

A decorative border made of watercolor washes and floral illustrations. It includes large, soft washes of blue, purple, and green, as well as detailed drawings of various flowers like peonies and smaller blossoms with green leaves. The style is delicate and artistic.

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.

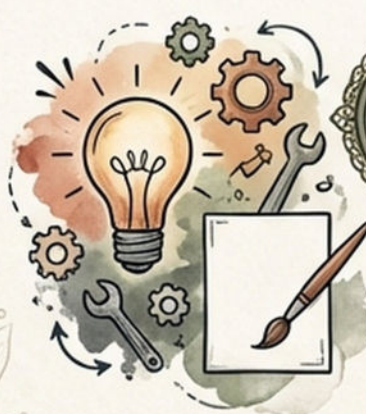
Work through the instructions in the order they are presented. Building on each step is crucial for achieving the best results and understanding the progression.



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.



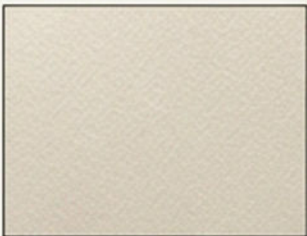
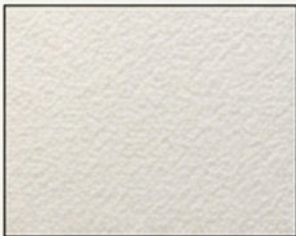
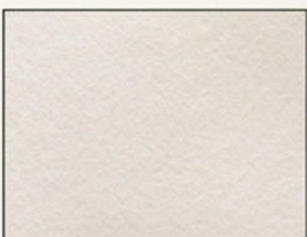
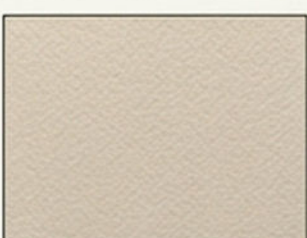
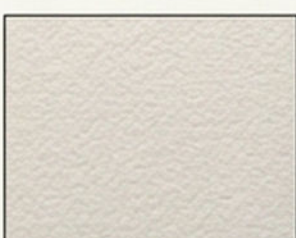
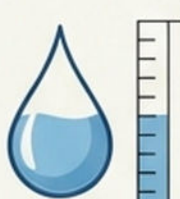
4

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

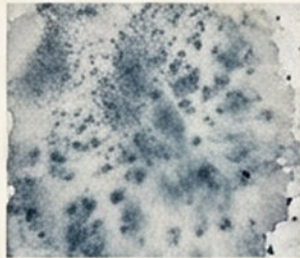
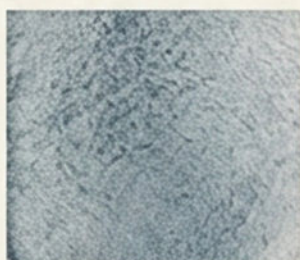
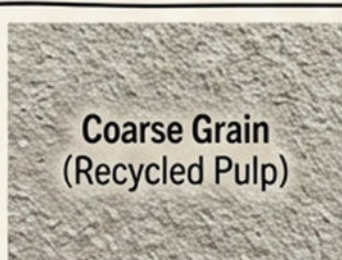
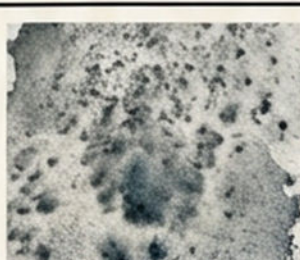
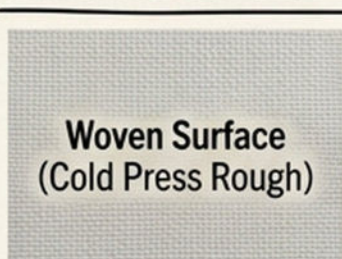
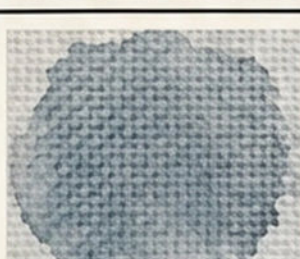
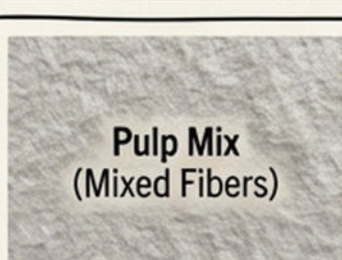
Your Guide to Choosing the Right Surface for Your Art

 PAPER TYPE & BRAND	 TEXTURE (Visual & Tactile)	 ABSORBENCY (Medium to High)	 BEST USES (Techniques & Media)
 ARCHES Watercolor 140lb / 300gsm 100% Cotton	 Medium Grain, Distinct Tooth, Slightly Rough Feel. Good for granulation. Tactile Rating: 4/5	 High Absorbency Holds water well, dries relatively slowly. Allows for wet-on-wet.	 Watercolor (Wet-on-Wet, Glazing)  Gouache  Ink Wash  Acrylic Excellent for layering and lifting.
 FABRIANO Artistico 140lb / 300gsm 100% Cotton	 Moderate Grain, Regular Surface, Smooth yet Toothy. Balanced feel. Tactile Rating: 3/5	 Medium-High Absorbency Controlled drying time, good for detail and washes.	 Watercolor (Detailed Work, Washes)  Gouache  Colored Pencil  Printmaking Good for precise techniques.
 SAUNDERS WATERFORD 140lb / 300gsm 100% Cotton	 Soft Grain, Felt-marked, Gentle Tooth. Luxurious, velvety feel. Tactile Rating: 3.5/5	 High Absorbency Very receptive to water, enhances color vibrancy.	 Watercolor (Loose Washes, Vibrancy)  Pastels  Charcoal  Graphite Ideal for expressive work.
 STRATHMORE 400 Series 140lb / 300gsm Wood Pulp	 Consistent Grain, Machine-made, Uniform Surface. Firm feel. Tactile Rating: 2.5/5	 Medium Absorbency Dries faster, less suitable for heavy wet techniques.	 Watercolor (Studies, Light Washes)  Sketching  Mixed Media  Pen & Ink Great for practice.

HOT PRESS PAPER COMPARISON CHART

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

ROUGH PAPER COMPARISON: Texture, Granulation & Best Uses

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

PAPER COMPARISON CHART:

Cotton vs. Cellulose

Pros, Cons, and Price Comparison

Feature/Category	Cotton Paper	Cellulose Paper
 PROS		
	• Excellent Durability & Strength • Superior Archival Quality (Acid-Free) • Soft, Luxurious Texture • Deep Ink Absorption & Rich Colors • Resistant to Aging & Yellowing • Ideal for Fine Art & Official Documents	• Cost-Effective • Smooth & Uniform Finish • Good Opacity • Widely Available • Suitable for Everyday Printing • Quick Drying Time
 CONS		
	• Higher Cost • Can Be More Textured (Not for All Printers) • Heavier Weight May Require Special Handling • Less Widely Available in Standard Stores	• Lower Durability, Prone to Tearing • Not Typically Archival (May Yellow Over Time) • Less Luxurious Feel • Colors May Appear Less Vibrant • Susceptible to Moisture Damage
 PRICE COMPARISON		
	Higher Cost: Premium Pricing (e.g., \$0.50 - \$2.00+ per sheet, depending on weight/brand) 	Lower Cost: Budget-Friendly (e.g., \$0.05 - \$0.20 per sheet, depending on quality) 

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

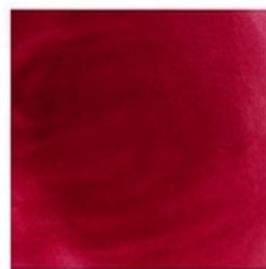


VALUE RATING



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	• Drafts, printing, notepads
120 - 160 GSM (Medium)	 Moderate, some resistance	• Flyers, brochures, resumes
200 - 300 GSM (Heavyweight)	 High, minimal buckling	• Business cards, covers, art prints

Key Factors Affecting Buckling:
Fiber Content, Moisture, Handling



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Happy creating!

Dee x

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