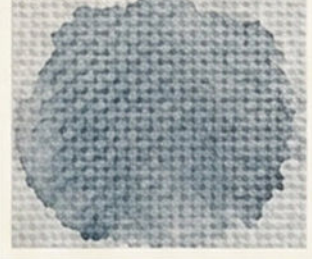


Your Guide to Choosing the Right Surface for Your Art

 <b>PAPER TYPE &amp; BRAND</b>	 <b>TEXTURE</b> (Visual & Tactile)	 <b>ABSORBENCY</b> (Medium to High)	 <b>BEST USES</b> (Techniques & Media)
 <p><b>ARCHES</b> Watercolor 140lb / 300gsm 100% Cotton</p>	 <p><b>Medium Grain, Distinct Tooth, Slightly Rough Feel.</b> Good for granulation. Tactile Rating: 4/5</p>	 <p><b>High Absorbency</b> Holds water well, dries relatively slowly. Allows for wet-on-wet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Watercolor</b> (Wet-on-Wet, Glazing)</li> <li> <b>Gouache</b></li> <li> <b>Ink Wash</b></li> <li> <b>Acrylic</b></li> <li> Excellent for layering and lifting.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>FABRIANO</b> Artistico 140lb / 300gsm 100% Cotton</p>	 <p><b>Moderate Grain, Regular Surface, Smooth yet Toothy.</b> Balanced feel. Tactile Rating: 3/5</p>	 <p><b>Medium-High Absorbency</b> Controlled drying time, good for detail and washes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Watercolor</b> (Detailed Work, Washes)</li> <li> <b>Gouache</b></li> <li> <b>Colored Pencil</b></li> <li> <b>Printmaking</b></li> <li> Good for precise techniques.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>SAUNDERS WATERFORD</b> 140lb / 300gsm 100% Cotton</p>	 <p><b>Soft Grain, Felt-marked, Gentle Tooth.</b> Luxurious, velvety feel. Tactile Rating: 3.5/5</p>	 <p><b>High Absorbency</b> Very receptive to water, enhances color vibrancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Watercolor</b> (Loose Washes, Vibrancy)</li> <li> <b>Pastels</b></li> <li> <b>Charcoal</b></li> <li> <b>Graphite</b></li> <li> Ideal for expressive work.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>STRATHMORE</b> 400 Series 140lb / 300gsm Wood Pulp</p>	 <p><b>Consistent Grain, Machine-made, Uniform Surface.</b> Firm feel. Tactile Rating: 2.5/5</p>	 <p><b>Medium Absorbency</b> Dries faster, less suitable for heavy wet techniques.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Watercolor</b> (Studies, Light Washes)</li> <li> <b>Sketching</b></li> <li> <b>Mixed Media</b></li> <li> <b>Pen &amp; Ink</b></li> <li> Great for practice.</li> </ul>

# HOT PRESS PAPER COMPARISON CHART






PAPER TYPE	SMOOTHNESS	DETAIL CAPABILITY	BEST USES
<b>Arches Hot Press</b>	Extremely Smooth (Vellum Finish)	Excellent for ultra-fine lines, ink, colored pencils	Botanical art, illustration, graphite, calligraphy 
<b>Fabriano Artistico</b>	Very Smooth (Satin Finish)	High; good for washes, holds detail	Watercolor, printmaking, charcoal, pastel 
<b>Stonehenge</b>	Smooth (Vellum-like)	Medium-High; good for layering, soft focus	Colored pencil, graphite, printmaking, pen & ink 
<b>Strathmore 500</b>	Smooth (Satin Finish)	Good; suitable for technical pens and markers	Illustration, technical drawing, marker, airbrush 

# ROUGH PAPER COMPARISON: Texture, Granulation & Best Uses

<b>PAPER NAME</b> (Source)	<b>TEXTURE LEVEL</b> (Visual & Feel)	<b>GRANULATION EFFECTS</b> (Watercolor & Ink)	<b>BEST USES</b> (Recommended Mediums & Styles)
 <p><b>Heavy Rough</b> (Handmade Cotton)</p>	<p><b>High, Deep, Rugged.</b> Tactile, distinct peaks and valleys.</p>		<p>Excellent for expressive wash, wet-on-wet, textured media like charcoal, pastels. Not for fine detail.</p>
 <p><b>Textured Rag</b> (100% Cotton Rag)</p>	<p><b>Medium-High, Uniform.</b> Strong, tactile tooth.</p>		<p>Great for landscapes, portraiture, mixed media, bold linework. Good all-rounder.</p>
 <p><b>Handmade Cotton</b> (Rough Finish)</p>	<p><b>Medium, Organic, Varied.</b> Soft, absorbent feel with imperfections.</p>		<p>Perfect for loose styles, botanical art, traditional printmaking, calligraphic brushwork.</p>
 <p><b>Coarse Grain</b> (Recycled Pulp)</p>	<p><b>High, Gritty, Abrasive.</b> Rough, almost sandpaper-like quality.</p>		<p>Best for experimental techniques, sgraffito, heavy texture applications, rugged landscapes.</p>
 <p><b>Woven Surface</b> (Cold Press Rough)</p>	<p><b>Medium, Structured, Patterned.</b> Consistent, mechanical tooth.</p>		<p>Good for controlled texture, graphic design elements, layering, illustration with texture.</p>
 <p><b>Pulp Mix</b> (Mixed Fibers)</p>	<p><b>Medium-Low, Fuzzy, Fibrous.</b> Soft, absorbent, felt-like.</p>		<p>Suitable for sketches, studies, soft pastels, quick washes, collaging.</p>

# PAPER COMPARISON CHART: Cotton vs. Cellulose

Pros, Cons, and Price Comparison

Feature/Category	Cotton Paper	Cellulose Paper
 <b>PROS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excellent Durability &amp; Strength</li><li>• Superior Archival Quality (Acid-Free)</li><li>• Soft, Luxurious Texture</li><li>• Deep Ink Absorption &amp; Rich Colors</li><li>• Resistant to Aging &amp; Yellowing</li><li>• Ideal for Fine Art &amp; Official Documents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost-Effective</li><li>• Smooth &amp; Uniform Finish</li><li>• Good Opacity</li><li>• Widely Available</li><li>• Suitable for Everyday Printing</li><li>• Quick Drying Time</li></ul>
 <b>CONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Higher Cost</li><li>• Can Be More Textured (Not for All Printers)</li><li>• Heavier Weight May Require Special Handling</li><li>• Less Widely Available in Standard Stores</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lower Durability, Prone to Tearing</li><li>• Not Typically Archival (May Yellow Over Time)</li><li>• Less Luxurious Feel</li><li>• Colors May Appear Less Vibrant</li><li>• Susceptible to Moisture Damage</li></ul>
 <b>PRICE COMPARISON</b>	<p>Higher Cost: Premium Pricing (e.g., \$0.50 - \$2.00+ per sheet, depending on weight/brand)</p> 	<p>Lower Cost: Budget-Friendly (e.g., \$0.05 - \$0.20 per sheet, depending on quality)</p> 

**SUMMARY:** Cotton paper offers superior quality, longevity, and texture, making it ideal for professional, archival, and fine art applications, albeit at a higher price point. Cellulose paper is a more economical choice for general-purpose printing and everyday use, providing a smooth finish and wide availability but with lower durability and archival standards.

# STUDENT GRADE vs ARTIST GRADE

## STUDENT GRADE



### QUALITY DIFFERENCES

- Less pigment load
- More fillers & binders
- Often chalky finish
- Color shifts over time



### VALUE RATING



**GOOD VALUE**  
for beginners/practice

**GOOD VALUE**  
for beginners/practice



**Red**  
(Student)



**Blue**  
(Student)

## ARTIST GRADE



### QUALITY DIFFERENCES

- High pigment concentration
- Minimal binders
- Rich, vibrant color
- Superior lightfastness

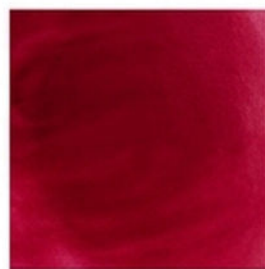


### VALUE RATING



**EXCELLENT VALUE**  
for professional/  
archival work

**EXCELLENT VALUE**  
for professional/archival work



**Crimson**  
(Artist)






**Ultramarine**  
(Artist)



**PROGRESSION &  
LONG-TERM RESULTS**

# PAPER WEIGHT GUIDE: GSM, BUCKLING & RECOMMENDATIONS

GSM RATING	BUCKLING RESISTANCE	RECOMMENDATIONS (Best For...)
60 - 90 GSM (Lightweight)	 Low, easily buckles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drafts, printing, notepads</li></ul>
120 - 160 GSM (Medium)	 Moderate, some resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flyers, brochures, resumes</li></ul>
200 - 300 GSM (Heavyweight)	 High, minimal buckling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business cards, covers, art prints</li></ul>

**Key Factors Affecting Buckling:**  
Fiber Content, Moisture, Handling



# Happy Creating!

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**Dee x**

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