

Color Concepts

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED how interior designers choose colors when designing a room? Do they choose random colors, or is it a set color scheme? Generally, interior designers refer to the color wheel to determine which colors will match the best. Also, they consult their clients for input and feedback.



Objectives:



1. Analyze the color wheel.
2. Compare color schemes.

Key Terms:



analogous	hue	shade
color	intensity	split complementary
color harmonies	monochromatic	tertiary colors
color schemes	neutral color schemes	tint
color wheel	neutral colors	tone
complementary	primary colors	triad
cool colors	rectangular tetrad	value
double complementary	secondary colors	warm colors

Color Wheel

The color wheel is an extremely valuable tool for interior designers. It is often used when determining a theme.

USE OF COLOR WHEEL FOR DESIGNERS

The **color wheel** is a circular diagram of the color spectrum used to show relationships between colors. It usually shows the primary, secondary (intermediate), and sometimes tertiary

colors. It is a basic design tool. Sir Isaac Newton is said to have developed the first circular diagram of colors in 1666. He arranged red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet on a disk. When the disk is spun, the colors blur, and people see white.

Hue, Tint, Shade, and Tone

The color wheel represents the “normal” value of each of the colors (e.g., true red, true blue, and true yellow). **Hue** is another name for the “normal value” of colors: the purest and brightest colors. Different hues are caused by different wavelengths of light. **Color** is a general term that represents the entire spectrum that is seen, including blacks, grays, and whites.

Each color on the color wheel can be altered in three ways: tinting, shading, and toning. Tint (a pastel) is a color created by adding white to a hue. It is a lighter version of the hue. A **tint** is a color that produces a soft and soothing color scheme; it is sometimes referred to as feminine. **Shade** is a color created by adding black to a hue. It is a darker version of the hue. A shade produces deep and powerful color schemes; it is sometimes referred to as masculine. A shade is typically used as an accent. **Tone** is a color created by adding grey to a hue. It is a more muted version of the hue. A toned color is pleasing to the eye. It is also complex and subtle. Sometimes tone is referred to as sophisticated.



FIGURE 1. Warm colors are considered vivid and energetic and are associated with the sun.

Warm and Cool Colors

The color wheel can be divided into warm colors and cool colors. **Warm colors** are the red-orange-yellow range. **Cool colors** are the blue-violet-green range. Warm colors are considered vivid and energetic and are associated with the sun. Warm colors can actually make a person feel warmer and are considered “advancing colors” because they make items seem closer.

Cool colors are considered calming and soothing and are associated with sky and earth. These are popular colors for bedrooms and bathrooms because of the relaxing feeling they exude. Hospitals often use a cool color palette because of

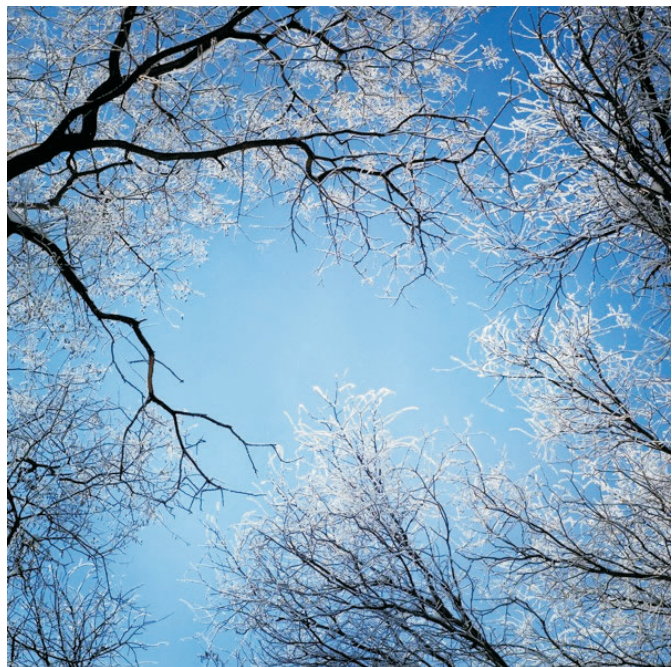


FIGURE 2. Cool colors are considered calming and soothing and are associated with sky and earth.

the calming effect on people. Cool colors are considered “receding colors” because they make objects seem smaller and walls appear farther apart.

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Colors

Color harmonies are color combinations that are visually pleasing. The three **primary colors** are red, blue, and yellow. All other colors are created from mixing these three colors. However, no other colors can be mixed together to create the primary colors. The three **secondary colors** are green, orange, and purple. These are the colors formed by mixing two primary colors together. The six **tertiary colors** are colors created by mixing a primary and a secondary color together. Tertiary color hues are a two-word name, such as blue-green, red-violet, and yellow-orange.

Color Schemes

Various color schemes are available for interior designers. **Color schemes** are a combination of harmonious colors. They include one- and two-color schemes, three-color schemes, four-or-more color schemes, and neutral color schemes. Common color schemes include warm, cool, neutral, monochromatic, analogous, triads, complementary, and split complementary. Color schemes can be categorized as those that use one or two colors, three colors, or four or more colors.

ONE- AND TWO-COLOR SCHEMES

Monochromatic is a type of color scheme used with a single hue from the standard color wheel, which is repeated in various tints, shades, and tones. Using different values or intensities of the hue creates color scheme variations. The lightness or darkness of a color is the **value**. In addition, the brightness or dullness of a color is the **intensity**. Accents of neutral colors are often used in a monochromatic color scheme to add



FIGURE 3. This is an example of a color scheme used at an amusement park.

interest. The **neutral colors** are black (absence of all color), white (presence of all color), silver, grey, and brown (warm neutral) hues. Neutrals make good backgrounds. They serve to unify diverse color palettes. Neutrals may stand alone as the only or primary focus of a design.

Complementary is a type of color scheme that consists of two colors directly opposite from each other on the color wheel. Complementary colors are sometimes called contrasting colors. Colors directly opposite each other on the color wheel share a simultaneous contrast: One is always warm, and the other is always cool. Complementary colors make each other appear brighter and more intense. This type of contrast makes rooms and textiles look brighter and more dramatic. Examples of complementary color schemes are blue (cool) and orange (warm) as well as red (warm) and green (cool).

THREE-COLOR SCHEMES

Split complementary are color schemes that use three colors and are created when one hue (the “mother color”) is used with the two hues adjacent to its complement. The original hue selected is usually the dominant color, and the adjacent colors to its complement are used to provide contrast. An example would be violet (the mother color) used with yellow-green and yellow-orange. An advantage of a split complementary color scheme is that there are never any colors that clash with each other.

Tips for using split complements are the mother color should be used in accent pieces (e.g., pillows). It is best to darken one altered hue and to lighten another for interesting variations in carpets or fabrics. One of the altered hues could be neutralized with grey walls.

Triad is a color scheme that uses any three hues that are an equal distance apart, such as every fourth color on the color wheel. Skill is needed to create a pleasing triad color scheme because of the sharp color contrasts. Yet changing the values and intensities can soften the contrasts. Examples of triadic color schemes are:

- ◆ Primary colors: yellow, blue, and red
- ◆ Secondary colors: orange, violet (purple), and green
- ◆ Tertiary colors: yellow-orange, red-violet, and blue-green

FOUR-OR-MORE COLOR SCHEMES

Analogous are color schemes that consist of four or more hues adjacent (next to each other) on the color wheel (e.g., green, blue-green, blue, and blue-violet). These colors tend to blend well together because they are related. Each color seems to effortlessly merge into the other. Analogous color schemes work best when one hue is chosen as the dominant and the other adjacent colors are used in smaller amounts. Analogous color schemes are considered sophisticated.

Rectangular tetrad is a color scheme that includes four colors on the basic color wheel that are an equal distance from each other. An example is blue, orange, green, and red, which form a perfect rectangle on the color wheel (two primary colors and two secondary colors).



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Popular Color Schemes

In the Color Combos blog, artists have posted the latest color schemes, the most popular color schemes, and random color schemes. Go to the following link to access the blog. After reading the blogs, write down three examples of each type.

<http://colorcombosgalore.blogspot.com/>

Another name for a rectangular tetrad is a **double complementary**. The suggested process to create a rectangular tetrad is to select one color as the mother color and then to add a bit of that hue to each of the other hues. When blue is the mother color of a rectangular tetrad, the designer could add a small amount of blue to red and achieve burgundy. The designer could add a small amount of blue to orange and achieve gold. The designer could add a small amount of blue to green and achieve forest green.

NEUTRAL COLOR SCHEMES

Neutral color schemes are color schemes that use the following hues: black, white, grey, silver, and brown. Neutral colors contain equal parts of the three primary colors, and these neutrals have low color saturation (color intensity). Neutral color schemes provide a minimalist approach to decorating and textiles. They are calming and safe. Accenting a neutral color scheme with pops of color (e.g., red) makes the neutral color scheme more interesting. An example of a neutral color scheme is black and white. When a neutral is added to a hue, the value is changed.



FIGURE 4. Neutral color schemes provide a minimalist approach to decorating and textiles.

Summary:



The color wheel is the basic tool of design. Cool colors are greens, blues, and violets. Warm colors are reds, oranges, and yellows. Yellow, red, and blue are the primary colors. The secondary colors—orange, green, and violet—are created by mixing two primary colors together. Tertiary colors are also known as intermediate

colors and are named for the colors used to create them, such as yellow-green and blue-violet.

Monochromatic color schemes use a single hue from the standard color wheel and repeat it in various tints, shades, and tones. Complementary color schemes consist of two colors directly opposite from each other on the color wheel, such as orange and blue. Split complementary color schemes use three colors and are created when one hue is used with the two hues adjacent to its complement. Triad color schemes use any three hues of an equal distance apart on the color wheel. Analogous color schemes consist of four or more hues adjacent on the color wheel. Rectangular tetrad color schemes include four colors on the basic color wheel of an equal distance from each other and form a perfect rectangle. Neutral color schemes use hues that have low color saturation.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Give one example of a neutral color scheme.
2. What is one example of a secondary color?
3. What are the cool colors?
4. What are the warm colors?
5. What is a color scheme, and how does it impact design?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Choose three different rooms in your house, and write down all the colors involved in the room. Then determine if the color scheme exists based off the blog in the “online collection” portion. Return to class with your findings.

Web Links:



Color

<http://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel/>

Basic Color Theory

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

Color Wheel Primer

<http://www.hgtv.com/design/decorating/design-101/color-wheel-primer>