



Different Painting Techniques with Acrylics and Watercolours

KS3 ART & DESIGN

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

What Are Acrylic and Watercolour Paints?

Acrylic paints are water-based paints that dry quickly and become waterproof once they're dry. **Watercolours** are also water-based, but they stay slightly transparent and don't fully harden. Both are brilliant for exploring different **painting techniques** — special ways of applying paint to create different effects and textures.

Washing and Glazing

A **wash** is when you mix paint with lots of water to make it very thin and transparent. You then brush it across your paper in loose, flowing strokes. This technique is especially popular with watercolours because the colour spreads naturally.

Think of it like spreading diluted juice across a piece of paper — the more water you add, the lighter and more see-through it becomes.

Glazing is similar but more controlled. You layer thin, transparent colours on top of each other, letting each layer dry first. This builds up depth and creates new colours where layers overlap.

Dry Brush and Stippling

The **dry brush** technique uses very little water, so the paint is thick and textured. When you drag your brush across the paper, it creates rough, scratchy marks that look very expressive and bold.

Stippling is completely different. Instead of using brush strokes, you use a brush, sponge, or even your fingertip to dab small dots of paint onto the surface. Thousands of tiny dots together create an image or pattern.

Think of stippling like making a picture from hundreds of tiny stickers placed close together.

Splattering and Impasto

Splattering involves flicking paint onto your surface with a brush or stick. It's playful and unpredictable, and creates exciting accidental patterns. It works well with both acrylics and watercolours.

Impasto is mostly used with acrylics because they're thicker. You apply paint so thickly that your brush or palette knife leaves visible ridges and texture. The paint is so chunky you can almost see the brushstrokes standing up from the surface.

Blending and Layering

Blending means mixing colours together smoothly where they meet. With watercolours, you can do this while the paint is wet. With acrylics, you need to work quickly before they dry.

Layering builds images by stacking colours on top of each other. Acrylics are perfect for this because each layer dries fast, so you can paint over it immediately without the colours mixing.

Think of layering like building with transparent sheets of coloured plastic — you can see through all of them at once, creating interesting colour combinations.