Painting a Wave in Oils

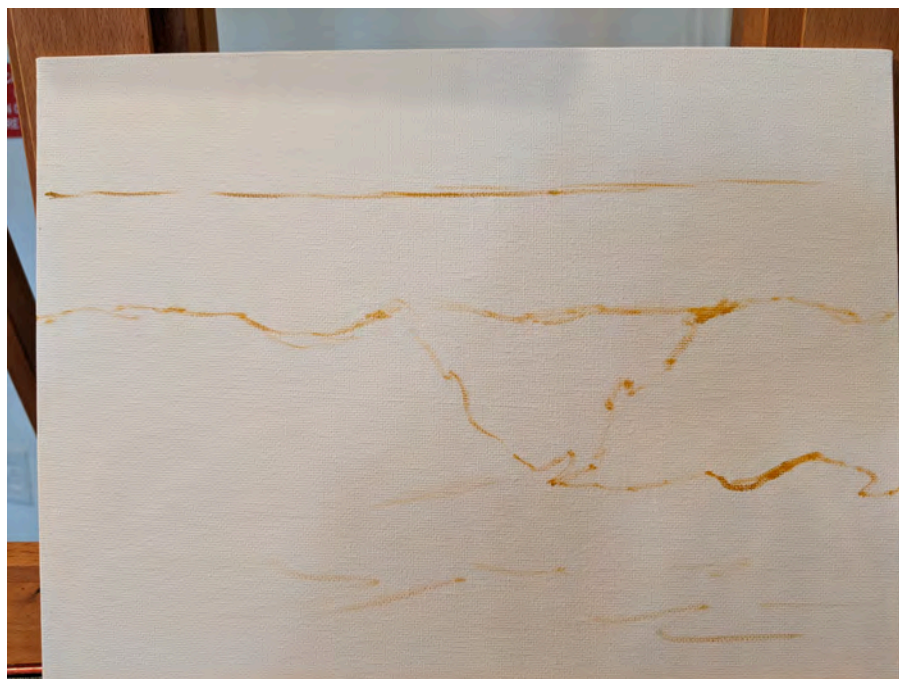**This is the step by step process I used when painting this wave.**

Key point starting out,

Keep it simple throughout most of the painting.
Details are only for finishing touches after you know you have your value, color choices and composition right.

1. Using a mixture of yellow ochre and white draw in a very limited and basic composition so you have guidelines.

2. Start to compare value and color of your reference source. Remember all colors have values. Don't fill in all of the sky, water, wave, whatever. SPOTS of color to compare to each other to start.

Try to use a different color for for each spot but in this demo, I am not adhering strictly to this.

**   I started in the sky with a Cad yellow with white. Later I added on the top a yellow deep with white.**

**   I used a combination cobalt blue, cobalt violet and manganese blue with white for the distant water color on the horizon left.**

I started the inside of the wave with a percent green light and cad green pale but when comparing the reference values around the painting it proved to be too light.

I had moved on to the shadow the wave produced which I used cobalt violet cobalt blue and viridian.

The shadow of the crashing, curled wave was manganese Blue with white.

The water in front I started with yellow ochre and white and quickly added over top a light, comparable value of violet and Cobalt blue and Viridian.

Side Tip: Keep in mind I am not proceeding completely with new different colors as I would for brand new students. This is a slightly advanced stage of painting.

Side Tip: Understanding the difference in each color and how they relate to other colors help.

Side Tip: Remember to not be in a rush to finish. Success depends on your start.

Side Tip: Treat every connected shadow and connected light area of a color as one shape.

3. I went back into the sky after adding the yellow deep with white and painted over it in areas with manganese blue and white. Careful to have enough white not to muddy or darken the sky. Check the whole painting for value and color comparisons at this stage.

4. I now start to fill in the white space carrying out color choices in the prospective areas out. In the curl of the wave I added a viridian, green light, cobalt blue with maybe a tad of white but not too much in the center of the wave and then blended the three values overlapping the green light and green pale mixture to darken it up.

Painting a Wave in Oils
Part 2

At this stage I'm am fine tuning my colors. I go back to scanning all parts of the painting. I look to brighten, saturate and restate initial start colors. In this example you see the stronger color note in the sky of cadmium yellow with very little to almost no white.

I have also added the "rollout" the top of the wave seen in the middle top. This requires adding light on top and darker on bottom. With either value on the brush sweep back and forth to both blend in the middle and create line like marks.

Side Tip: even though you are refining color you still want to hold back from too much detail. Always compare brightness, value(lightness or darkness) and color choices.

A view of my palette

Here I focus a closer attention on the sky after "punching" up the saturation of the yellow I add back in the manganese blue with white I then suggest the cloud placement very simply with a combination of Manganese Blue and Cobalt violet with white. Making the color value appropriate to what is in the reference in comparison the sky

Side Tip: Keep in mind I am not proceeding completely with new different colors as I would for brand new students. This is a slightly advanced stage of painting.

Next I add a very light combination of cadmium yellow light and white to start to describe the sunlit parts of the clouds. I use a brush something like a #1 filbert at a side angle to make dash marks over the darker dashes previously made for the clouds.

I have also made some adjustments in the distance water refining value along with lacing the blue with a white yellow mixture showing the light from the sky glistening on it.
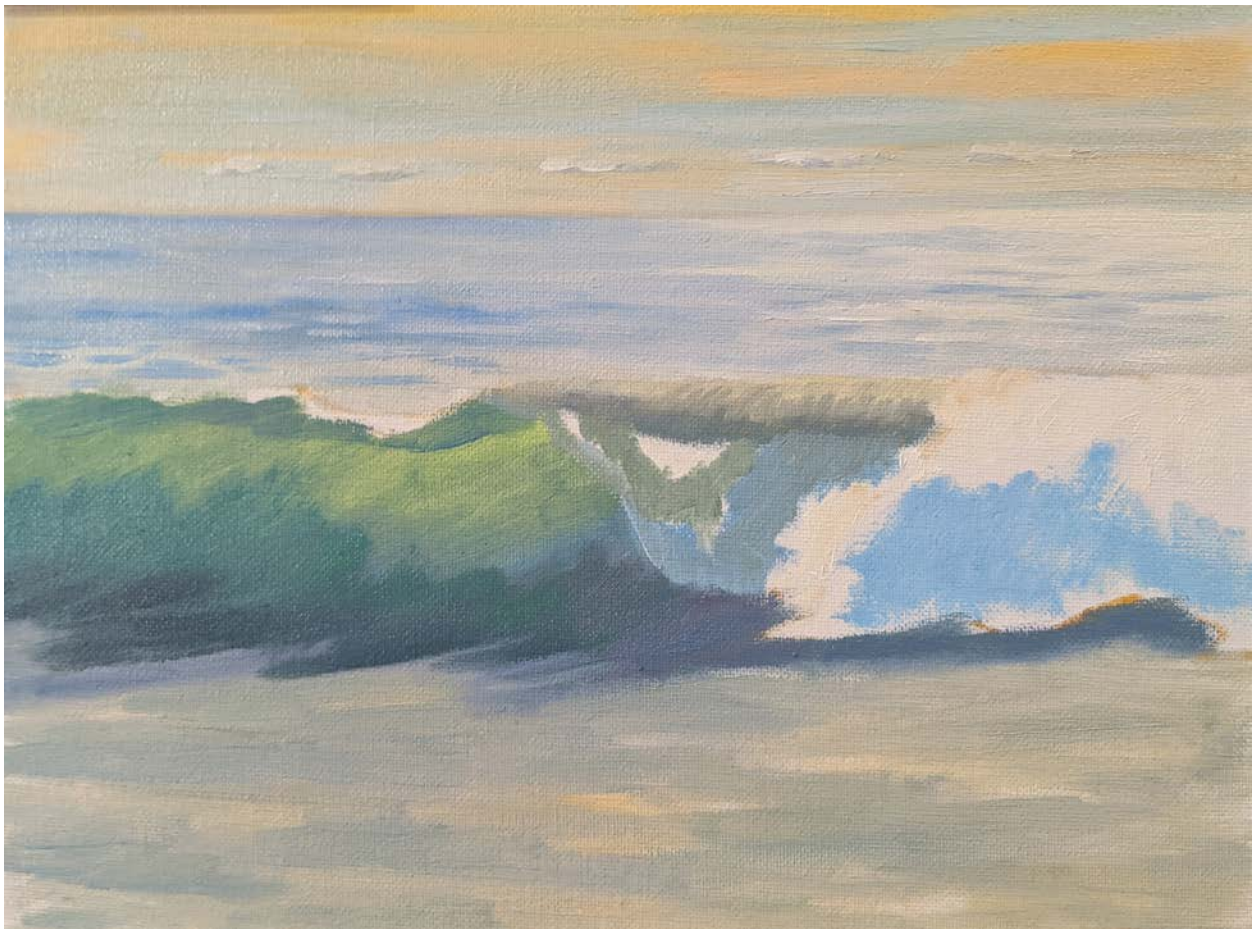

Side Tip: Don't fuss about detail. Keep it simple.

Side Tip: Be careful when mixing blue and yellow mixtures to keep values close. This help avoiding mud or too much green like look and so on.

Side Tip: Understanding the difference in each color and how they relate to other colors help.

Side Tip: keep in mind simple shapes of shadows and connected light areas.

In the next 3 photos I focus my attention towards refining the inside of the curl of the wave.
I again am both looking at value and color. There will be some reflection from the sky and the wave but before adding that reflection we need to create a value pop. Starting out with a darkened color, in this case, a combination of viridian green, cobalt violet, with very little to almost no white.

Similar to the over roll at the middle top of the wave, You will be doing the same but in a converse way.

In this photo you see in the middle right of the inside wave in the center I have added a lighter value from the darker value. As the wave curls up you start to see some of the back light. It's not as warm and glowing as the area full on hit by light in the back. So we lighten and warm the color a bit. I used manganese blue, viridian green with white. Adjust to what makes sense to your eyes. You feel a little green light might be appropriate.

Due to the angle the wave is hit by back light determines the temperature and value that needs to be used. In this case the wave inside on the upper left is not directly hit with strong sunlight. A lighter value is called for warm but slightly cool.

I also restate the the top rim of the wave. Starting with what will be the "under" painting which is the dark.

Next, we will work on the top of the wave and the foam to the right. Keeping in mind to restate the shapes and the color of the whites. I felt the need to strengthen the colors so I went stronger with the yellow light.

Side Tip: It's important to start with strong color. Start with color that feels uncomfortable. If you don't push the color in the beginning you need to revise as you go before locking down on details.

Another palette view

Painting a Wave in Oils Final Stage

We are now in the home stretch. These are the final steps. I have chosen not to go into a photo realistic look. This final painting is realistic but leaves some to the imagination. That being said using these same techniques and color you can take this to more or less detail as you wish.

1. I go back in and restate again color spots in the foreground water. Starting with the dark areas because the light will go over it I go in for the variations of darks.

Side Tip: In the top of the bottom under the right white foam there is a dark that is multi layered. I used a combination yellow ochre with white and cobalt violet with white first. While wet I over lay it with a viridian and manganese and white combo. This creates a beautiful sunlit grey. Keep in mind you are capturing color of the stirred up water with direct sunlight from above.

3. Continue to define the darks

2. Here you see the variation in darks and the use of color to portray it. The darker notes are a combination of viridian, cobalt blue and a touch of manganese with less white than the other.

3. Here I start to add in the sparkly whites around the darks we just put in. I use a combination of yellow cadmium with white and white. I also start redefining of the inside of the curl. I go back in and restate color go back and forth using viridian green with a little white to viridian, cobalt violet, and cobalt blue. Top edge just under the white part of the curl I start with a violet, viridian, ochre combo. I then overlay a cobalt blue and manganese with a small amount of white. A similar color combo I use to create a reflection on the dark. To the right in the foam, I start to redefine the lights and darks of the whites.

Side Tip: Keep in mind white is cooler it helps add dimension vibrating between the yellow white and the white.

The next two photos will illustrate how I used my brush to "drag" the white foam in the fore ground.
First my brush is laid flat against the canvas. With a light touch I drag or scumble the whites in.

Second, Illustrates the brush held at an angle using the edge of the brush.
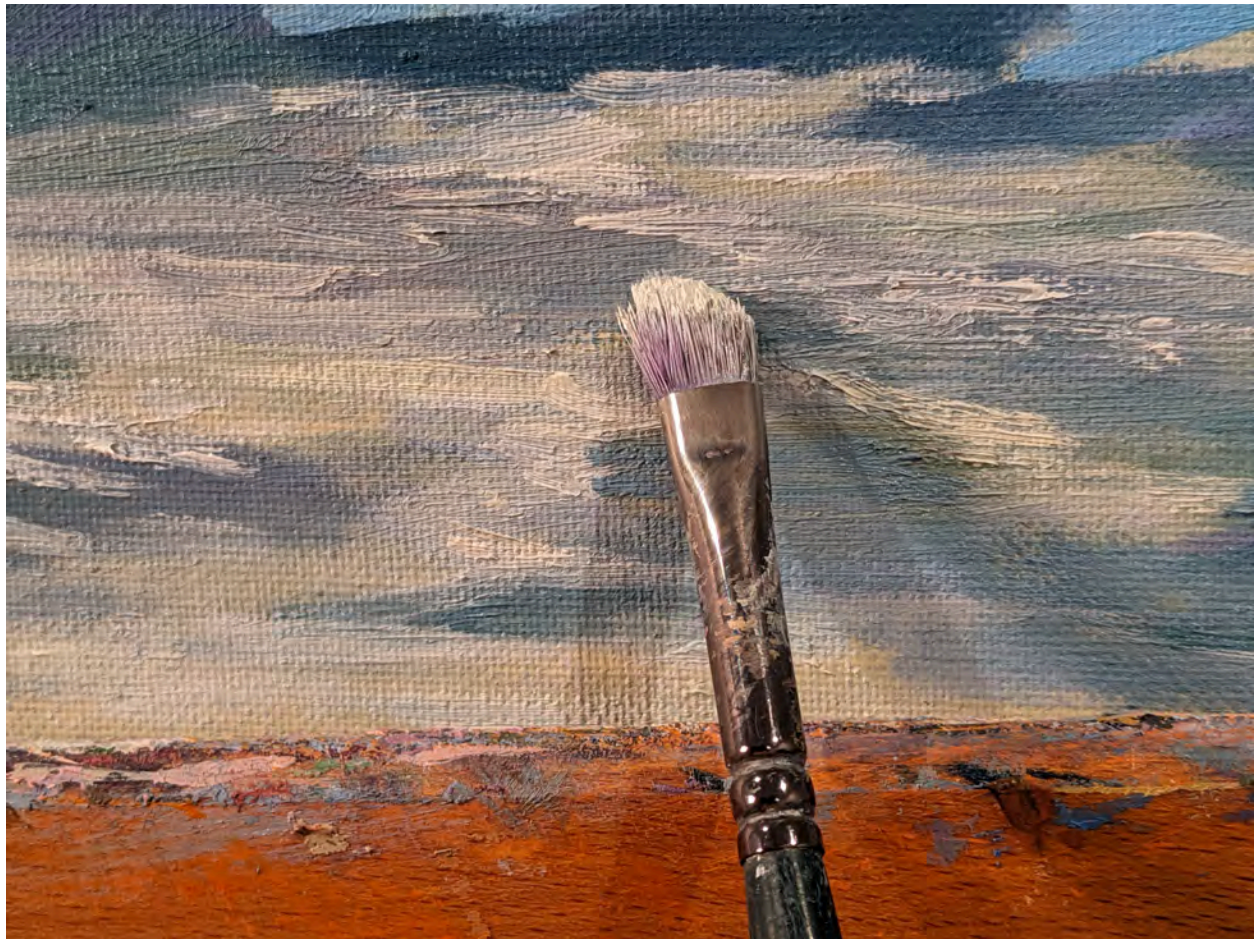
Brush Angle Two

In the next two photos I go back over all the darks and lights. I add variations in the various lights and darks using color. I also add details. For example, in the white foam shadow and in the top distant water section

Side Tip: When adding variations in areas like the shadowed foam, keep in mind to keep most value the same within the shadow. Only use color to define differences. Only where the wave touches the brightly lit part of the wave do I accentuate or darken the dark to punch up the light.
In the above distant water I add details to the lights and darks and sparkle.