



Yosemite Watercolor Series: Color Mixing

This is the second lesson of a four-part watercolor series with Yosemite Conservancy's Lora Spielman. The other lessons in the series cover value, techniques, and a step-by-step guide to painting Yosemite Falls.

Materials

- Watercolor paints (pans or tubes)
- Watercolor brushes
- Watercolor paper (to prevent buckling, use paper with a weight of at least 140 lb.)
- Water
- Spray bottle
- Paper towels or a rag

1. Get to know your palette.

A set of watercolors usually comes with the three primary colors — red, yellow and blue — as well as green and brown, and sometimes gray and black. A simple palette might have just one version of each of color, while a more advanced palette will often have warm and cool versions of some colors. What colors do you have in your palette?



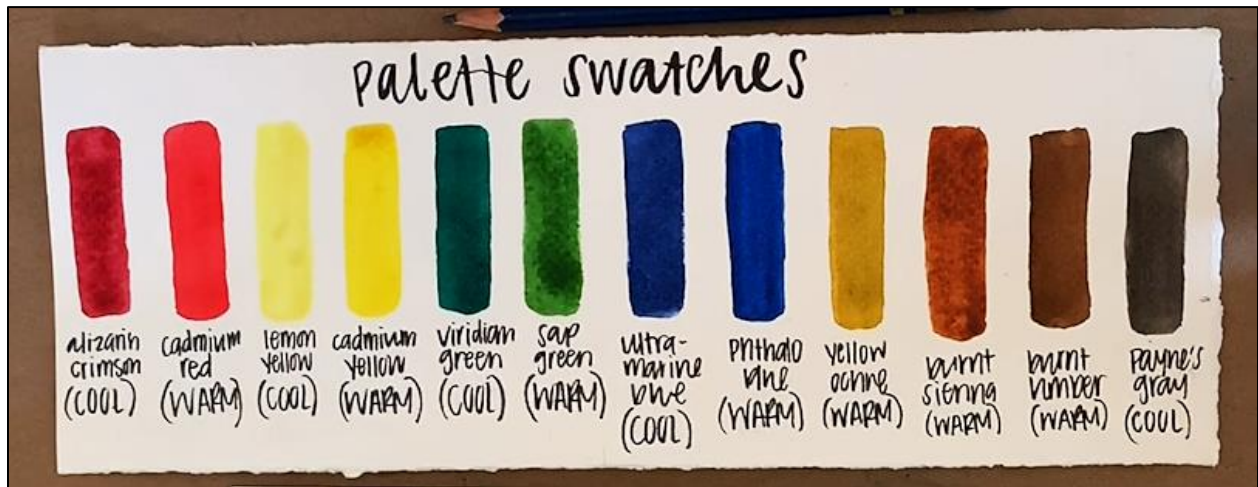
In this lesson, Lora will be referencing colors that are commonly used in more advanced, artist-grade watercolor sets:

- Cadmium red (warm)
- Alizarin crimson (cool)
- Cadmium yellow (warm)
- Lemon yellow (cool)
- Phthalo blue (cool)
- Ultramarine blue (warm)
- Sap green (warm)
- Viridian green (cool)
- Yellow ochre (warm)
- Burnt sienna (warm)
- Burnt umber (warm)
- Payne's gray (warm)

If you don't have a more advanced watercolor set, don't worry! For this series, all you need is the three primary colors: red, yellow and blue.

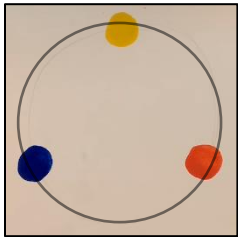
2. Create color swatches.

The colors in your palette will look different on paper! Create a handy reference sheet for yourself: Paint and label "swatches" of each color from your palette. (You could also create value scales for your colors — check out lesson one of these series for details!)



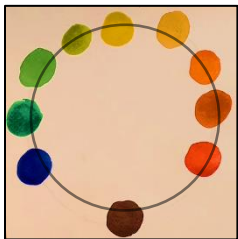
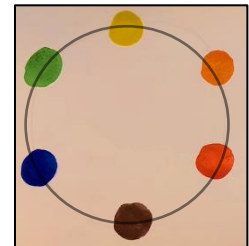
3. Make a color wheel.

Draw or trace a large circle on your paper. Don't worry if your circle isn't perfect! To create your color wheel, you'll paint large dots of different colors along the circle.



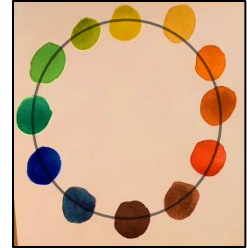
Start by adding your three **primary colors** (red, blue and yellow).

Next, add **secondary colors**, which are created by mixing two primary colors together: orange (mix *red* and *yellow*), green (mix *blue* and *yellow*) and purple (mix *red* and *blue*).

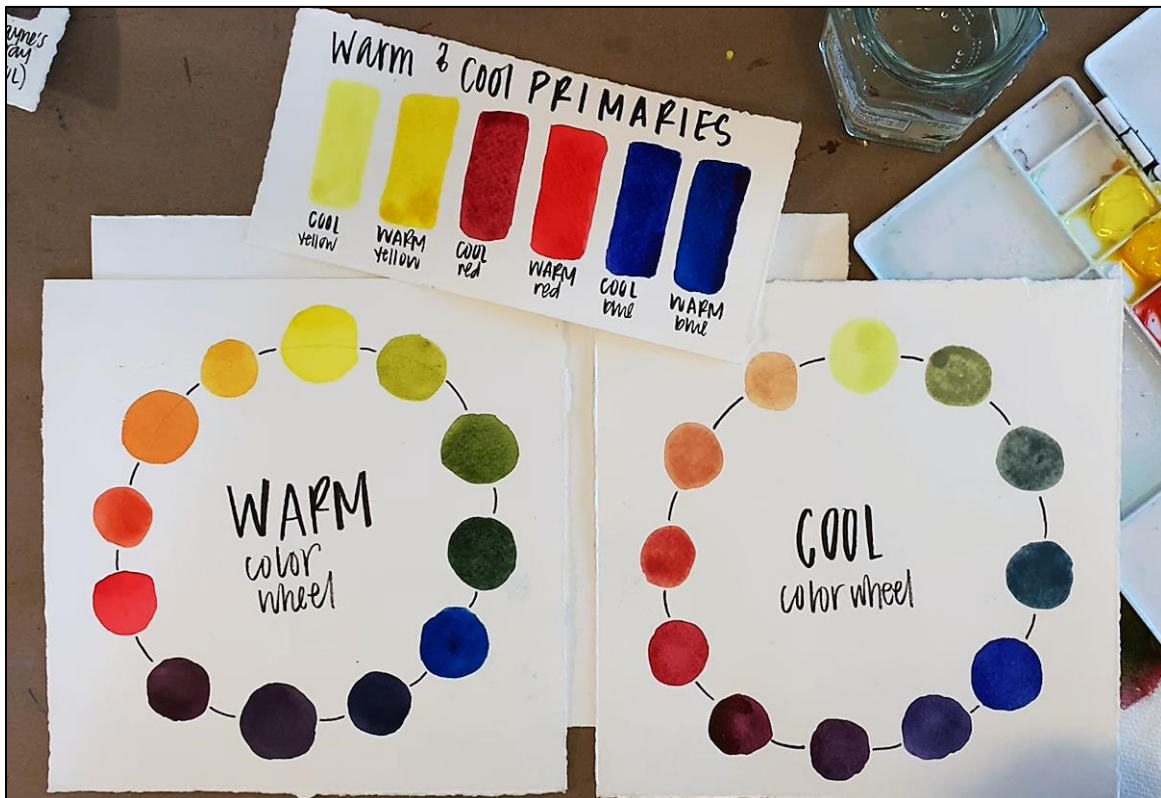


Now, add **tertiary colors**, which are created by mixing a secondary color with a primary color: red-orange, yellow-orange, yellow-green, blue-green, red-purple and blue-purple.

Last, add **earthy and neutral colors** (browns and grays), by mixing together *complementary* colors. Complementary colors are opposite each other on the color wheel. To make *brown*, mix green paint with a little red. To make *gray*, add a little blue paint to brown.



For this lesson, we're just using warm primary colors for the wheel, but you can also try this with cool versions of colors if you have those in your palette.



Thanks for making art with us! Follow us online (@yosemiteconservancy) for more fun ideas and learn more about Yosemite Conservancy at yosemite.org.