

SWS 2025 November Challenge Scrape or Rubbing Alcohol

Scraping techniques

Scraping involves removing wet or semi-dry watercolor paint to reveal the underlying paper or create specific textures.

Examples

1. Creating Lines and Details; Highlighting and Texture; Adding Movement:

- While a watercolor wash is still damp, use a sharp, rigid tool like a fingernail, the back of a paintbrush, or a credit card edge to scrape lines into the paint.
- This can be used to create hair, grass, architectural details, or other fine lines.
- Scrape off areas of paint to reveal highlights on surfaces like water, glass, or to create a rough texture on elements like rocks or bark.
- In a sky or landscape painting, strategic scraping can create a sense of wind or movement in clouds or foliage.

Key points to remember

- The results of both techniques can vary depending on the type of watercolor paper, the specific pigments used, and the amount of water and rubbing alcohol applied.
- Non-staining watercolor pigments tend to react more dramatically with rubbing alcohol, resulting in more pronounced textures and white areas.
- Experiment with different tools for scraping and application methods for rubbing alcohol to discover a wide array of creative possibilities.
- Always test these techniques on a separate piece of paper first to familiarize yourself with the effects before applying them to your main painting.



Rubbing alcohol techniques

Rubbing alcohol interacts with wet watercolor paint by repelling the pigments and creating lighter areas or white spots.

Examples

1. Dropping Alcohol onto Wet Wash:

- Paint a wash of watercolor on your paper.
- While the paint is still wet, dip a brush or dropper into rubbing alcohol and gently drop it onto the wash.
- The alcohol will push the wet paint away, creating interesting patterns and revealing the paper underneath, especially with non-staining pigments.
- This technique can create a "tie-dye" or bubble-like effect.

2. Spritzing Alcohol:

- Apply a watercolor wash to your paper.
- Using a paintbrush or spray bottle, spritz rubbing alcohol onto the wet paint for a more dispersed and cloudy texture.

3. Dabbing with a Sponge or Q-tip:

- Apply a watercolor wash.
- Dip a sponge or Q-tip in rubbing alcohol and gently dab it onto the wet paint to create softer, blurred edges and textured areas.

4. Painting with Alcohol:

- Instead of dripping or spritzing, you can use a brush dipped in alcohol to draw lines or patterns directly onto wet watercolor washes.

