



Ten Top Tips

Here are my Ten Top Tips for painting and drawing anything!

1. **Look carefully** at your subject and analyse what is in front of you. Look and keep looking at your subject and copy exactly what is there; the shapes, colours and tones. Don't draw what you think ought to be there, or the way you think an object must be. Often shapes change through foreshortening, colours change because of the way the light falls on them, and tones change in relation to what is around them. So learn to look and draw exactly what you see.
2. **Don't rush** at your painting. Take your time. You may paint quickly, or slowly, but don't rush at it because you will spoil it. Make sure you have enough time and are in the right mood to paint.
3. **Plan well** before you set brush to paper. This is especially important in watercolour painting, but is also necessary for any form of artwork. Poor planning leads to poor painting, and to many frustrations, so work out beforehand what you aim to paint and how you will go about it.
4. **Don't give up** half way through a painting. Many paintings look awful at the halfway stage and you may be tempted to give up and start again another day. But try not to. Work through the halfway stage and you will more often than not pull the painting together and produce a good painting.
5. **Keep your mistakes** and learn from them. They will remind you of how NOT to do things and will also act as a record of your progress.
6. **Know why you are painting** a particular subject, and make sure you keep this in the final painting. What attracted you to the subject? If it was a certain lighting effect, then keep that in the painting. Perhaps it was a curious series of shapes. Then highlight these and don't lose them. Try to convey whatever it was that caught your eye and made you want to paint the subject. If the viewer feels what you felt, then you've succeeded.
7. **Take criticism well.** Ask others what is good and what is not so good in your painting, and learn from them. My wife is my best critic because she tells me when I have painted well, and when I've painted a duffer!
8. **Paint for yourself.** There is always the desire to paint for others, and to produce paintings that other people will like, and even perhaps buy. But we paint best when we paint for our own enjoyment.
9. **Be confident.** Lack of confidence is a killer that stops us before we even start. Confidence is such a major key to painting well. So before you begin a painting say to yourself, 'I can do this. I'm good at it and I can create a beautiful painting'. And watch your painting improve!
10. **Have great fun!** After all this is really what painting is all about. If you have enjoyed your painting, then it will show through in your finished picture. I can always tell when students have struggled over a painting they have not enjoyed, and when they have relished every brushstroke – it shows up in the final product. If you enjoy your art, then that is an end in itself.