

The Color Wheel

(Paraphrased from the net)

Why do blue and yellow look good together? What makes green and orange an appealing pair? The secret to why some color combos work and others not so much comes down to color theory - and the color wheel.



A favorite of designers and artists, the wheel makes color relationships easy to see by dividing the spectrum into 12 basic hues: three primary colors, three secondaries, and six tertiaries.

Primary colors are red, blue, and yellow. These colors are pure - you **can't create them from other colors**, and all other colors are created from them.

Secondary colors are orange, green, and violet. They line up between the primaries on the color wheel because they are formed when **equal parts of two primary colors are combined**.

Tertiary colors are formed by mixing **a primary color with a secondary color next to it on the color wheel**. With each blending - primary with primary, then primary with secondary - the resulting hues become less vivid.

How the Color Wheel Works

The color wheel helps you mix colors to get *palettes* with varying degrees of contrast.

Four common types of color schemes or palettes:

Monochromatic Scheme:

These tone-on-tone combinations use several shades (adding black) and tints (adding white) of a single hue for a subtle palette. Think pale blue, sky blue, and navy.

Analogous Scheme:

For a bit more contrast, an analogous palette includes colors found side by side on the wheel, such as orange, yellow, and green, for a colorful but relaxing feel.

Contrast:

A triad creates an adventurous palette by using three hues evenly spaced on the wheel, such as blue-green, red-violet, and yellow-orange, for vivid contrast with balanced colors.

Complementary Scheme:

This is the most dynamic - yet simple - color scheme. Using two hues opposite each other on the color wheel, such as blue and orange, is guaranteed to add energy to any room.

Color can also affect emotional responses and create a mood.

Greens tend to soothe, while yellows are uplifting and energetic.

Bold reds are passionate and daring, but soft pink (a tint of red) is considered sweet and delicate.

Blues are perceived as calming and quiet; oranges are warm and cozy; and purple, a more complex color, is often seen as sexy, spiritual or royal.

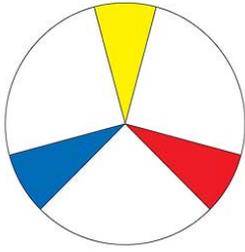
Colors are considered warm or cool because of association. In our minds we compare reds, oranges, and yellows with the warmth of the sun and fire. Blues, greens, and violets are cool because of their association with water, sky, and foliage.

Color Palette

As you create your color palette - theorists recommend that your scheme never be all warm colors or all cool colors. The recommendation is to let one scheme dominate to set the overall tone; and then include other elements that offer contrast.

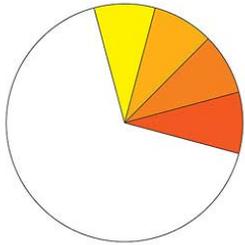
Some quilting palettes, however, include using only a "monochromatic" scheme to beautiful effect - with the addition of specialty stitch work.

Color Terms



Primary:

Pure colors - red, yellow, and blue - that combine to create all other colors on the wheel

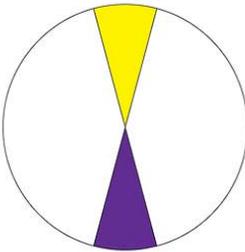


Analogous:

Neighbors on the color wheel

Chroma:

A color's brightness or dullness



Complementary:

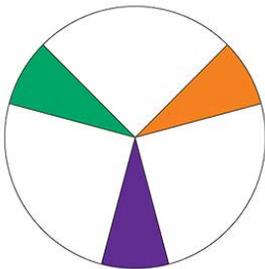
Opposites on the color wheel, appear brighter when they are used together (i.e.: yellow & purple, red & green, blue & orange)

Neutral: (see also Tint & Tone below)

Black, gray, white, cream, brown, and tan / beige

These are often the “monochromatic” colors used in quilting.

Neutrals usually fill the role of “complimentary” colors in quilting.

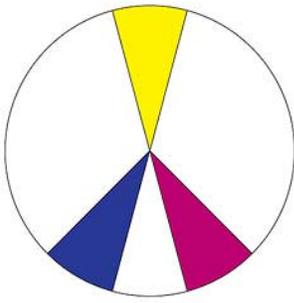


Secondary:

A combination of equal parts of two primary colors (secondary colors are green, orange, purple)

Shade:

Any color with black added; also refers to slight variations in a color

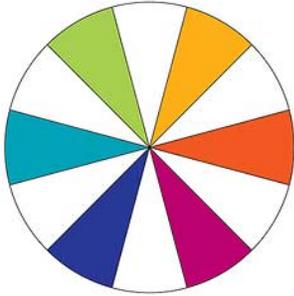


Split Complementary:

The grouping of a color with the two hues analogous to its complementary color (yellow with red-violet and blue-violet, for example)

Triad:

Any three colors equally spaced on the color wheel, one of which usually takes precedence in a color scheme (yellow-orange, blue-green, and red-violet, for example)



Tertiary:

A combination of equal parts of a primary and a secondary color

Tint:

Any color with white added

Tone:

A color's intensity - its degree of lightness or darkness

Ombé vs. Gradient

(Paraphrased from an article in Quilting Daily by Brenna Riley Gates)

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary . . .

- Ombé is defined as, "having colors or tones that shade into each other—used especially of fabrics in which the color is graduated from light to dark." We can think of ombé as starting with a pure color, blue for example - that subtly becomes darker and darker until it turns into navy.
- Gradient, is defined as, "change in the **value** of a quantity (such as temperature, pressure, or concentration) with change in a given variable and especially per unit distance in a specified direction."

Translation . . . If we think of the (change in the value of a quantity) as the concentration of color across the width of a piece of fabric. The left-hand side of the fabric is a deep red, but as we move towards the right side (specified direction) of the cloth, each inch (unit distance) in the concentration of our color becomes lessened - our fabric changes from red to pink to white.

Sounds an awful lot like ombé; however, here is where the path diverges: a gradient isn't limited to one color changing concentration. What if that piece of fabric didn't change from red to white, but from red to blue? That would give us a piece of fabric that was red on the left, shades of purple in the center, and blue on the right side (example - variegated threads or yarns).

Ombé and Gradient Fabric in Quilts

How do ombé and gradient apply to quilting? You can use a range of fabrics and prints to create a gradient that shifts from one color to another across your patchwork quilt. Or you can integrate fabrics that feature an ombé or gradient pattern into your quilt design for a different look.



Illustrations of Color Value:

