

A Primer for Color

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The three variable attributes of color are:

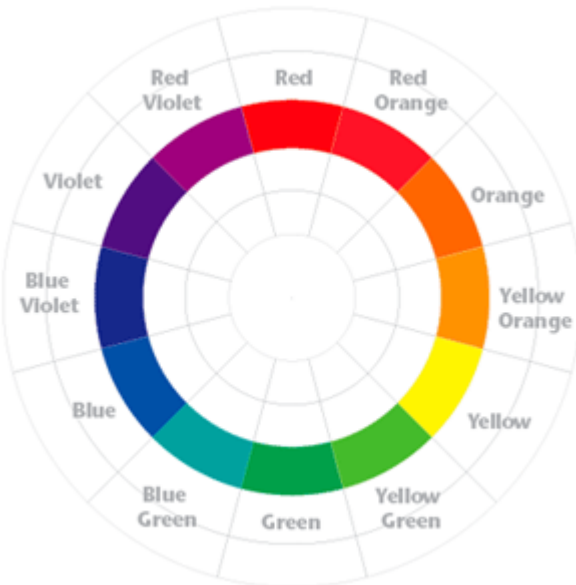
Hue-a spectral color in its pure state. This is a primary, secondary or tertiary color. (The word **color** is a broader term that includes variations on all hues and neutrals).

Value-the lightness or darkness of a color.

Saturation-Level of **purity** or **intensity**. This is also referred to as **chroma**.

Neutrals are either **achromatic** and contain no hues or colors (only black and white) or they are made from equal parts of colors that are opposite on the color wheel so that neither color is distinguishable

Colors are **chromatic** and contain at least some portion of a hue.



All colors can theoretically be made from red, yellow and blue. These are called the **primary color or hue**. Mixed in equal parts you get violet, green and orange. These are called the **secondary colors or hues**. When violet is mixed with red you get red-violet (the primary is always said first). A color like red-violet is called a **tertiary color or hue** (which means third).

A hue + white = a **tint**

A hue + black = a **shade**

A hue + grey = a **tone**

Simple Color Harmonies provide unity:

Achromatic is black, white and a full range of grays. There are no spectral hues in an achromatic color scheme.

Monochromatic is based on one single hue. Small amounts of other hues can be added, to create warm, cool, tinted and shaded variations, as long as the colors created are still strongly linked to the original hue. Saturation and value can provide contrast in this case but there will not be a hue contrast.

Analogous is based on a color family. This is **two or three** closely related hues from the color circle, like blue, blue-violet and violet. Only one primary color will ever be involved. These schemes tend to be low contrast, soothing.

Contrasting or Opposing Harmonies

maximize contrast Polar opposites, the yin/yang:

Complimentary (also called Dyad) is perfectly balanced opposing colors from the color circle. The most common are blue and orange, yellow and violet and green and red. Tertiary compliments are possible too. This scheme can use the chromatic neutrals between the two hues as well as tints and shades but it does not use other color circle hues

Cool Warm Color Harmony uses any two adjacent cool hues with any two adjacent warm hues. This is a very flexible scheme that can be tinted shaded or toned as long as it does not cancel out the cool/warm contrast.