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# Painting Skies

## in Watercolour

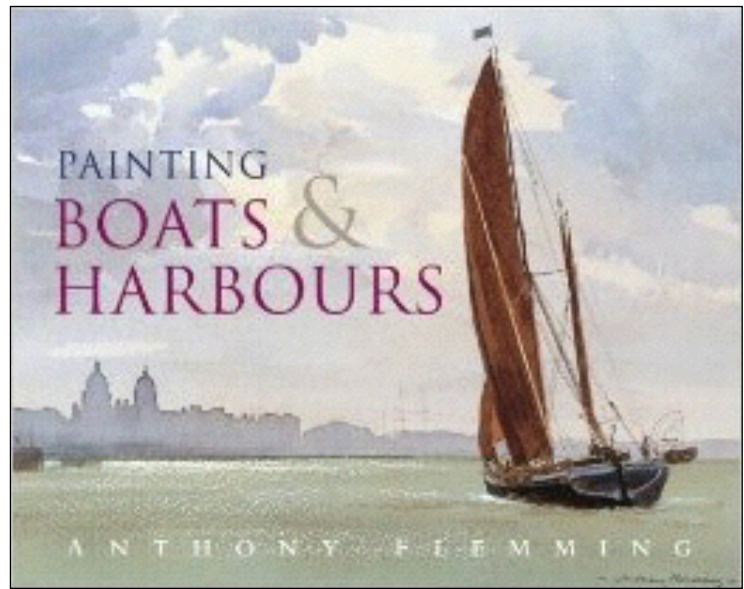
Tips and techniques for painting skies - 10 June 2015

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*Over the centuries* painters have painted skies in every shape and form

This fascinating subject can be a challenge but it is also fun too

I was researching painting skies and it was whilst reading about painting Boats and Harbours (of course there will be skies featured there!) that I found these useful tips



- Clouds are never as white as you imagine, hold a white sheet up to the cloud and see how white the cloud really is
- What time of day is it? You may see a creamy or pinkish hue to it
- Try painting on a tinted paper (do this yourself, cheaper and easier)

Skies provide a foil, as well as a background, to all manner of subject matter... Generally, a complicated foreground calls for a simple sky. Conversely, a simple foreground can be enhanced with a grand sky. The sky, more than anything else, sets the mood of a painting.

pg 66, Painting Boats & Harbours, Anthony Fleming  
(available in Worthing Library)

### Reach for the Blue paint then?

Well yes but if you are in the middle of winter or even in summer in England perhaps not!

If you are using blue there are a few to choose from:

Ultramarine blue  
Cerulean Blue  
Cobalt Blue  
Phthalo Blue  
Indigo  
Turquoise and so on.....  
See my other tips and notes on greys :)

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## Techniques

How do you paint a sky? There are several ways in watercolour but to simplify:

- paint on dry paper (wet on dry technique)
- paint on damp paper (wet in wet technique)

You can then add more colours, once the paint is on the paper as well as doing the following:

- lifting off (with a piece of kitchen roll, damp wide brush slowly, this will give you lighter areas of colour or pale tints of white) avoid scrubbing though!
- if painting on a tinted ground, add Chinese white watercolour for your lighter clouds (this is a very old technique but goes with the tips on page 1 here)

Where to start? Which paper?

- start on 1/4 sheets first, a big A4 sheet is daunting and not necessarily the right shape for your sky, aim to do one sky in say 10 minutes,
- if you are trying the above don't waste paint on poor quality paper, the paper is important in watercolour. One we have used in class is below, this is for 5 sheets but you must ask them at the checkout to QUARTER the sheets (do this in any space you can. It looks expensive but even the quarter sheets are large and can be divided further by you.
- The Postcard Watercolour paper is also worth checking out, besides being cheaper, it is gummed (leave sky to dry fully before cutting the top piece of paper with a knife to reveal a new sheet underneath)
  - [Saunders Waterford, NOT 140lb from Jacksons Art Supplies](#)
  - [Postcard watercolour paper](#)

**Lastly, look closely every day at skies, spot the colours, shapes (particularly clouds)**

**Try and paint lots of skies, not just a few!**

