



## Utrecht Art Supplies Diluting and Extending Acrylics



**Q: "I use mediums, retarder and water to get a runny look with acrylics. Are there limits to the amount I can dilute my acrylics? Recommended proportions for mediums? I know this is a concern with oils and I don't want to affect the longevity of my paintings."**

**A:** Unlike oil-based products, acrylic mediums can generally be used liberally. Acrylic mediums contain the same polymer dispersion base as paint, so adding extra medium doesn't reduce the strength of the dry paint film.

One important exception is Retarder Gel, an additive that can be mixed with colors and mediums to delay drying. Retarders don't contain any polymer base, and shouldn't be used alone as a medium. A small amount can help facilitate suave blending and improve workability, particularly in hot, dry conditions.

Use of the minimum effective amount is recommended, because excessive amounts can lead to a dry film that remains soft, soluble and

tacky. Utrecht Retarder Gel can be added up to 25% in mixtures; other brands may vary.



Professional grade acrylic colors can bear considerable dilution with water and still produce a durable film, but scholastic-grade acrylics may not perform as well when heavily diluted. Even with top quality paints, adding a lot of water can affect wet appearance and the behavior of mixtures.



Some artists enjoy the random, unpredictable behavior of very thin washes, but it is possible to fine tune the effect by adding small amounts of medium. The addition of a low-viscosity medium like Acrylic Sizing gives better flow than water alone, and improves consistency in appearance between wet and dry mixtures, while supporting binding power and adhesion.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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