**🎨 Step-by-Step Series: How to Use Water-Based Oil Paints**

**🖌️ Tutorial 1: What Are Water-Based Oil Paints?**

**🟡 What Are Oil Paints?**

**Oil paints** are made by mixing colour pigments with oil (usually linseed oil). They dry slowly, which gives artists time to blend colours beautifully. But… traditional oil paints need strong-smelling chemicals (called solvents) to clean brushes.

**💧 What Are *Water-Based* Oil Paints?**

Water-based oil paints (also called **water-mixable** or **water-soluble oil paints**) are a clever twist on traditional oil paints. They work just like oils—but you can use **water instead of turpentine or white spirit!**

| **Traditional Oil Paints** | **Water-Based Oil Paints** |
| --- | --- |
| Mix with oil or solvents | Mix with water |
| Need turpentine to clean | Clean with water |
| Strong smell | Low or no smell |
| Long drying time | Slightly faster drying time |

**🎯 Why Use Water-Based Oils?**

* ✅ Safer and less smelly
* ✅ Easier clean-up with water
* ✅ Good for classrooms or working indoors
* ✅ Same rich, creamy texture as traditional oils

**🎒 What You’ll Need to Start**

Here’s a starter list for your art toolbox:

* Water-based oil paints (e.g. Winsor & Newton Artisan, Cobra, or Holbein Duo Aqua)
* A palette (plastic or wood)
* Brushes (synthetic or natural—look for ones that say “oil” or “multi-use”)
* Water pot or jar
* Rags or kitchen paper
* A painting surface (canvas, canvas board or heavy paper)
* A palette knife (optional, for mixing)
* Soap and warm water for cleanup

**🧽 Safety Tips**

* Always clean your brushes well after painting.
* Don’t pour paint water down the sink if it’s full of pigment—dispose of it outside or in the bin if needed.
* Work in a space with good air circulation.

**🖌️ Tutorial 2: Setting Up Your Workspace & Mixing Your First Colours**

**🛠️ Step 1: Set Up Your Painting Area**

**Choose a safe and tidy place to paint.** Use a table with a cover or old newspaper.

**You’ll need:**

* Table cover
* Apron or old clothes
* Water-based oil paints
* Brushes
* Water pot or jar
* Palette
* Rag or kitchen paper
* Canvas, canvas board or heavy paper

📌 **Tip:** Make sure your space has good light and fresh air.

**🧽 Step 2: Prepare Your Tools**

Put out everything you’ll use:

* Fill your jar with water (only halfway to avoid spills).
* Place your palette flat on the table.
* Squeeze out a small amount of each paint colour you want to use (about the size of a pea).

🖼️ **Only squeeze out what you need**—you can always add more later.

**🎨 Step 3: Understand Your Palette**

Arrange colours like a rainbow, from light to dark:

* White
* Yellow
* Red
* Blue
* Green
* Brown
* Black

This helps you find colours easily and mix cleanly.

**🧪 Step 4: Start Mixing Colours**

Take a clean brush or palette knife and gently mix two colours.

For example:

* Red + Yellow = **Orange**
* Blue + Yellow = **Green**
* Red + Blue = **Purple**

💧 Add a **tiny** bit of water if the paint is too thick. Don’t add too much, or it will go streaky!

**🧼 Step 5: Clean Between Colours**

Dip your brush in water and wipe it with your rag or paper before using a new colour. This keeps your colours clean and bright.

**🖌️ Tutorial 3: How to Paint a Background Using Water-Based Oils**

**🎯 What’s a Background?**

A **background** is the area behind your main subject. It sets the mood and helps your picture feel complete. You can make it smooth, textured, bright, or dark—it's up to you!

**🎨 Step 1: Choose Your Background Colour**

Decide how you want your picture to feel:

| **Mood** | **Colours to Try** |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Calm | Light blue, pale green |
| Warm | Soft yellow, peach, pink |
| Bold | Dark purple, navy, burnt orange |

🖌️ Pick 1–3 colours to blend for interest.

**🖌️ Step 2: Mix Your Paint**

Use your palette to mix your background colour(s).

If it’s too thick, add a drop or two of water and mix until it’s smooth like soft butter.

**🖼️ Step 3: Cover the Canvas**

Use a big flat brush for this part.

1. Dip your brush into the paint.
2. Start at the top corner and brush across in long strokes.
3. Keep going until the whole background is covered.

🎨 Try brushing in different directions for texture (up-down, side-to-side, swirly).

**💡 Step 4: Blend Colours (Optional)**

If you’re using more than one colour:

* Add a second colour before the first dries.
* Use a clean brush to blend where the colours meet.
* Soften edges by brushing lightly with just a touch of water.

🌀 Blending tip: Wipe your brush often to keep it clean and avoid muddy colours.

**🧼 Step 5: Let It Dry**

Water-based oils take **a few hours to dry to the touch**—longer than acrylics but quicker than traditional oils.

🕒 Don’t rush! Let it dry before adding your main subject.

**🖌️ Tutorial 4: Painting Your Subject — Blocking In Shapes with Colour**

**🧩 What Does “Blocking In” Mean?**

“**Blocking in**” is the first stage of painting your main subject. You’re not adding details yet—just **big shapes and colours** to get your composition in place.

Think of it like colouring in a sketch with flat areas of paint.

**🖼️ Step 1: Lightly Sketch Your Subject**

Use a pencil or a thin brush and watered-down paint to lightly draw the main shapes on your dry background.

✏️ Keep it simple! Just basic outlines (like a circle for a face, a triangle for a tree, etc.)

**🎨 Step 2: Mix Your Base Colours**

Decide what colours you’ll use for each part of your painting.

Examples:

* Skin tone: mix white + red + yellow + a tiny bit of blue
* Tree trunk: mix brown + a touch of yellow
* Sky: add white to your background blue for a highlight

💧 Add water if needed to make it smoother.

**🖌️ Step 3: Fill in the Big Shapes**

Use medium or large brushes to paint **flat blocks of colour** inside your outlines. Don’t worry about details yet.

🖼️ Tips:

* Paint one area at a time
* Clean your brush between colours
* Try not to paint over wet areas to avoid smudging

**🌀 Step 4: Add a Second Layer (Optional)**

Once the first layer is **dry to the touch**, you can:

* Add another coat of the same colour to make it richer
* Blend in a second colour for shading or highlights

🖌️ Use soft strokes and don’t press too hard.

**⏳ Step 5: Let It Dry Fully**

Before adding details (like eyes, leaves, fur, patterns), let your blocked-in shapes dry completely.

⏱️ This usually takes a few hours depending on the paint thickness.

**🖌️ Tutorial 5: Adding Detail — Texture, Shading, and Highlights**

**🌈 What Are Details?**

Details are the **small parts** that make your painting come alive:

* Eyes on a face
* Light and shadow on fabric
* Feathers on a bird
* Leaves on a tree

They add **depth, texture, and realism**.

**🖼️ Step 1: Check That Your Painting Is Dry**

Make sure your blocked-in shapes are completely dry before adding details. If not, the colours might smudge or blend too much.

**🎨 Step 2: Mix Lighter and Darker Shades**

To make your painting look 3D, mix:

* **Shadows**: add a touch of blue, brown, or black to your base colour
* **Highlights**: add white or yellow to your base colour

🧪 Example:  
If your base colour is green:

* Shadow green = green + a little blue
* Highlight green = green + a little yellow or white

**🖌️ Step 3: Add Shadows**

Use a **thin round brush** and lightly paint where shadows would fall (like under the chin, behind an object, or where things overlap).

🖌️ Blend gently into the base colour for a soft edge.

**✨ Step 4: Add Highlights**

Use a clean brush and your lighter mix to add highlights where light hits your subject (like the top of a nose, the edge of a vase, or the side of a tree).

🎨 Tip: Don’t overdo it—just a few touches can make a big difference!

**🌿 Step 5: Add Fine Details**

Now use a **tiny detail brush** or the tip of a round brush to paint:

* Eyes, lashes, lips
* Fur strokes or feathers
* Veins on a leaf or petals on a flower
* Dots, lines, or patterns

Let each layer dry before adding more so the details stay sharp.

**🧼 Step 6: Clean Your Brushes Well**

Fine brushes need gentle cleaning. Rinse them with water and use a bit of soap if needed. Gently reshape them with your fingers and leave them to dry flat.

**🖌️ Tutorial 6: Finishing Touches & How to Varnish Your Painting (Optional)**

**🌟 What Are Finishing Touches?**

**Finishing touches** are the last marks you make to complete your artwork. This can include:

* Tiny highlights or shadow boosts
* Texture details (like sparkles, whiskers, or texture lines)
* Sign your name!

**✍️ Step 1: Add Final Details**

Look at your painting and ask:

* Does anything need brightening?
* Is anything too flat or dark?
* Would a tiny highlight bring it to life?

Use a fine brush and gentle strokes to add those last touches.

🎯 Don’t overwork it! A few thoughtful marks go a long way.

**✒️ Step 2: Sign Your Name**

Use a small brush and a colour that stands out gently from the background (not too bold).  
Add your name or initials in a bottom corner.

🖌️ Pro tip: Practise your signature on scrap paper first!

**🖼️ Step 3: Let It Dry Fully**

Let your painting dry **completely** before doing anything else.  
Water-based oils might need several days depending on paint thickness.

💨 Touch the thickest part gently—if it still feels soft, wait a bit longer.

**🧴 Step 4 (Optional): Varnish to Protect Your Painting**

**Varnish** is a clear coat that protects your art and can add a shiny or matte finish.  
Only varnish **when the painting is totally dry**, which can take **1–2 weeks** or more for thicker layers.

**How to Varnish:**

1. Use **varnish made for water-mixable oil paints** (check the label).
2. Work in a **dust-free, well-ventilated** space.
3. Use a wide soft brush.
4. Brush the varnish across your painting in even strokes (don’t go over the same spot too much).
5. Let it dry flat and untouched for 24 hours.

🧼 Wash your brush straight after with water and soap.