

# Colour Theory

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Sir Isaac Newton developed one of the first ever colour diagrams, now referred to as a colour wheel, in the seventeenth century.



A **primary colour** is either:

Blue  
Yellow  
Red

These three pigment colours cannot be mixed by any other combination of colours – they are the first or primary colours within the colour wheel. They are located in the centre of the diagram.

A **secondary colour** is either:

Green  
Orange  
Purple

These three colours are formed by mixing two primary colours. They are located in the inside ring of the diagram.

A **tertiary colour** is either:

Yellow-orange  
Red-orange  
Red-purple  
Blue-purple  
Blue-green  
Yellow-green

These tones, or hues, are created by mixing a primary and secondary colour, hence the two word naming.

### **How to create GREAT colour palettes**

It is imperative that you continually immerse yourself in beautiful colour – pictures, tear sheets, objects and photographs of good colour that you LOVE. Pop them into a plastic sleeve and take them into the print rooms and dye lab with you – don't be precious! You want to recreate a wonderful palette that is as close a match to your inspiration after all.

### **Jargon and fancy vocabulary to understand and use**

#### **Warm colours**

Derived from red, through yellow and orange and including brown and tan tones. These colours are warm, like a sunny holiday

#### **Cool colours**

Derived from blue-green through blue-violet and including most grey tones. These colours are said to be cool or cold, like a wintery day.

#### **Complimentary colours**

Colours that sit opposite each other on the colour wheel are said to be 'complimentary colours' - they make each other appear brighter and contrast against each other.

#### **Analogous colours**

Colours that sit next to each other on the colour wheel are said to be 'analogous colours' – showing off a key colour against clean and elegant tones.

#### **Saturation**

Saturation describes the level of colour intensity - to make a colour more intense or vivid we 'saturate' or increase its level of colour.

#### **Toning down or 'Greying off'**

'Greying off' or toning down a colour describes how you change its intensity to create a softer or duller tone. Greying off rarely involves throwing in black pigments.

### **How to Grey off colour?**

The principles of toning down or 'greying off' are colour is super simple! For example:

You have mixed a bright yellow-green from your two primary colours (blue and yellow), but it's just too vibrant. It needs to be more subtle, but still bright. By adding a tiny flick of red-violet (its complimentary shade) the colour saturation will be counteracted by its complimentary colour.