Pastel Fish Scales: Layered Color Technique

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A practice plate is 18 cm wide. You choose a scale width of 3 cm. How many scale centers fit in one row, and what is the offset for the next row?

Answer: 18 ÷ 3 = 6 scales per row. Offset = half of 3 cm = 1.5 cm.

Reason: Divide the plate width by the scale width to find the count. The offset is always half a scale width to create the overlapping pattern.

Check: Count the marks on your plate: there should be 6 centers in the first row. Measure the second row's first center: it should be 1.5 cm to the side of the first row's first center.

Task 2

You are drawing a row of 8 scales. You apply base color to all 8, mid-tone to the lower two-thirds of each, and accent to the top edge of each. How many accent applications do you make?

Answer: 8 accent applications, one per scale.

Reason: The accent is applied only along the top overlapping edge of each scale, so the number of accents equals the number of scales in the row.

Check: Point to each scale and confirm one accent stroke at its top edge. The total should match the scale count.

Task 3

Your plate is 24 cm wide and you want 8 scales per row. What scale width should you use, and what is the row offset?

Answer: Scale width = 24 ÷ 8 = 3 cm. Offset = 1.5 cm.

Reason: Divide the plate width by the desired count to get the scale width. The offset is half that width.

Check: Mark 8 centers at 3 cm intervals and measure the second row's offset; it should be 1.5 cm.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

After three rows, you notice the fourth row is drifting to the right by about 1 cm over the row length. What is the best correction before adding more color?

Answer: Realign the fourth row using a light guideline and adjust the centers so they match the offset pattern; lift any misplaced color with a kneaded eraser before continuing.

Reason: Correcting drift early prevents the pattern from becoming uneven. A light guideline and center marks restore the rhythm without overworking the paper.

Check: Step back and compare the fourth row's centers to the third row's offset. The spacing should be consistent within about half a centimeter across the row.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Scale shapes are consistent rounded arcs that overlap from bottom to top.
- [ ] Three distinct layers are visible: light base, mid-tone, and dark accent at the top edge.
- [ ] Spacing is even; a sample row count matches the expected number within one scale.
- [ ] Blending is minimal and does not obscure the layered look.
- [ ] The pattern reads as fish scales from a short distance, with clear rhythm.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?