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Art workshop instruction – creative painting wet- on-wet

KidsLikeUs | 20251019 Lotten Svensson for YogaYou Sweden

<https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/kidslikeus/>





Art for stress reduction and creative expressions for kids.

Instruction how to use the wet-on-wet
technique

Set the scene

To paint wet-on-wet watercolor, you typically need

- Watercolor paper, preferably 300 g
- Watercolor paints (fluid, tube or “cake”)
- Water
- Brushes (typically round brushes with a good tip)
- Palette or mixing tray
- Paper towels or a cloth for blotting
- Optional: Masking fluid for preserving areas of the paper
- Optional: Spray bottle for wetting the paper evenly
- Flake salt



Setting the scene

Step-by-step

- Picture a picturesque outdoor setting with easels, watercolor palettes, and an array of vibrant paint colors set up near a calming water stream. If the session is indoor make sure there is a table with a tablecloth and paper towels for drying or cleaning at the table. Children are gathered, eager to explore their artistic talents and express themselves through abstract watercolor paintings.
- Choosing Brushes: Begin by introducing the children to a variety of brushes, explaining their different sizes and shapes. Encourage them to select brushes based on the desired effect in their paintings.
- Selecting the right watercolor paper: Guide the children in choosing the appropriate watercolor paper, emphasizing the importance of texture and weight for wet-on-wet techniques. Discuss the benefits of using high-quality paper to enhance their artistic creations.
- Exploring colors: Introduce the vibrant world of watercolor paints. Allow the children to explore and mix colors to create their own unique palettes. Emphasize the freedom of expression and experimentation with colors.

Setting the scene

Step-by-step

- Preparing the water: Guide the children to the nearby water source, where they can dip their brushes and dampen their watercolor paper using the wet-on-wet technique. If indoor use plastic or glass tins with water. Explain the transformative effect this has on the watercolor pigments.
- Layering and drying: Demonstrate the process of layering colors and techniques to create depth in their paintings. Provide a space for the paintings to dry between layers, allowing the children to observe the evolving artwork.
- Abstract painting: Encourage the children to let their imagination run wild as they create abstract patterns, shapes, and forms on their watercolor paper. Emphasize the therapeutic nature of expressing oneself through art. Add flake salt on parts of the painting when it is still wet for creating patterns.
- Signing the artwork: Guide the children in signing their completed paintings, instilling a sense of pride and ownership in their creations.
- Vernissage and reflection: Organize a small exhibition (vernissage) where the children can showcase their masterpieces. Create a reflective space for them to share their thoughts and feelings about the artistic process.

How it works

- Expressive outlet: Art, and particularly watercolor painting, offers a unique way for individuals to express emotions and experiences that may be challenging to communicate verbally. The use of colors, strokes, and visual elements allows refugees to externalize their feelings, providing a form of release and catharsis.
- Mindful focus: The process of watercolor painting requires concentration and focus on the present moment. This mindful engagement helps individuals temporarily shift their attention away from distressing memories or worries about the future. Focusing on the act of painting promotes a sense of calm and presence.
- Empowerment through creativity: Engaging in creative activities like watercolor painting empowers individuals by giving them a sense of control over their artistic expression. This empowerment can be particularly valuable for refugees who may have experienced a loss of control in their lives due to forced displacement or traumatic events.

How it works

- Cultural connection: Watercolor painting can also serve as a bridge to cultural expression. It allows refugees to reconnect with their cultural heritage through artistic means, fostering a sense of identity and belonging. This connection to one's cultural roots can contribute positively to mental well-being.
- Social interaction: Participating in group painting sessions can create a supportive and social environment. Sharing the creative process with others, including peers and facilitators, promotes social bonding and a sense of community. Positive social interactions are crucial for rebuilding a sense of trust and belonging.
- Aesthetic beauty: The visual beauty of watercolor paintings can evoke positive emotions and appreciation for aesthetics. Creating and enjoying aesthetically pleasing artwork can contribute to a more positive and uplifting emotional state.
- Non-verbal communication: For individuals who may face language barriers or find it difficult to express themselves verbally, watercolor painting provides a non-verbal form of communication. This can be particularly helpful in therapeutic settings, allowing refugees to convey their experiences and emotions without relying solely on words.
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Wet-on-wet

Quick painting part 1

Soak the paper and start with one color

Turn the paper and let the water flow, add on more color

To blend the colors –add on some more water if needed

Turn the paper around and watch out for water dropping on the clothes



Wet-on-wet

Quick painting part 2

More color are added....

Let the color move on the paper,
turn the paper at least four time, let it take
Time, the colors should blend without hard
edges



Wet-on-wet

Quick painting part 3

More color are added....

Let the color move on the paper



Wet-on-wet

Quick painting part 3

Add on more colors and spray gently with water



Making clouds

Texture and pattern

Take a piece of soft household paper

Crumple the paper into a cardboard ball

Dab the paper on the wet paint to remove excess paint, watch little clouds appear



Concentrated color marks

Dropping fluid water color

If you have access to use fluid water color:

Draw up paint with the eyedropper and then drip on the top of the page to let it flow out, here there will be clear color markings, like small rings

Do not overuse the color- it is rich in pigment and can be diluted with water to save paint



Flake salt effects

Make stars...

When the paper is still wet and the colors are floating, take a handful flakesalt and drop gently on the painting. There will be patterns showing up like stars when drying. Lay flat and let dry proper. The salt can fall off, but if you like it to stay, use a frame with glass.



Kids with special needs

With a little help... everybody can paint



Kids with special needs

With a little help... everybody can paint

Method: Inclusive watercolor workshops for children with special needs

Purpose:

To create a calm and creative space where children with special needs can explore watercolor painting together with their parents. The workshop aims to strengthen communication, sensory experience, and shared creativity through the *wet-on-wet* watercolor technique.

Target group:

Children with special needs (for example, Down Syndrome) together with their parents or guardians.

Preparation:

Provide watercolor paper suitable for wet-on-wet technique (e.g., 300 g cold pressed).

Prepare wide brushes with ergonomic handles that are easier to grip and allow children to vary pressure naturally.

Arrange small containers for water and liquid watercolor paint.

Cover tables with waterproof cloths to make the space comfortable and relaxed.

Step 1 – Introduction for parents

Begin the session by teaching the parents the *wet-on-wet* technique. Let them practice blending colors and observing how pigments move on the wet surface. This gives them confidence to later assist their children without taking over the creative process.

Step 2 – Joint painting session

Invite children to paint together with their parents. Parents can support by:

Helping the child hold the brush and find a natural movement.

Pouring paint or adjusting water levels.

Wiping away excess water if it starts to run off the paper.

Encourage open exploration rather than precision. The focus should be on enjoying colors, textures, and the movement of water on paper.

Step 3 – Adaptations

When the concept was tested with parents and children with Down Syndrome, only one adaptation was needed: the choice of brushes. Using brushes with thicker, ergonomic handles improved grip and allowed for a softer or firmer touch depending on each child's motor ability.

Step 4 – Reflection and sharing

After painting, take time to look at the artworks together. Ask simple questions like:

“What color do you like most?”

“What did the water do on your paper?”

This creates space for storytelling and emotional expression.

Results:

The workshop has shown that with minimal adjustments and the active presence of parents, children with special needs can fully enjoy watercolor painting and express themselves freely. The shared experience strengthens both confidence and the parent–child relationship.

Quotes from parents

KidsLikeUs project has inspired kids and families from Ukraine

"We think that the project is good for children and would like to have activities every month"

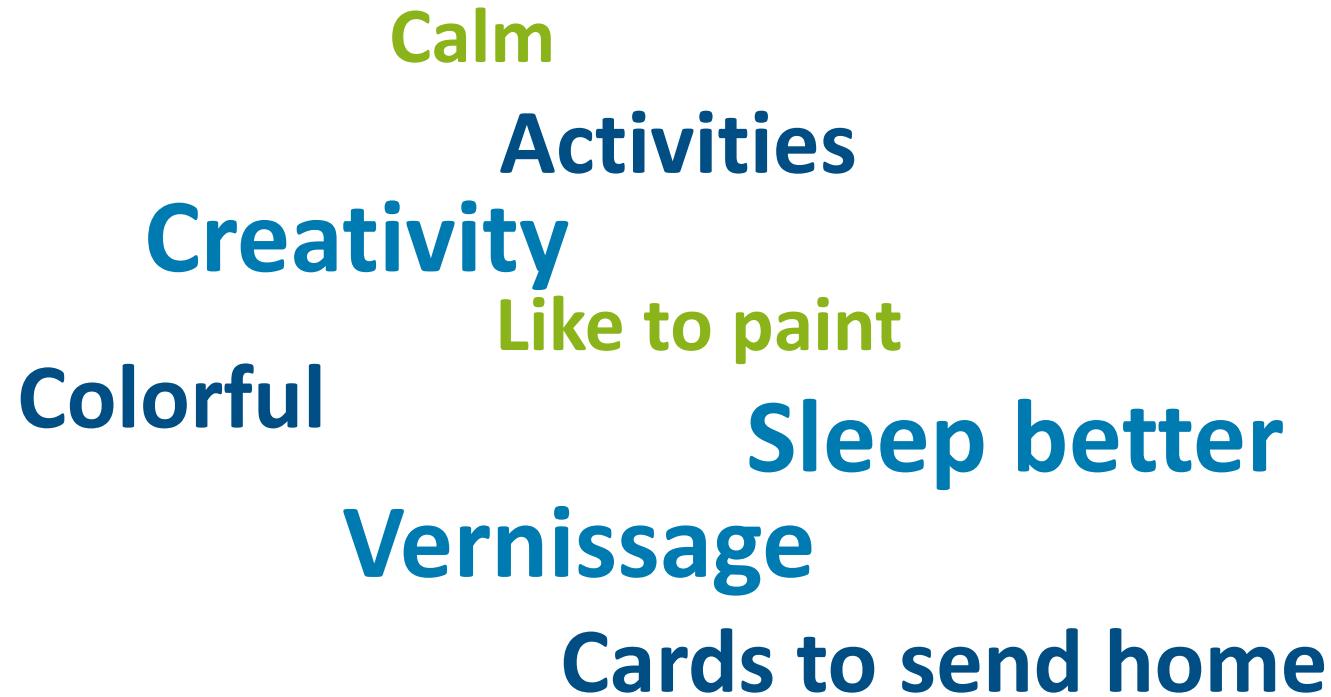
"We like mixed activities. Our children have learned to communicate better"

"In their free time, children can also meet other Ukrainian children and paint"

"The children like to paint, in Ukraine they had painting twice a week, now there is nothing like that in school. So it is good that they are allowed to continue. They sleep better when there have been activities, it's good because they sleep well then"



Wordcloud



A wordcloud visualization with a mix of blue and green text. The words are arranged in a cluster, with some words like 'Creativity' and 'Colorful' in blue being larger and more prominent. Other words like 'Calm', 'Activities', 'Like to paint', 'Sleep better', 'Vernissage', and 'Cards to send home' are in green and appear to be smaller or less prominent. The overall layout is a dense cluster of words.

Calm

Activities

Creativity

Like to paint

Colorful

Sleep better

Vernissage

Cards to send home

Contacts

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