LESSON L003 · WATERCOLOUR FOUNDATIONS

The first drop

No pencil, no plan, no experience needed.

> *You are not painting. You are inviting.*

No pencil, no plan, no experience needed. Wet a shape, touch two colours to its edges, then do the hardest thing a beginner ever does: nothing. The water takes over, and the pigment moving on its own is the whole secret of watercolour.

STEP BY STEP

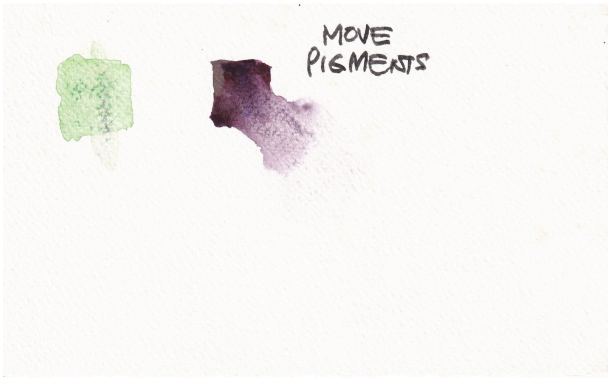
01 **A blob of water.** Paint a loose, wobbly, palm-sized shape in clean water. It should glisten all over.

02 **Drop the Rose.** Load Quinacridone Rose, strong. Touch the tip to one edge of the wet shape, then lift and watch.

03 **Drop the Blue.** Cobalt Blue at the opposite edge. Same move: one gentle touch, then lift.

04 **Put the brush down.** Three to five minutes. Cross your arms if you have to. Every touch now leaves a streak.

05 **Now make five more.** Try Lemon Yellow with Rose, or New Gamboge with Carbazole Violet. Every pair tells a different story.



"Move pigments": colour dropped into wet paper and left to travel. Whee Teck, Penang demo, November 2025.

TRY THIS · 5 MINUTES

One blob, two colours. Water first, Rose on one edge, Blue on the other. Then hands off until the violet appears.

LOOK FOR

The dark, rippled watermarks at the edges, and the third colour in the middle that you never mixed.

DO

Load the brush stronger than feels comfortable.

DON'T

Touch it while it's wet. Hands off is the whole lesson.

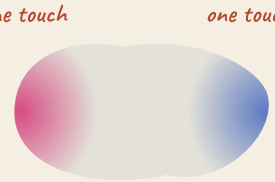
The water mixes the third colour.

THE FIRST DROP

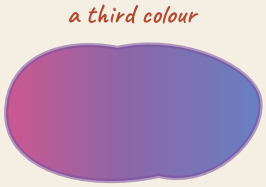
Water, two touches, then nothing



01 A BLOB OF WATER



02 ROSE HERE, BLUE THERE



03 HANDS OFF

TECHNIQUE CARDS

Why Rose and Blue

Quinacridone Rose is warm and loves to travel; Cobalt Blue is cool and spreads in soft halos. The friendliest pair on the palette for a first experiment.

Wetter travels further

Wetter paper, further travel. Let the paper dry 30 seconds first for tighter blooms. Tiny changes, wildly different results.

Make it big enough

At least the size of your palm, or the colours crash together with no journey.

Watermarks are a gift

The dark rippled edges are blooms. Many artists spend years learning to make them on purpose.

Put the brush down

The instinct is to help, nudge or fix. Resist it completely. Every touch drags the pigment and leaves a streak.

Try other pairs

Lemon Yellow + Quinacridone Rose. New Gamboge + Carbazole Violet. Every pair tells a different story.

Keep it flat

Lay the paper level so the colour spreads evenly instead of pooling.

YOUR LEVEL, SAME BLOB

LEVEL	YOUR TASK
Beginner	Rose + Blue blob, then five more.
Intermediate	Three colour pairs side by side; note which pigments travel fastest.
Seasoned	Use the bloom as a sky or background, then paint a subject over it when dry (L053).

Practise at home. "Now make five more." Each one will be completely different. That is the whole point.

See. Simplify. Sketch.

WHEE TECK · ARTERS TRAVEL SKETCHING