

Tips and Techniques — Painting Clouds & Trees

Painting Clouds with Acrylics

- Paint whatever gradient of blue (or other color) you choose as a solid background.
- With white lay down wherever the clouds are, being careful to keep the edges soft and make them a little smaller than the final size of cloud wanted as you can enlarge them with subsequent layers.
- If you find your paint lifting, let it dry completely between layers.
- In the second layer, put in dark and light areas. For dark you can use Payne's gray, or ultramarine blue or even violet. Mix the dark colour with as much white as needed to achieve the desired value. For bright areas and sunshine use a little cadmium yellow with a little orange.
- In subsequent layers add white (or other colours) to achieve the hue and values desired. For very bright clouds use a number of layers of white. Also do this for very white fluffy area. You may even use from 4 – 6 layers.
- Brushes used to scumble and make clouds even and fluffy become quite wispy so do not use your favourite brush as it will get quite worn quickly.

Painting Trees with Watercolour

- When painting evergreens you need to differentiate between the different kinds. For example firs are a greener hue than spruce but similar in shape, cedars have sweeping boughs and pines have longer needles arranged more in bunches.

If it is a young tree you may paint the tree first and then add the main trunk at the bottom, but if it is an old large fir then the main trunk may appear intermittently all the way up.

Lay down the boughs using the main colour of green, starting about a third from the top and then carefully taper off for the top. Continue the boughs down the length of the tree spreading out wider and wider.

Then think of lights and darks, adding a lighter green for the brighter side and more at the top, and a darker green under boughs and on the darker side, including usually more at the bottom.

- Deciduous trees are more difficult especially when up close. If the trees are far away you paint them as one shape again thinking about the different kinds. For example maples are more round and poplars are long and straight, so you should be aware of the type of tree you are painting.

When they are closer, you can paint the trunk and a system of branches, then using the shape of the leaves paint individual leaves using about three different values of green (or the tree's main colour), painting dark colour leaves in shaded areas and the darker side, painting light leaves where the light falls, and the main colour everywhere else.

- This is for painting realistic trees. There are other ways of doing much more impressionistic trees.