

Introduction to Color Theory

Introduction to Color Theory – Study Notes

1. What Is Color Theory?

- **Definition:** A set of principles that explains how colors interact, how they can be combined, and the psychological effects they produce.
 - **Purpose:** Guides artists, designers, marketers, and anyone working with visual media to create harmonious, effective, and emotionally resonant compositions.
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2. The Color Wheel

Primary Colors	Secondary Colors	Tertiary Colors
Red	Orange (Red + Yellow)	Red-Orange (Red + Orange)
Blue	Green (Blue + Yellow)	Yellow-Green (Yellow + Green)
Yellow	Purple (Red + Blue)	Blue-Green (Blue + Green)
		Yellow-Orange (Yellow + Orange)
		Red-Purple (Red + Purple)
		Blue-Purple (Blue + Purple)

- **Primary Colors** cannot be created by mixing other hues.
 - **Secondary Colors** result from mixing two primaries.
 - **Tertiary Colors** are the result of mixing a primary with an adjacent secondary.
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3. Color Relationships (Schemes)

Scheme	Description	Typical Use
Complementary	Two colors opposite each other on the wheel (e.g., blue & orange).	High contrast, focal points, branding.
Analogous	Three colors next to each other (e.g., red, red-orange, orange).	Calm, cohesive designs, interior décor.

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Scheme	Description	Typical Use
Triadic	Three colors evenly spaced (e.g., red, yellow, blue).	Balanced vibrancy, logos, posters.
Split?Complementary	Base color + two colors adjacent to its complement.	Softer contrast than pure complementary.
Tetradic (Double?Complementary)	Two complementary pairs (e.g., red?green & blue?orange).	Rich, complex palettes; needs careful balance.
Monochromatic	Variations in lightness and saturation of a single hue.	Elegant, minimalist layouts.

4. Color Properties

Property	Explanation	Visual Impact
Hue	The name of the color (red, blue, etc.).	Determines the basic “color” identity.
Value (Lightness)	How light or dark a color is.	Controls contrast, readability, depth.
Saturation (Chroma)	Intensity or purity of a hue.	Influences energy, mood, and focus.
Temperature	Perceived warmth (reds, oranges) vs. coolness (blues, greens).	Affects psychological feeling and spatial perception.

5. Psychological & Cultural Associations

Color	Common Emotions / Symbolism	Typical Applications
Red	Passion, urgency, danger	Food packaging, sales tags
Orange	Energy, friendliness, creativity	Children’s products, call?to?action buttons
Yellow	Optimism, caution, attention	Warning signs, sunny branding
Green	Growth, health, tranquility	Eco?friendly brands, finance
Blue	Trust, calm, professionalism	Tech, healthcare, corporate
Purple	Luxury, mystery, spirituality	High?end cosmetics, creative arts
Black	Power, elegance, formality	Luxury goods, text, backgrounds

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Color **Common Emotions / Symbolism**

Typical Applications

White Purity, simplicity, space