

# Watercolour Landscapes — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into brush-in-hand practice. Each section pairs with a course module and gives you exercises to paint, worksheets to record your palette and value plans, and checklists to keep washes clean and skies luminous. Work through it scene by scene, keep your swatch charts and thumbnails, and let your filled sheets become a personal reference you mix and compose from.

## Materials, Water Control, and the Three Washes

Set up a reliable kit, stretch paper that stays flat, and drill the flat, graded, and variegated washes until they are even and streak-free.

### Exercise: Wetness-Stage Sheet

On one cheaper cotton sheet, lay four small patches of clean water and let them reach the four stages in turn: glistening wet, shiny damp, matte damp, and bone dry. Drop the same blue into each at its stage and observe how the colour behaves. The goal is to recognise each stage by sheen alone.

- How far did the colour spread on glistening wet versus shiny damp?  
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- What happened when you dropped colour into the matte damp patch (the danger stage)?  
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- How crisp was the edge on the bone-dry patch?  
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- Can you now name the stage from the surface sheen without touching the paper?  
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### Exercise: Three-Wash Drill

On a tilted board (15 to 20 degrees), lay a flat wash, a graded wash (dark at top fading to the horizon), and a variegated wash (two colours fused wet-on-wet) in three boxes. Mix far more wash than you think you need. Repeat until each is even with no streaks and no hard internal lines.

- Did you mix enough wash, or run out mid-box and leave a hard line?  
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- Was your board tilt enough to keep a moving bead without the colour running away?  
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- On the graded wash, did the fade stay smooth from top to horizon?  
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- On the variegated wash, did you let the colours meet softly instead of stirring them?  
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### Worksheet: Kit and Palette Setup Sheet

Fill this once as you assemble your kit, then keep it inside your paint box as a reference for what each colour is and where it sits.

Paper (brand / weight / surface, e.g. Arches 300gsm cold-pressed)

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Warm yellow (pigment name)

\_\_\_\_\_

Cool yellow (pigment name)

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Warm red (pigment name)

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Cool red (pigment name)

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Warm blue (pigment name)

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Cool blue (pigment name)

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Earths (raw sienna / burnt sienna)

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Brushes (sizes and types)

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Board / stretching method used

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### Checklist: Clean-Wash Setup Check

- Board tilted 15 to 20 degrees for the wash
- Far more wash mixed than the area seems to need, fully dissolved
- Two water jars in use: one for rinsing, one kept clean for diluting
- Large soft round or mop loaded fully for sky-sized washes
- Wetness stage of the paper identified before each touch
- Final bead lifted at the bottom edge so it cannot run back and bloom
- Paper stretched or clipped on all sides so it stays flat

## Skies, Clouds, and Wet-on-Wet Atmosphere

Practise the two core techniques, paint luminous graded skies in one pass, and make believable clouds by reserving and lifting whites.

### Exercise: Wet-on-Wet versus Wet-on-Dry Comparison

Paint the same simple shape (a soft tree mass) twice: once wet-on-wet onto a pre-wetted area, and once wet-on-dry onto bone-dry paper. Then on a third box, paint a wet-on-wet sky, let it dry fully, and add a wet-on-dry trunk and branches over it.

- How did the edges differ between the wet-on-wet and wet-on-dry shapes?

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- Did you mix the wet-on-wet colour thicker to allow for dilution on contact?

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- When you glazed the dry trunk over the dry sky, did the sky lift or stay clean?

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- Which order felt right: soft first, hard last?

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### Exercise: Three-Mood Sky Study

Paint three small skies fast, in one pass each: a clear day (graded ultramarine, cool and strong at top, pale and slightly warm at horizon), an overcast day (even mixed grey), and a golden hour (variegated yellow to rose to blue, wet-on-wet). Do not go back into any sky once laid.

- On the clear sky, did you grade it cooler-darker at top to paler-warmer at the horizon?

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- For the grey, did you mix it from a blue and an earth rather than using a tube grey?

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- On the golden sky, did the colours fuse softly while wet?

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- Which sky did you fiddle with, and did it go duller as a result?
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### Exercise: Cloud Reserving and Lifting

Make two fair-weather cloudy skies. In the first, reserve the clouds by painting the blue around them. In the second, lay a graded blue and lift the clouds out with a squeezed brush and tissue while shiny-damp. Vary cloud size, flatten them toward the horizon, and add a warm-grey shadow to the underside of one once dry.

- Which method gave softer, more natural clouds for fair weather?
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- Did you vary cloud size and edges, or make them all the same round shape?
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- Did you keep the brightest cloud tops as untouched paper?
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- Was the shadow side warm-leaning rather than cold and grey?
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### Checklist: Sky and Cloud Quality Check

- Sky painted first, fast, and in one confident pass
- Clear sky graded cool-dark at top to pale-warm at horizon
- Neutrals mixed from a blue plus an earth, never a tube grey or black
- Brightest cloud tops left as bare paper
- Cloud edges varied: some hard and bright, some soft and lost
- Clouds flattened and reduced in size toward the horizon
- Sky left undisturbed to dry, not reworked into the danger stage

## Colour, Depth, and the Greens of Landscape

Mix natural greens and greys from a limited palette, then use colour temperature, aerial perspective, and a value plan to build depth and a strong composition.

### Exercise: Green and Grey Mixing Charts

Make two charts from your limited palette. Greens: each yellow against each blue, then each dulled with a touch of red. Greys: ultramarine and burnt sienna in five steps from warm (more burnt sienna) to cool (more ultramarine). Label every swatch with its pigments and rough proportions. Never use a tube green or black.

- Which mix gave the most convincing mid-summer foliage green?
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- How did you darken a green without using black, and how did it read?
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- Which grey step suited a warm path, and which suited a distant hill?
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- How many distinct greens did two pigments give you?
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### Exercise: Aerial-Perspective Depth Study

Paint a simple scene with three or four distance planes: far hills, middle ground, near ground, and immediate foreground. Make the farthest plane palest and coolest (near pale blue-grey, no detail), and step each nearer plane warmer, darker, and more detailed. Overlap the planes and keep the strongest contrast in the foreground only.

- Did each plane back get paler and cooler than the one in front?
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- Did you keep detail and the darkest darks in the foreground only?
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- Did the planes overlap to reinforce the layering?
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- Does the scene read as deep space, or does it look flat?
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## Worksheet: Value Plan and Composition Sheet

Complete this before painting any scene. Sketch a three-value thumbnail in the box of your own copy, then record the plan here so the structure is decided before water touches the good paper.

Subject in one sentence (what is this painting about?)

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Dominant value (mostly light / mostly mid / mostly dark)

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Location of the lightest area

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Location of the darkest accent

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Horizon placement (about one-third from top or bottom)

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Focal point location (near which third intersection)

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Lead-in line (path / river / fence / furrow)

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What to simplify or leave out

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### Checklist: Colour and Depth Check

- Greens and greys mixed from the palette, no tube green or black
- Foreground warmer, darker, sharper; distance cooler, paler, softer
- Each distance plane paler and bluer than the one in front
- Sunlit-scene shadows painted cool blue-violet, not dead grey
- Three-value thumbnail made before painting
- Horizon and focal point placed off-centre
- A lead-in line carries the eye to the focal point

## Foreground Texture and Painting Plein Air

Build foreground texture with restraint, paint recurring elements like water and trees, then take a light kit outdoors and finish a small landscape on location.

### Exercise: Texture Sampler and Negative-Painting Grass

On one sheet, make a small patch of each texture: dry-brush, lifting, salt (into a shiny-damp wash), spatter, and scraping. Then build one clump of foreground grass by negative painting: a light base, then a mid glaze around a few reserved blades, then a darker glaze behind fewer blades. Keep all texture concentrated, not scattered.

- Which texture suited grass, which suited gravel, and which suited lichen or snow?

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- Did the salt go into a shiny-damp (not wet) wash for the best stars?

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- How many layers of negative painting gave the grass real depth?

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- Where did you restrain yourself and leave the surface smooth?
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## Exercise: Water and Tree Studies

Paint a small still-water study: a graded wash mirroring the sky, reflections dropped in below their objects wet-on-wet, a few horizontal ripple strokes, and reserved sparkle. Then paint a tree as a soft foliage mass with sky holes, a lit and a shadow side, and trunk plus branches added wet-on-dry once dry.

- Did you keep reflections vertical and ripples horizontal?

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- Did you reserve or lift a few flecks of bare paper for sparkle?

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- Did you paint the tree as a mass with sky holes, not leaf by leaf?

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- Did the trunk and branches go on wet-on-dry after the foliage dried?

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## Worksheet: Plein-Air Outing Log

Fill one of these for each location session. It captures the conditions and the plan you locked in early, so you can finish honestly even as the light moves.

Date and location

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Time started / light direction now

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Weather (sun / cloud / wind / temperature)

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Composition chosen (subject through the viewfinder)

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Three-value plan (lightest / darkest / mid)

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Palette colours carried

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Drying conditions (fast / slow) and adjustment made

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What you would change next time

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## Checklist: Plein-Air Finishing Check

- [ ] Light kit packed: block or sketchbook, half-pan palette, travel brushes, water, rag, viewfinder
- [ ] Sun behind or beside you, not glaring off the wet paper
- [ ] Composition simplified to one focal subject, not a panorama
- [ ] Three-value thumbnail and light direction noted before painting
- [ ] Big soft masses painted first, fast, wet-on-wet across the sheet
- [ ] Wet-on-dry structure and foreground accents added after drying
- [ ] Plan from the first five minutes trusted as the light moved
- [ ] Sketch called finished and signed, even if it feels unfinished

## Your Action Plan

1. Assemble the limited kit: cotton cold-pressed paper, six split-primary colours plus two earths, three brushes, two water jars, and a board.
2. Stretch a sheet of 300gsm paper and complete the Wetness-Stage Sheet until you can name each stage by sheen.
3. Drill the flat, graded, and variegated washes on a tilted board until each is even and streak-free.
4. Compare wet-on-wet and wet-on-dry, then paint a three-mood sky study (clear, overcast, golden) in single passes.
5. Practise clouds by reserving and lifting whites, varying size and edges, on the Cloud exercise.
6. Build green and grey mixing charts from the palette and pin them above your desk.
7. Paint an aerial-perspective depth study with three or four planes, and complete a Value Plan and Composition Sheet.
8. Make a texture sampler and a negative-painting grass clump, keeping texture concentrated in the foreground.
9. Paint a still-water study and a soft-mass tree with trunk added wet-on-dry.
10. Pack a light plein-air kit, fill a Plein-Air Outing Log, and finish one small landscape on location, then sign it.











