Tints, Tones and Shades

In painting, everything has a colour. The word hue is used to describe a colour or the shade of a colour.

Tints

A tint is a colour mixed with white. The more white paint that is added to the original colour, the lighter the tint. A tint can range from slightly lighter than the original colour, to almost white. When mixing a tint, begin with the pure colour and add white paint a tiny bit at a time.

tints of red

Shades

A shade is a colour mixed with black. The more black paint that is added to the original colour, the darker the shade. A shade can range from slightly darker than the original colour, to nearly black. When mixing a shade, begin with the pure colour and add black paint a tiny bit at a time.
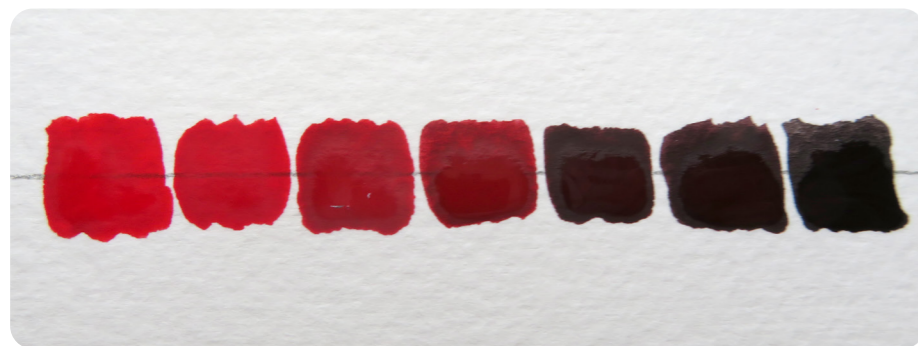
shades of red

Tones

A tone is a colour mixed with grey. Tones are less vibrant than the original colour. Using a tonal colour in a painting balances other intense colours and bright hues. When mixing a tone, begin with the pure colour and add grey paint a tiny bit at a time.

tones of red

Mixing tints, shades and tones

This diagram shows how tints, shades and tones are made.

pure colour	+	white	=	tint
pure colour	+	black	=	shade
pure colour	+	grey	=	tone

Creating light and shadow

Tints and shades are used in paintings to create light and shadow. This painting by Vincent van Gogh is a good example of the use of tints and shades. The apples in the foreground are painted in tints of green to emphasise light. The apples in the background are painted in shades of green to show that they are in the shadows.

Still Life with Basket of Apples by Vincent van Gogh, 1885

Landscapes

A landscape is an artwork that represents an environment. Examples include coastal landscapes, cityscapes or fantasy landscapes. Landscapes should feature a horizon and perspective, which gives the artwork depth and an impression of distance.

Glossary

horizon	The line at which the Earth's surface and the sky appear to meet.
hue	A version of a colour.
perspective	A technique that enables artists to add depth to a painting or drawing.