

Materials/equipment list for Jem Bowden watercolour courses; 'plein air and studio' based.

Materials must be provided by each participant. This list is a recommendation, and the detail is intended to be helpful. Read it a few times so that you can take it in effectively and consider it well, so you'll be set up for an enjoyable course, rather than potentially frustrated. The list reflects what I (Jem) will likely be using, but this should be balanced with participants using whatever colours, paper type, seat/easel etc, they favour or are accustomed to.

It's true, there's quite a lot of stuff! Over many years of plein air painting I have learned that I would prefer not to be without any of it. I use all the same things in the studio as I use plein air. Familiarity is key.

***Students need to be self-sufficient.** Please carefully consider what things you personally might need to be comfortable outdoors potentially for much of a day, with the vagaries of British weather and a range of underfoot (likely damp) terrain.*

In terms of clothing, I wear walking boots for three-quarters of the year, quick-drying layers, and ALWAYS have a peaked or brimmed hat. I also pack a tick remover, neck warmer, sun lotion, painkillers and a waterproof poncho for summer downpours!.... the list goes on. We're all different, so please think about your own needs. Outdoor painting is weather-permitting, but as a group we will be going out unless it is either raining or too windy (and that's pretty windy).

Watercolour paper:

Either a 'block' or taped, pre-stretched or otherwise held paper on board.

A pad can be okay as a learning material, as long as it is 300g/140lb weight minimum, and up to about A4 or quarter-imperial size max, otherwise the issue of windblown or curling pages means it is usually better to tear out sheets and tape them down.

Bring plenty of paper, potentially to complete up to 3 paintings per day, plus some spare sheets for exercises and mishaps, *and some scrap* for testing on. Size, surface type, brand, etc, should ultimately be your choice, however I recommend that you use Cold-pressed or Rough and would *not* recommend Hot-pressed paper. For information, I (currently and for years) mostly use **Cold-pressed (also known as 'Not') Bockingford 200lb weight**, affixed to a light (corrugated plastic) board, with clips or tape.

In the studio we will at times get through several small to medium size sheets in one sitting, whilst doing quick technique exercises or experiments. Avoid the cheap, so-called 'practise papers'. They are often not very good and can be a real hindrance to success. Also, *everything* we do is 'just practise'. Particularly for those new or relatively new to watercolour, I recommend using the same paper (a good quality one) at all times if possible so that you *get to know it well, which is half the battle!*

IF you wish to see similar watercolour effects to my own (most especially with regard to soft edges) then using the *same paper, mentioned above*, is more important than anything else; e.g. the same colours.

A board, suitable for taking out (unless you use blocks) and **tape** or alternative method of affixing paper.

Brushes: *hopefully including:*

At least one large Wash type brush, and a medium/large Round with a decent point. (If possible, just bring all your brushes.) Jem does not use small brushes at all and doesn't recommend them - unless you wish to work at a *very* small scale.

Paints: *I strongly recommend tube paints rather than pans, for ease of mixing and particularly to obtain strong darks.* 'Student quality' can be fine. Use whichever colours and brand you prefer or are used to.

For information in case you wish to use similar (though I stress this is not necessary) my own palette includes (mostly Winsor & Newton Professional range): French Ultramarine, Phthalo Blue Red Shade (known as 'Winsor Blue Red Shade' in the W&N range), Light Red, Indian Red, Raw Umber, Winsor Lemon (or other cool, 'bright' yellow), Cobalt Turquoise and very occasionally a bright scarlet red. A more limited palette would be absolutely fine and potentially a very good idea. I often paint with just three or five colours. (There is more information about this on the 'About' page of my website.)

Digital camera/smartphone camera/tablet, or at least a card viewfinder

Immensely helpful when selecting a subject and composing, as well as for collecting visual information for later reference at times.

An 'old school' card viewfinder (at LEAST A5 in size, rather than tiny ones) can work, but is less easy to use than the modern equivalents mentioned here. *I strongly recommend you do not try to 'do without' a viewfinder of some sort or other.*

Pencil and rubber, both soft. **Small water spray bottle**, for keeping the palette from drying out completely in heat/sun/wind.

Mixing palette - ideally with several generously sized mixing areas. Small palettes are generally more of a hindrance than a help (unless you work VERY small) even when working outdoors. I also find a flat palette much better than ones with 'domed' mixing areas, where mixed paint pigment can separate, with some floating and some sinking to the bottom.

Water pot, plus container for transporting water, such as a plastic litre bottle. (+ wire to hang pot from easel, if needed)

Sketch book if you use one, or some loose drawing paper. We may or may not need this much, depending on how *you wish* to work.

Kitchen/toilet roll: for mopping up runs/pools/mishaps, cleaning the palette, and for drying off your brush (see also below).

Absorbent rag/cloth/sponge: for quickly drying off brushes when painting (alternatively use the above for this too). I find this to be an essential piece of my kit.

Easel, if you use one. **Lightweight chair/stool** if you wish to paint seated. For info, I stand at an easel when painting and demonstrating, but this doesn't work for everybody. You will need to provide your own stool, easel, or whatever you wish to use. I use the 'Jakar Lightweight Adjustable Watercolour Easel', model circa 2016, but I can no longer recommend this model because it has changed. You need something that will stand up in UK wind, so prioritise leg-spread above all else. MANY of the lightweight easels do not have very wide leg spread - frustratingly!

Peaked cap or brimmed hat. *Essential* for looking towards - and protecting from - sun (and the odd raindrop). As with a viewfinder, don't think you can 'do without' it. This would be about the last thing I would want to forget!

'Ink and wash': Jem sometimes works and demonstrates in this method, either using waterproof black ink in a bottle, with rudimentary matchstick dip pen, or else a waterproof black 'brushpen' (by Pentel). Check very carefully if/when buying black ink that it is **waterproof**, and therefore suitable for painting watercolour over the top of. For example, not all 'India Ink' nowadays is, though a lot of people make that assumption (W&N do a waterproof one and a non-waterproof one, with this only mentioned on the label in small print!)

A bag of some sort to contain all of this - and anything else you might consider useful when simply being outdoors. I fit everything including easel into a hiker's backpack, with a cheap (but rainproof) plastic folder underarm for my board & paper.

Do a trial run, or at least practise the 'setting up and packing away' of your outdoor gear before the holiday, if it will be your first time.

I hope this is helpful.

Please feel free to contact me in advance if you have any questions. jembowdenwatercolour@gmail.com Tel: 07941 712674