

Color theory for beginners.

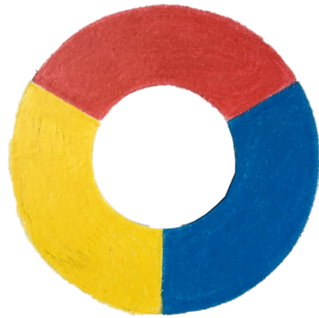
Part One: The Color Wheel

The color wheel is a tool artists use every day. It is a visual reference for the spectrum of colors and how they relate to one another.

Primary Colors: Red ~ Blue ~ Yellow

A primary color is one that cannot be made by mixing any other colors, just as a prime number is one that cannot be made by multiplying any other number besides itself and 1. Prime or Primary comes from the Latin term *Primus*, meaning “first” or “first part.”

The primary colors are Red, Blue, and Yellow. They are the colors that blend to make all of the other colors.



Secondary Colors: Purple ~ Green ~ Orange

Secondary colors are made by blending 2 primary colors together in different pairs:

Red + Blue = Purple

Blue + Yellow = Green

Yellow + Red = Orange



Tertiary Colors:

Magenta, Ultramarine, Turquoise, Lime, Yellow Orange, Red Orange

Tertiary colors are made by blending secondary and primary colors:

Red + Purple = Red Purple (Magenta)

Blue + Purple = Blue Purple (Ultramarine)

Blue + Green = Blue Green (Turquoise)

Yellow + Green = Yellow Green (Lime)

Yellow + Orange = Yellow Orange

Red + Orange = Red Orange



Part Two: Warm and Cool colors

In some regards, warm and cool colors are obvious - warm colors are those we associate with things that are warm, like fire or a sunset, e.g., reds, oranges, and yellows;



and cool colors are those that may seem cool and refreshing, like blues and purples for different depths of water, or fresh green grass.



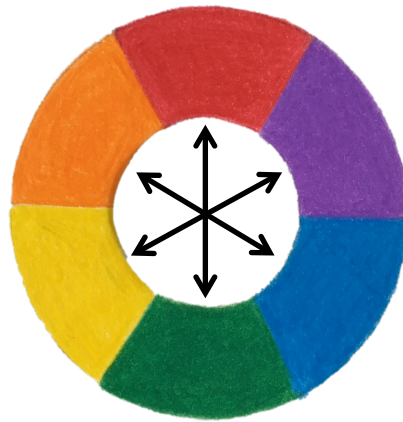
There can also be variations on these colors. For instance, an orangish red might be warmer, and a bluish red might be cooler.

Part Three: Color Relationships

Complementary Colors

Complementary colors are colors that are *across from* each other on the color wheel. They are named as such because they complement one another; they look good together. Complementary color pairs are:

- Red and Green (think of Christmas)
- Orange and Blue (think of an ocean sunset)
- Yellow and Purple (think of a Pansy or Violet)



Analogous Colors

Analogous colors are colors that are *next to* each other on the color wheel. They are part of the same color family. Analogous colors also look good together.



Monochromatic

Monochromatic: from the root words *mono*, meaning one; and *chroma*, meaning color. A monochromatic color scheme means using different shades of one color. For instance, imagine an image of foliage in many shades of green.

Part Four: Color Blending

Complementary Colors vs. Analogous Colors

It's important to remember that while complementary colors look good together, they do not *blend* well. Orange and blue paired together create a beautiful sunset, but try and mix these two shades together and you get something that closely resembles baby vomit. Yuck!

Remember:

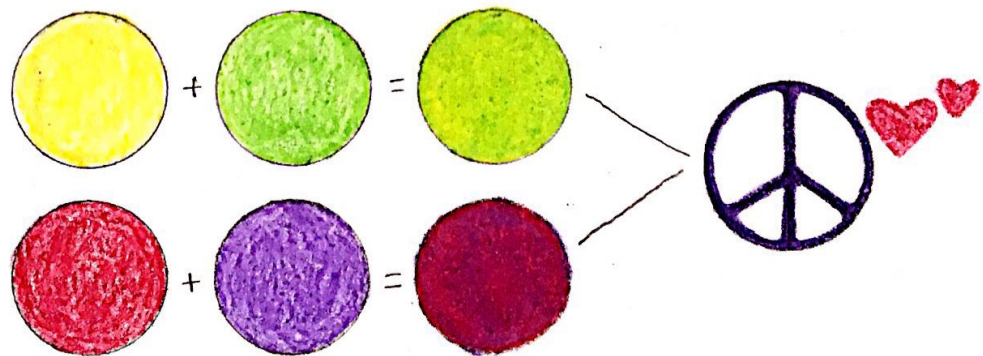
Blending colors **ACROSS FROM** each other on the color wheel = baby vomit



Analogous colors, however, not only look good together, but they blend well on the palette. Mix yellow with lime green, and you get a brighter shade of lime green. Mix magenta with purple, and you get a more pinkish purple.

Remember:

Blending colors **NEXT TO** each other on the color wheel = peace & love, baby



Note: if using colored pencils or markers, blending is done by layering colors on top of each other.

Part Five: Have Fun!

Now that you know a little more about the color wheel and how colors relate to each other, have fun! Experiment with different color themes. For example:

- Use only Primary colors.
- Use all Secondary colors.
- Use all of the Tertiary colors.
- Use only warm colors.
- Use only cool colors.
- Use a monochromatic color scheme; all blues or all greens, for instance.
- Blend complimentary colors together to see what shades of baby vomit you can make!
- Now blend analogous colors and see how they affect each other.

Remember: It's OK to make mistakes! In fact, expect that you will make mistakes. It's a good thing, because by making mistakes, we learn.

After a while, the way you use colors will come more naturally to you. You'll begin to notice color all around you. Observe how colors are used in your favorite artworks. You might even have a piece of clothing you like because of the colors in it. Colors in nature are always pleasing to the eye. Now you can try to use some of these color combinations in your own compositions.

Happy Coloring!

xo,
Heidi

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