How to Color Water

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You can color water for all sorts of purposes, such as creating centerpieces or other decorations, making a fun drink, or setting up a water playstation for your kids. There are a wide range of synthetic, natural, or even homemade options you can turn to. On the other hand, if you're trying to color a picture of water, you can create realistic-looking waves or droplets by adding highlights and shadows.

Method 1

Method 1 of 3:
Dyeing Water with Synthetic Coloring

1 **Add a couple of drops of food coloring, and stir to mix.** Food coloring comes in a multitude of different colors, and can be found at grocery stores and discount stores. Adding a little bit of salt to the water first can prevent the food coloring from sinking to the bottom.[1]

- Water-based liquid food coloring is easiest to find, but it produces more diluted colors. Liquid gel food coloring is a little more concentrated, and will make the final product more vibrant.

- If you're coloring water for a drink, don't add too much food coloring. Some food dyes, especially red colors, can have a bad flavor if you use too much of them.

- If you're planning on putting flowers in your food coloring-dyed water, wait until the last minute to add them. Food coloring can start changing the flowers' color within a couple of hours.
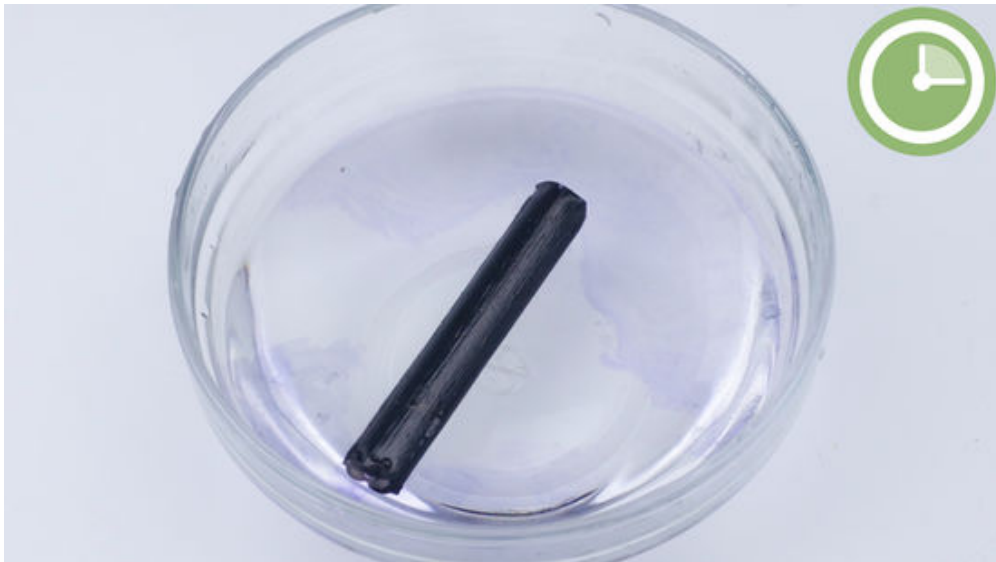
2 **Use gel icing for brighter, more concentrated color.** A little bit goes a long way, so use a toothpick to grab a small amount of gel and swirl it around in the water. Add more if necessary until you achieve the color you're looking for. Gel icing or paste dye can be found in grocery or cooking stores.[2]

3 **Add powdered food dye for an extra dark color.** Pick up a tiny bit of powder with a spoon and drop it in your water slowly. Blend in more dye, a little at a time, until you get the deep color you're looking for.

- Alternately, you can mix the powder with a couple of drops of clear alcohol to create a liquid dye, which can then be added dropwise to your water.[3]

4 **Color water with a highlighter to make water that glows.**   While wearing gloves, pop off the back of a highlighter and then remove the ink-soaked felt tube inside. Soak the tube in hot water for 4-6 hours, and then squeeze it into the water to get all the last bits of ink out. The water will look fluorescent on its own, and will glow under a blacklight!
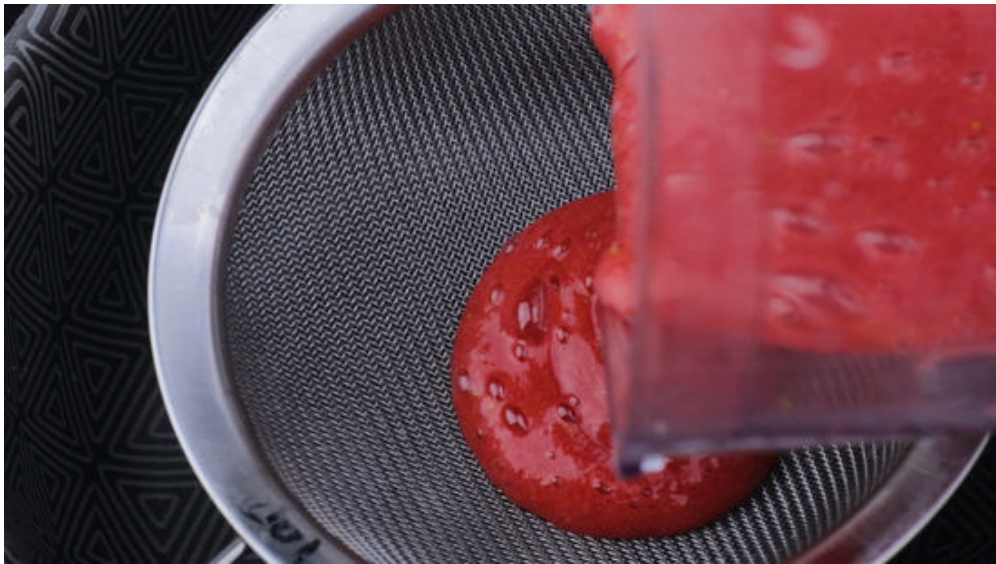
- Do not use this method if you want to drink the water or if your skin will be coming into contact with the water, as the highlighter ink might be toxic.

Method 2 of 3:
Coloring Water with Natural Dyes

1 **Add a few drops of natural food coloring for a softer look.**   These dyes are usually made from plants, and can be found in specialty stores or online. Their color is usually not as bright, so use these for a more subtle, understated option or for water that you want to drink or have your kids play with.[4]

2 **Make your own natural liquid food dye from fruits or vegetables.** Find a fruit or vegetable that matches the color you're looking for and juice it in a juicer or puree it in a blender. Strain the liquid, and then reduce it by heating it until most of the water is evaporated, which will leave you with a concentrated color. Add your homemade dye to water a few drops at a time until you get the hue you're looking for.[5]

- Strawberries or raspberries produce different shades of pink.

- Tomatoes can give you a nice red color.

- Leafy greens like spinach can be used to color water green.

- Pureeing red cabbage and then adding a little bit of baking soda produces a blue color.

- Blueberries, despite their name, can be used to make purple coloring.

3 **Color water with natural powdered food coloring.** Buy a powdered fruit or vegetable, or use spices or drink mixes. Mix the powder directly into the liquid, or steep the powder by wrapping it in a coffee filter and letting it soak in warm water for a couple of hours until you get the color you're looking for.[6]

- Mix paprika into water to color it orange.

- Steep saffron or turmeric to get yellow water.

- Stir matcha or other powdered green tea into water to turn it green. You can also try steeping green tea leaves in warm water.

- Add ground coffee or cocoa powder to water, or steep a tea bag in warm water, to color it brown.

- Combine activated charcoal powder and water to get a black solution.

**Method 3 of 3:
Drawing and Painting Water**

1 **Create water droplets by adding highlights to a bubble shape.** Sketch out a circle or oval with a thin dark line, and fill it in with a blue or gray shade. Add a highlight on one side of the bubble by making a rectangle in a white or very light color. Make the rectangle slightly curved to match the shape of the bubble.[7]

- Make the drops look 3-dimensional by using different colors when coloring in the drop. Use a darker shade in the area immediately surrounding the highlight, and a slightly lighter shade on the opposite side of the droplet.[8]

- Blend all the colors within your drop to create a smooth, rounded shape, but give your rectangle highlight sharp edges.[9]

- Add extra shading around the inner edges of the drop with a darker color, and give the drop a small shadow on its outside edge to complete the look.[10]
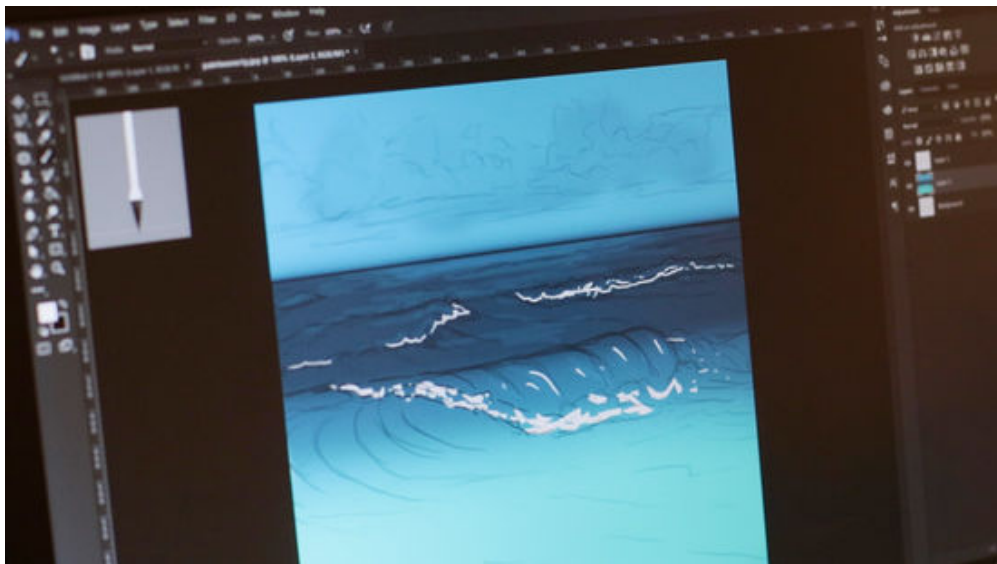
2 **Paint ocean waves by making stacked wavy lines.** Add a base color over the area where you want your water. Draw overlapping scalloped lines over the entire water area.[11]

- Each of the lines should look like several connected semicircles.[12]

- Make the wave shapes smaller and shallower for faraway waves, and bigger with more pronounced shadows for waves in the foreground.[13]

- Add white on the crests of some of the bigger waves to create the appearance of sea foam, and use a darker shade to make shadows underneath the peaks of the waves to portray depth.[14]

3 **Use diagonal lines when making a seascape with watercolor paint.** Use a flat brush and create broad, slightly diagonal strokes to create your wave shapes. Make the strokes closer together and more horizontal towards the horizon of your picture. Leave some white space in between your waves to create the look of shimmering or foamy waves.[15]

4 **Draw digital waves with a hard brush tool.** Make a gradient-filled block of color over the area where you want your water to be, putting the darker shade towards the horizon. Use a brush tool with hard edges to create your squiggly wave shapes.[16]

- Add highlights to the peaks of your waves with a softer brush in a slightly lighter color. Paint ocean spray and foam onto the tops of your waves with a white or light brush.[17]

5 **Make water look more realistic by incorporating nearby colors.** Water not only reflects white light, it mirrors other colors too. Your seascapes will look more realistic if you use other colors besides just blue shades.

- For example, if you're painting a seascape at sunset and the sky is orange, give the lighter highlights on the tops of your waves a slightly orange tint.[18]

6 **Color nearby objects by drawing them upside-down.** First, draw your object, such as a floating boat or a tree-lined shore. Next, lightly sketch an upside-down version of each object right beneath it. Add in wavy lines both overtop of the reflected object as well as in the surrounding water. [19]

- Make the waves tighter together in the background, and farther apart in the foreground. [20]

- Where the wave shapes cross into the outline of the reflected object, make them the same color as the original object. For example, if you are drawing a brown tree trunk reflected into the water, make the wave shapes blue outside of the reflected outline, and brown inside of it.[21]

⚡ Tips

- If you're making a centerpiece or other decoration, finish off your colored water by adding floating candles, plants or flowers. You could also add real or fake flowers to a vase with colored water.

- If you don't want to actually dye your water, but you want it to appear colored, buy a water-safe LED light and put it in your water-filled container. Alternately, place a small LED light underneath your water container and let the light shine up through the water.

- Set up a color laboratory where your kids can experiment with pouring and mixing colored water. Add water and a little bit of non-toxic dye to some squeeze bottles, and let your kids have fun squirting the water out into bowls and ice cube trays and mixing different colors together![22]

- Color your pool with non-toxic pool dye for some colorful summer fun. Make sure that the label says that it won't stain skin, clothes, or the pool.

- Try adding a drop or two of food coloring into a water balloon before you tie it up, or mix the dye into water inside of a balloon pumper, and use it to fill up water balloons. Have your kids pop the balloons in a play pool and watch the dyes mix to form new colors.[23]

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