



TO DO

- Cut out the above tonal key value bar (or copy it onto photo paper and use that)
- Use this bar to compare colour to value (the lightness or darkness of a colour).
- It is a crucial part of painting to learn to see colour as if in black and white.
- When you check values, squint your eyes. It also helps to be at arm’s length or more.

TIP

To check how you are doing tonally on a painting, take a digital photo in grayscale mode (black and white), or convert it to grayscale on your computer. This way you are not distracted by the colours. Another way to check your tonal values is to look through a red sheet of cellophane.

If you like the colours in your painting, but something the painting lacks life, it might be that you need more shades. If this is the case, add darker darks and / or lighter lights. If you already have enough darks and lights, add some mid-tones. More often than not, when we are learning to paint, we shy away from the necessary darks. Don’t be afraid of the dark!

Some artists suggest a minimum of five shades for a painting and up to nine, though all ‘rules’ can be broken. Ideas and suggestions are like a supermarket full of food, you can choose what you want to create your own way of doing things.

Interesting Fact:

The more accurately shades are painted, the less detail you need. Our brains have the ability to fill in information that is not there based on the the interplay of lights and shadows. Learn to see the shapes and patterns ‘beyond’ all the details you see.

Low Key -
Dark tones

Mid Key -
Mid tones

High Key -
Light tones

