

Gouache Painting - Workbook

This workbook turns the Gouache Painting course into hands-on reps. Each section pairs with a course module and mixes guided exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists so you build a flat, opaque, confident gouache practice. Work through it with paint nearby, not just a pen - the value is in the swatches you make and the color recipes you write down.

Materials, Setup, and How Gouache Behaves

Set up a working kit and palette, and prove to yourself how gouache behaves before painting anything ambitious.

Exercise: The Re-solubility Test

Paint a flat patch of any color, let it dry fully, then paint a second wet stroke across it. Observe how the dried layer lifts and blends. Repeat with a drier second brush and note the difference. This single test teaches the core behavior of gouache.

- What happened to the dried layer when you painted over it with a wet brush?

-
- How did blotting your brush on a towel first change the result?

-
- Where will re-solubility help you, and where will it cause problems, in a real painting?
-

Worksheet: My Starter Kit and Budget

Fill in the materials you own or plan to buy. Use the course's 7-tube starter palette and surface guidance.

Total your spend before purchasing so you invest in paint and paper first.

Paint brand and line (e.g. Winsor and Newton Designers Gouache)

7 starter tubes owned / needed

Brushes owned (sizes) / needed

Paper brand, weight (gsm), surface (hot or cold press)

Palette type (wet palette? container?)

Estimated total cost (USD)

Checklist: Studio Setup Checklist

- Built or assembled a wet palette (airtight container, damp layer, palette paper)
- Set up two water jars: one for rinsing dirty, one for clean mixing water
- Taped 300 gsm paper down on all four sides to prevent buckling
- Mixed a test color to single-cream consistency and swatched it dry

[] Confirmed my paints are re-soluble gouache, not acrylic-modified (Acryla)

Core Techniques: Flat Color, Layering, and Edges

Drill the four foundational moves until flat fields, light-over-dark layering, and edge control are reliable.

Exercise: Ten Flat Squares

Paint ten one-inch squares, aiming for a flawless, streak-free, even flat field in each. Change one variable at a time (more water, fuller brush, faster pace) and track which squares improved. Keep the wet edge moving and never re-brush a drying area.

- Which square was your flattest, and what did you do differently on it?

- What caused your worst streaks - paint too dry, brush under-loaded, or stopping mid-field?

- Did a second coat fix patchiness? How did opacity change when dry?

Exercise: Light-Over-Dark Sphere

Paint a simple sphere using the three-value workflow: block the shadow local color, add a lighter mid value on the lit side, then place one bright opaque highlight last. Make each layer slightly drier than the one below so highlights do not reactivate the shadow.

- Did your highlight stay clean, or did it gray out by reactivating the layer below?

- How much water did you remove from the brush between layers?

- Where did you place the single brightest highlight, and why there?

Worksheet: Edge Decisions Map

For a small two-shape study, plan your edges before painting. Decide where each edge should be hard, soft, or lost, and note the technique you will use to achieve it.

Focal point (where the hardest edge goes)

Edges I will keep hard - and how

Edges I will soften - and how (blend wet / damp brush)

Edges I will lose entirely (similar values meeting)

What the eye should land on first

Checklist: Core Techniques Mastery Checklist

- [] Painted a flat field with no visible streaks or tide marks
- [] Layered a light opaque color cleanly over a dark one
- [] Built a smooth gradient using stepped intermediate values, then feathered the seams
- [] Created a hard edge, a soft edge, and a lost edge in one study
- [] Kept each upper layer drier than the layer beneath it

Botanical Studies from Observation

Move from observation to a finished botanical study, mixing natural greens and finishing with restraint.

Exercise: Measured Underdrawing

Choose a forgiving subject (single tulip, eucalyptus sprig, lemon with a leaf). Build a light pencil underdrawing by establishing gesture, blocking large masses, and checking proportions by measuring widths against heights. Map your lightest lights and darkest darks before any paint.

- What is the overall gesture and growth direction of your subject?
-
- Are the leaf veins parallel or branching, and how does the leaf attach to the stem?
-
- Where will your darkest dark and lightest light fall?
-

Worksheet: Green Mixing Recipe Log

Mix at least five distinct greens from your two yellows and two blues. Swatch each, let it dry, and record the recipe so you can repeat it. Note how much each green shifted lighter or chalkier when dry.

Green name / use (sunlit leaf, shadow, distant foliage)

Yellow used + approximate parts

Blue used + approximate parts

Muting addition (complement / other) if any

Wet appearance vs dry appearance (lighter? chalkier?)

Checklist: Botanical Finishing Checklist

- Blocked each leaf and petal as a flat local-color field first
- Built form with a darker shadow green and a lighter lit green
- Mixed greens (no straight-from-tube green) and muted any that looked artificial
- Added fine veins as positive opaque marks, not reserved gaps
- Placed one true brightest highlight and kept all others dimmer
- Ran the thumbnail test on my phone and stopped before overworking

Editorial Illustration and Reproduction

Develop a concept-driven editorial spot on a limited palette, then digitize it cleanly for your portfolio.

Exercise: Concept-to-Thumbnail Sprint

Pick a short article or headline. Write its core message in one sentence, brainstorm visual metaphors, then sketch six to ten two-inch thumbnails testing different compositions. Squint to judge value and focal point, and choose the strongest before scaling up.

- In one sentence, what idea must the illustration communicate?
-
- What three visual metaphors could carry that idea?
-
- Which thumbnail reads fastest at small size, and what is its single focal point?
-

Worksheet: Limited Palette Plan

Lock a limited palette for your editorial spot before painting: a dominant mood color, one or two supporting harmonious colors, and one reserved accent for the focal point. Swatch the set and confirm every shape will be mixed from it.

Dominant color + the mood it sets

Supporting color(s) (analogous / near it on the wheel)

Reserved accent color (used only at the focal point)

Near-black and white I will use for value

Where the accent will appear - and nowhere else

Worksheet: Digitizing Settings Log

Record how you captured and corrected your finished piece so you can reproduce the result every time.

Capture before the original leaves your hands.

Capture method (flatbed scan / camera / phone)

Resolution (dpi) and lighting setup

White point and black point set to match original? (Y/N)

Color matched to original under neutral light? (Y/N)

Export 1: web (sRGB JPEG/PNG)

Export 2: print (CMYK TIFF, 300 dpi)

Checklist: Editorial Reproduction Checklist

- Illustration communicates one clear concept readable in a second
- Built entirely from a limited palette with a single reserved accent
- Strong value contrast that survives at small or grayscale print size
- Calm negative space left for a possible headline or caption
- Captured in flat even light with no glare or shadow across the surface
- Exported a web file and a print file before the original left the studio

Your Action Plan

1. Assemble your kit: 7 starter tubes, three synthetic rounds, a flat, and a pad of 300 gsm hot-press paper.
2. Build a wet palette and run the re-solubility test so you understand how gouache behaves.
3. Drill ten flat squares until you can lay a streak-free field on demand.
4. Practice the three-value light-over-dark workflow on a simple sphere.

5. Build one stepped gradient and deliberately create hard, soft, and lost edges in a study.
6. Complete a measured underdrawing of a forgiving botanical subject.
7. Mix and log at least five custom greens, then paint and finish the botanical study.
8. Run a concept-to-thumbnail sprint and lock a limited palette for an editorial spot.
9. Paint the finished editorial illustration back-to-front, accent color at the focal point only.
10. Scan or photograph the piece, color-correct it, and export web and print files for your portfolio.

