

Apply Color Concepts

COLOR is one of the most important elements of design because of its ability to appear a bit differently on everyone. Have you ever wondered why you can wear the same outfit as someone else your size and shape and it just doesn't look as good on you? It could be the color. Color is a powerful element of design and also one of the cheapest to use. Understanding color and how to use it is a powerful tool. This unit takes a first step in understanding color with the use of the terms, color wheel, color schemes, and the symbolisms associated with each color.



Objective:



Use the color wheel, color schemes, and color symbolism.

Key Terms:



analogous
color
color harmonies
color schemes
color symbolism
color theory
color wheel
complementary
cool colors

hue
intensity
monochromatic
neutral
neutral colors
primary colors
secondary colors
shade
split complementary

tertiary colors
tetradic (or double
complementary)
tint
tone
triadic
value
warm colors

Color Concepts: Wheel, Schemes, and Symbolism

Color is all possible combinations of the hues on the color wheel. **Hue** is each color's name: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, black, and white. Color is one of the most

important elements of design and is the result of reflected light. To work with color you must first be familiar with the many color terms. Color terminology is essential to making all your design work easier and more productive.

COLOR WHEEL AND COLOR SCHEMES

Color Wheel

The **color wheel** is a circle with 12 triangles that represents the color range and shows the relationship between colors. It is a key tool for understanding and using color. The color wheel places the primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—equal distance apart.

- ◆ **Primary colors** are red, blue, and yellow. They are placed equal distance apart on the color wheel. Mixing other colors together cannot produce the primary colors. Some designers think of the primary colors as the ‘parents’ or the ‘base’ colors.



FIGURE 1. Whether you're designing or working to improve your own look, learning about color can change your life for the better. Which hat color would you choose for yourself? Why?

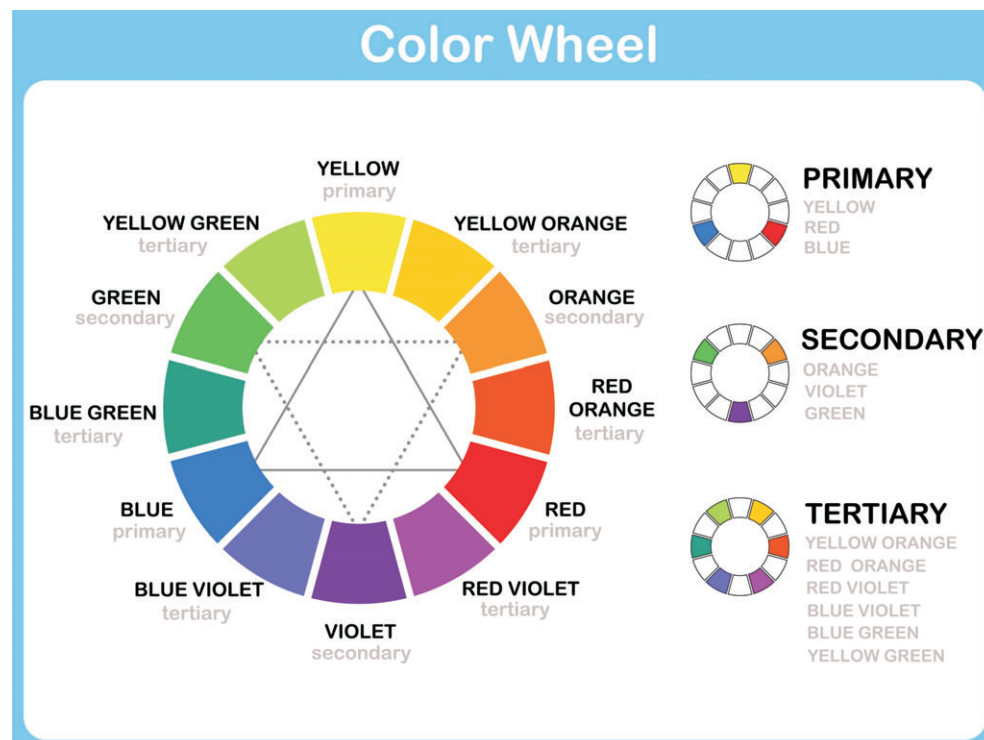


FIGURE 2. The color wheel is a key tool for understanding and applying color. The color wheel places the primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—equal distance apart.]

- ◆ **Secondary colors** are orange, green, and violet. They are placed equal distance between two primary colors. Mixing equal amounts of two primary colors produces a secondary color. For example, equal amounts of:
 - Red and yellow produce orange.
 - Yellow and blue produce green.
 - Red and blue produce violet.
- ◆ **Tertiary colors** are blue-green, red-violet, yellow-orange, yellow-green, red-orange, and blue-violet. Mixing one primary and one secondary color creates tertiary colors. When naming the tertiary color, the name of the primary color is always listed first.

Color Schemes

Color harmony is the act of combining any two colors opposite each other on the color wheel, any three colors equally spaced around the color wheel forming a triangle, or any four colors forming a rectangle. Harmonious color combinations are called color schemes. **Color schemes** are combinations of colors pleasing to the eye based on their position on the color wheel. For example:

- ◆ **Complementary** is a color scheme of any two hues directly opposite each other on the color wheel. For example, red and green, blue and orange, and yellow and violet create high contrast. As such, complementary color schemes are used when the designer wants something to stand out. [NOTE: Complementary colors are often used for sports teams' colors.]
- ◆ **Split complementary** is a color scheme made up of three colors: one color and the two adjacent colors on each side of its complementary color on the color wheel. For example, choosing green as the color automatically chooses red-orange and red-violet as the split complementary colors because they lie on each side of red (green's complementary color) on the color wheel.
- ◆ **Analogous** is a color scheme of any three colors next to each other on the color wheel. For example, blue, blue-green, and blue-violet are an analogous color scheme. [TIP: However, several color theorists indicate that a more harmonious analogous scheme would be to use the tints of those analogous colors. Tints are not as harsh as are hues.]
- ◆ **Triadic** is a color scheme composed of any three colors that are equal distance apart on the color wheel. For example, red, yellow, and blue are a triadic scheme as are orange, green, and violet. [TIP: Because triadic is a high-contrast color scheme, designers often use one color as the primary color in the design and accent with the other two. Because primary color schemes are bright and cheery, they are often used in children's clothing.]
- ◆ **Tetradic** (or **double complementary**) is a color scheme that uses four colors together in the form of two sets of complementary colors. For example, blue and orange is paired with yellow and violet. [TIP: This is a difficult scheme to balance when these highly contrasting colors are used in equal amounts in the design. Again, selecting one color to be dominant in the design avoids an unbalanced image.]

COLOR SCHEMES

Complementary



Complementary color scheme
Colors that are opposite each other on the colorwheel are considered to be complementary colors

Rectangle (Tetradic)



Rectangle (tetradic) color scheme
The rectangle or tetradic color scheme uses four colors arranged into two complementary pairs

Analogous



Analogous color scheme
Analogous color schemes use colors that are next to each other on the color wheel

Triadic



Triadic color scheme
A triadic color scheme uses colors that are evenly spaced around the color wheel

Square



Square color scheme
The square color scheme is similar to the rectangle, but with four colors spaced evenly around the color circle

Split Complement



Split-Complementary color scheme
The split-complementary colors scheme is variation of the complementary color scheme. In addition to the base color, it uses the two colors adjacent to its complement

FIGURE 3. Color schemes are combinations of colors pleasing to the eye based on their position on the color wheel. Which color schemes do you use most?

- ◆ **Monochromatic** is a color scheme that uses a single color along with the tints, tones, and shades of that color. It may also use different saturation levels of each tint, tone, and shade. [TIP: To avoid a design that appears monotonous, the designer can pair the monochrome scheme with black or white accents.]
- ◆ **Neutral** is a type of monochromatic color scheme on a range of only neutral colors from black to white. **Neutral colors** include blacks, whites, greys, and browns. Neutral colors are not found on the color wheel. [TIP: These colors are good background colors and tend to unify the other colors in a design. This scheme can be a bit boring and often needs a pop of color to ‘pull the design’ together.]
- ◆ **Cool colors** are blues, greens, and violets that tend to make one feel calm and cool. **Warm colors** are yellows, oranges, and reds that remind people of fire and sunshine and make one feel cozy.
- ◆ **Intensity** is the level of brightness or dullness of a color. The lightness or darkness of a color is known as its **value**.

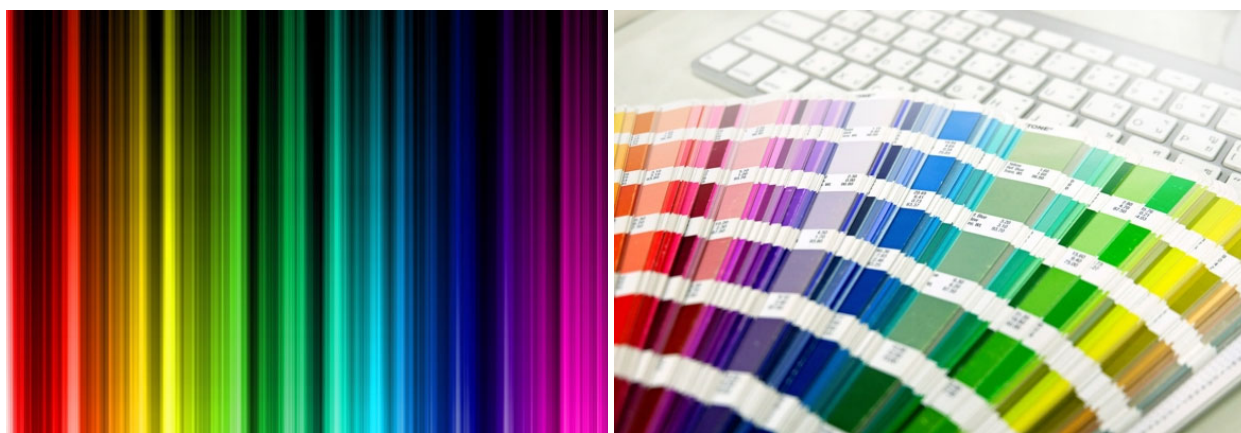


FIGURE 4. The intensity of color can change the associated emotions. Learn to use value and intensity in color combinations.

◆ All colors have tints, shades, and tones.

- A **shade** is a variation of a color produced when mixed with black.
- A **tint** is a variation of a color produced when mixed with white.
- **Tone** is a variation of a color produced when mixed with gray.

Color Characteristics

Information about the characteristics of color allows a person to present a ‘look’ and evoke an emotion or send a message. Individuals who study the color wheel and color schemes can use this information to make their wardrobe work harder for them.

◆ **WARM VS COOL COLORS:** Colors do not change the temperature but they can give a textile or a wall or a room a feeling of warmth or coolness.

- The warm color range is red, yellow, and orange. These colors give the illusion of ‘advancing’ so fabrics, objects, walls, etc. tend to look larger than their actual size. Warm colors make one feel cozy.
- The cool color range is blue, green, and violet. Cool colors give the illusion of ‘receding’ so these colors make that part of a design appear smaller than actual size. With this knowledge, one can make a larger part of the body appear smaller by using a cool color. Understanding cool colors allows a person to help hide any perceived flaws.



FIGURE 5. Think about your wardrobe. Does it contain both warm and cool colors or do you have more of one type than the other?

◆ **TINT, SHADE, AND TONE:** Tinting, shading, or toning can be accomplished for all colors on the color wheel. For example, when the designer wants to:

- Lighten a hue they tint it by adding white. A tint softens the color. Tinting is known to add a feminine touch.
- Darken a hue they shade it by adding black. Shading deepens the color and is often used as an accent on a garment. Shading is thought to add a masculine touch to a textile or garment.
- Subdue or mute a hue they tone it by adding grey. Tones are very pleasing to most eyes and are often thought of as 'sophisticated.' One must be careful when using tone to avoid a drab look.

◆ **CHOOSING COLORS:** When choosing garments you'll often find that the same outfit or garment is available in a variety of different colors. Have you ever wondered why?

Multiple color options are available because often it is the color, not the design of a garment that makes it look good on you. Different people wear colors differently. First off, it is important to find out which colors look best, with your skin coloring. Some people can wear bright colors while others cannot. To find out more about which colors are best for you continue reading the *Further Exploration* sidebar.



FIGURE 6. All colors have tints, shades, and tones. Tone is a variation of a color produced when mixed with gray.



FIGURE 7. Fashions come in different colors because all color looks a bit different on each individual. Different colors mean different looks.

COLOR SYMBOLISM

Color theory is the way in which color principles are applied to design and how colors relate to each other. Possible combinations of colors are grouped to create powerful visual



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Warm or Cool Skin Tone

Read the Bustle website article, “Warm or Cool Skin Tone: 5 Questions to Help You Determine Your Undertones So You Can Find The Prettiest Colors For You,” at <https://www.bustle.com/articles/36375-warm-or-cool-skin-tone-5-questions-to-help-you-determine-your-undertones-so-you-can>. Determine your undertones to help decide which colors are best for you. Summarize what you have learned and decide upon your skin tone. Ask a friend or family member to check your results and see if they agree with you.



Which skin tone color are you?

effects. Color is considered one of the most important elements of design because of its ability to appear a bit differently on everyone and in every lighting setting. For example, the exact design for a trench coat only in a different color can produce an entirely different look or effect.

Color symbolism is the practice of using hues to represent a relationship, an attribute, a characteristic, or a quality. Knowing each color’s symbolism is a powerful tool when choosing garments for oneself and when creating textiles or room designs. People and organizations are influenced by color. For example, choosing a blue suit or choosing a red suit sends two different messages. Colors carry and send messages and it is important to select colors that send the desired message. Color choice can impress or disappoint. Each color has associated symbolism: relationships, attributes, characteristics, and qualities.

◆ **Red** is:

- A primary color.
- A warm color.
- Known to evoke feelings of fire, blood, energy, danger, power, strength, passion, love, and courage. Knowing this information provides the user or a designer the information to know that it is a good choice for a dress for a special dating event or evening.
- Known to enhance metabolism and raise blood pressure.
- Known to give the illusion of advance or of “coming at you.”

◆ **Blue** is:

- A primary color.



FIGURE 8. What impression does a good navy suit give?

- A cool color.
- Known to evoke feelings of trust, loyalty, wisdom, intelligence, confidence, calm, and masculinity. Blue, and the tint or shade that is used can give off a totally different look. A dark blue suit can be very masculine or give a feeling of strength for say a woman heading into a board room full of men while a pale blue suit of the same design can prove to be very feminine. Once again, a person trying to look smaller would maybe choose blue over red as it is receding and gives the illusion of smaller or farther away. Most men's suits are made of a darker blue giving suggesting intelligence.
- Known to slow metabolism and breathing.
- Known to give the illusion of receding (diminishing).

♦ **Yellow** is:

- A primary color.
- A warm color.
- A suggestion of sunshine, joy, happiness, and wisdom.
- Known to stimulate mental activity and increase muscular energy. Yellow is known to draw attention. [TIP: It is a great color used as an accent to draw attention to a good body attribute. Yellow is bright and cheery and is great color to wear for a happy occasion.]

♦ **Green** is:

- A secondary color: a mix of blue and yellow.
- A cool color.



FIGURE 9. Each green shirt evokes a different look and a different feeling. How do these green colors make you feel?

- Known to make one think of nature, freshness, growth, financial wealth, healing, stability, and endurance. Green can appear relaxing and peaceful and is often used for outdoor clothing.

◆ **Orange** is:

- A secondary color: a mix of red and yellow.
- A warm color.
- Suggests energy, joy, sunshine, and enthusiasm.
- Suggests images of fall and harvest

◆ **Violet** is:

- A secondary color: a mix of red and blue.
- A cool color.
- Suggests stability from blue and energy from red. It also evokes the emotions of power, luxury, dignity, wisdom, mystery, and magic.
- Associated with royalty throughout history.
- Recognized as feminine in its lighter tints.



FIGURE 10. What a beautiful dress.

◆ **Black** is:

- A neutral.
- Associated with luxury, elegance, and power.
- Versatile: it can be conservative or edgy or modern.
- Associated with grief and mourning (in Western cultures).

◆ **White** is:

- A neutral.
- Associated with purity (e.g., the wedding dress).
- Versatile: it can be used with any other color but when used alone produces a feeling of cleanliness.
- Associated with healthcare, positivity, and simplicity.

◆ **Gray** is:

- Both warm and cool. Its unique attributes work well with all colors.
- Associated with professionalism and sophistication.

◆ **Brown** is:

- Versatile: its hue and tints and shades work with many colors.
- Associated with earth, wood, stone, and strength (especially brown tones).
- Harmony and balance.

Summary:



Color is all possible combinations of the hues on the color wheel. Hue is each color's name: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, black, and white. Color is one of the most important elements of design and is the result of reflected light. To work with color one must first be familiar with the many color terms. Color terminology is essential to making all design work easier and more productive.

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Color theory is the way in which color principles are applied to design and how colors relate to each other. Color is considered one of the most important elements of design because of its ability to appear a bit differently on everyone and in every lighting setting.

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Checking Your Knowledge:



1. List the primary colors. List the secondary and tertiary colors.
2. How are color schemes used?
3. Describe the warm colors. Describe the cool colors.
4. What part do neutral colors play in textiles and design?
5. What is the color symbolism of each primary color?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Find some current fashion outfits online that use the secondary and tertiary colors today. Would the outfits you find fit your personal style? Why or why not?

Web Links:



Basic Color Schemes

<http://www.tigercolor.com/color-lab/color-theory/color-theory-intro.htm>

Basic Color Theory

<https://www.colormatters.com/color-and-design/basic-color-theory>

Color Basics

<https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/color-basics.html>

How to Combine Colors in Your Wardrobe Using the Color Wheel

<http://www.realmenrealstyle.com/color-wheel-menswear>

Shop 7 No Fail Color Combinations

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/trends/g6417/fashion-color-combinations/>