



# Using the Color Wheel in Photography

# Basic Color Schemes – Introduction to Color Theory

With colours you can set a mood,  
attract attention,  
or make a statement.

You can use colour to energize,  
or to cool down.

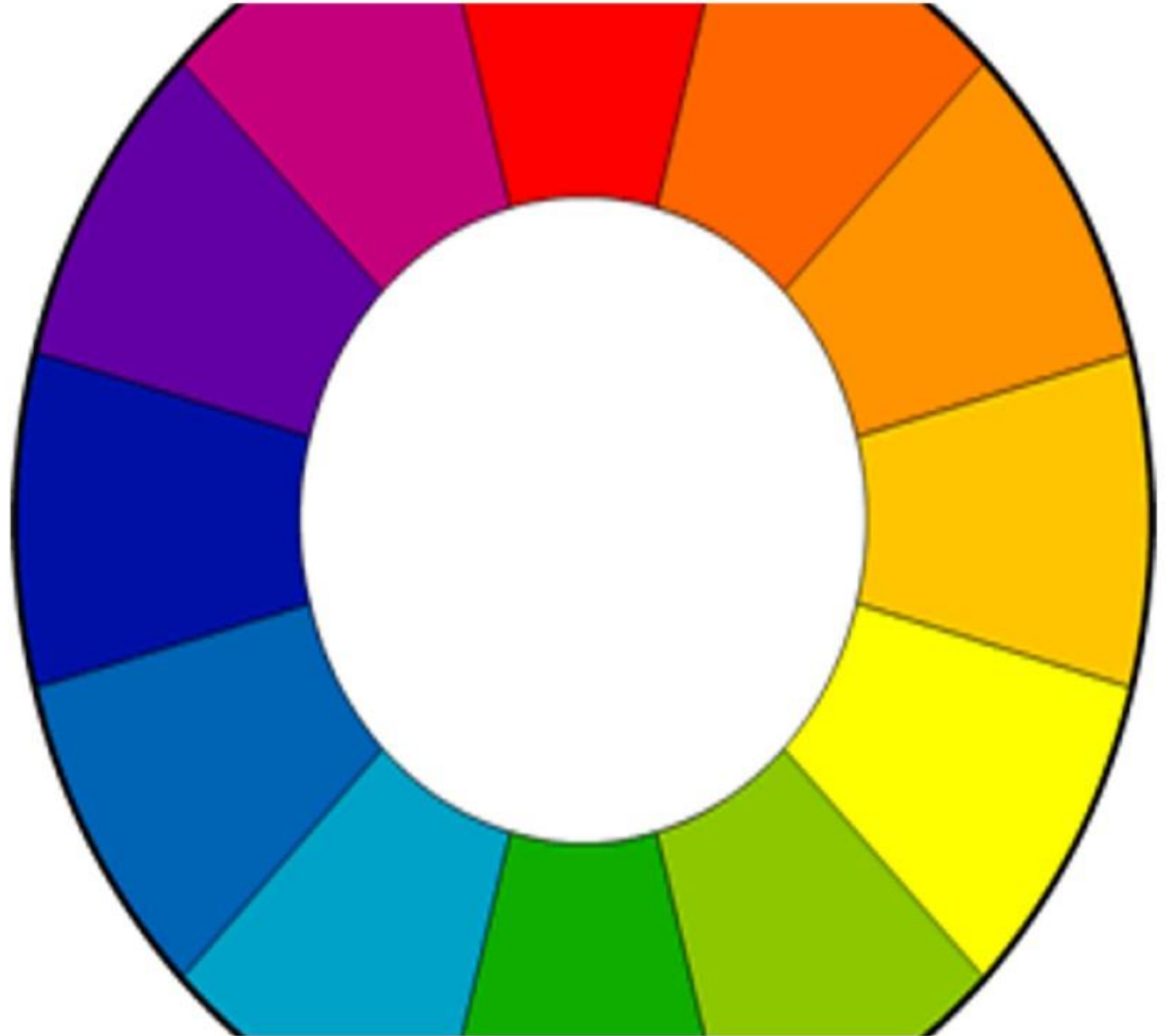
By selecting the right colour scheme,  
you can create an ambiance of elegance, warmth or tranquillity,  
or you can convey an image of playful youthfulness.

Colour can be your most powerful design element if you learn to use it effectively.

- Colours affect us in numerous ways, both mentally and physically. A strong red colour has been shown to raise the blood pressure, while a blue colour has a calming effect.
- Being able to use colours consciously and harmoniously can help you create spectacular results.

# The Colour Wheel

The **colour wheel** or **colour circle** is the basic tool for combining colours. The first circular colour diagram was designed by Sir Isaac Newton in 1666.



The colour wheel is designed so that virtually any colours you pick from it will look good together. Over the years, many variations of the basic design have been made, but the most common version is a wheel of 12 colours based on the RYB (or artistic) colour model.

Traditionally, there are a number of colour combinations that are considered especially pleasing. These are called **colour harmonies** or **colour chords** and they consist of two or more colours with a fixed relation in the colour wheel.

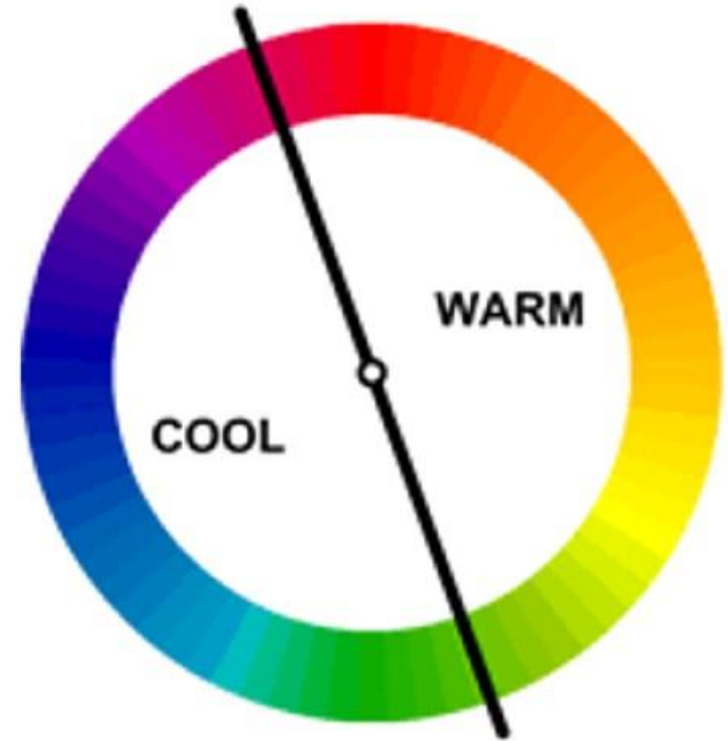


# Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Colours

- In the RYB (or subtractive) colour model, the **primary colours** are red, yellow and blue.
- The three **secondary colours** (green, orange and purple) are created by mixing two primary colours.
- Another six **tertiary colours** are created by mixing primary and secondary colours.

# Warm and cool colours

- The colour circle can be divided into warm and cool colours.
- **Warm colours** are vivid and energetic, and tend to advance in space.
- **Cool colours** give an impression of calm, and create a soothing impression.
- White, black and grey are considered to be neutral.



# Tints, Shades, and Tones

- These terms are often used incorrectly, although they describe fairly simple colour concepts. If a colour is made lighter by adding white, the result is called a **tint**. If black is added, the darker version is called a **shade**. And if grey is added, the result is a different **tone**.



## Colour Harmonies

- basic techniques for creating colour schemes

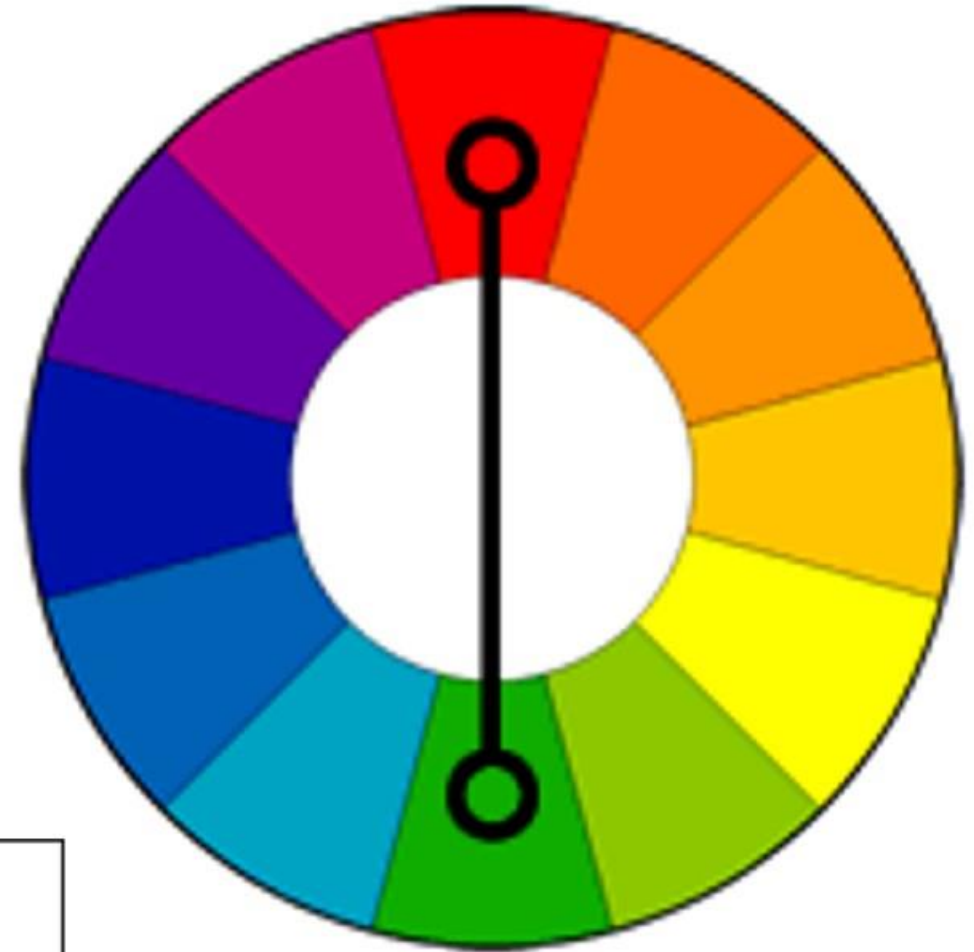
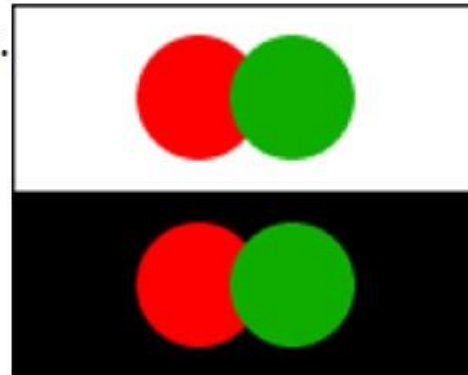
Below are shown the basic colour chords based on the **colour wheel**.

### Complementary colour scheme

Colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel are considered to be complementary colours (example: red and green).

The high contrast of complementary colours creates a vibrant look especially when used at full saturation. This colour scheme must be managed well so it is not jarring. Complementary colour schemes are tricky to use in large doses, but work well when you want something to stand out.

Complementary colours are really bad for text.





Flanders Poppies  
By Rhonda Buitenhuis



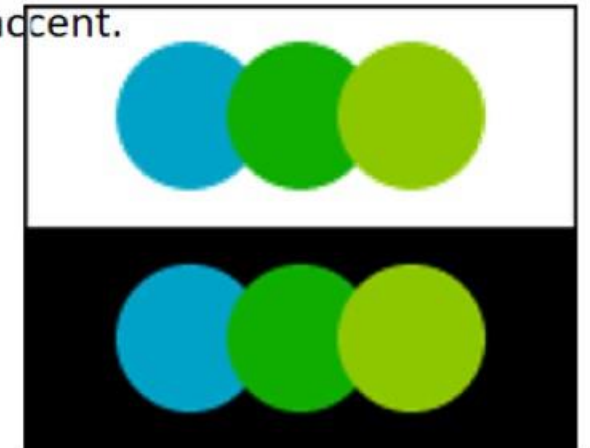
### **Analogous colour scheme**

Analogous colour schemes use colours that are next to each other on the colour wheel. They usually match well and create serene and comfortable designs.

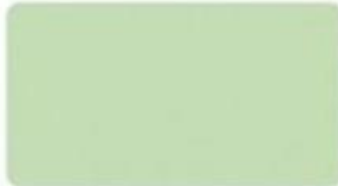
Analogous colour schemes are often found in nature and are harmonious and pleasing to the eye.

Make sure you have enough contrast when choosing an analogous colour scheme.

Choose one colour to dominate, a second to support. The third colour is used (along with black, white or grey) as an accent.







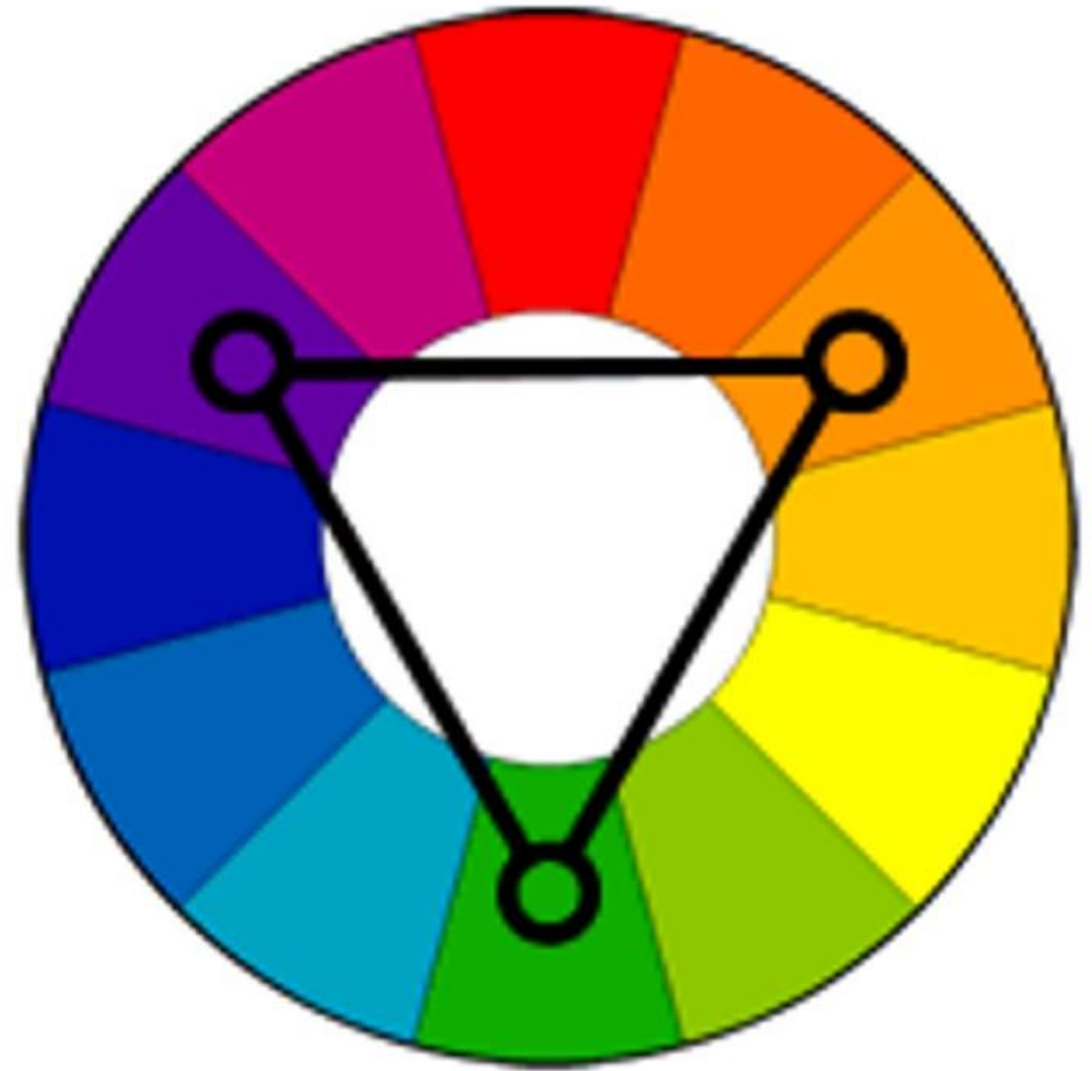
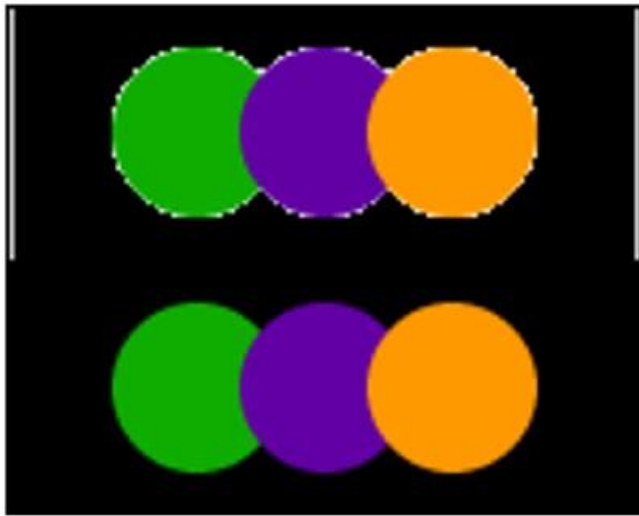
*Hydrangea Palette*

## Triadic colour scheme

A triadic colour scheme uses colours that are evenly spaced around the colour wheel.

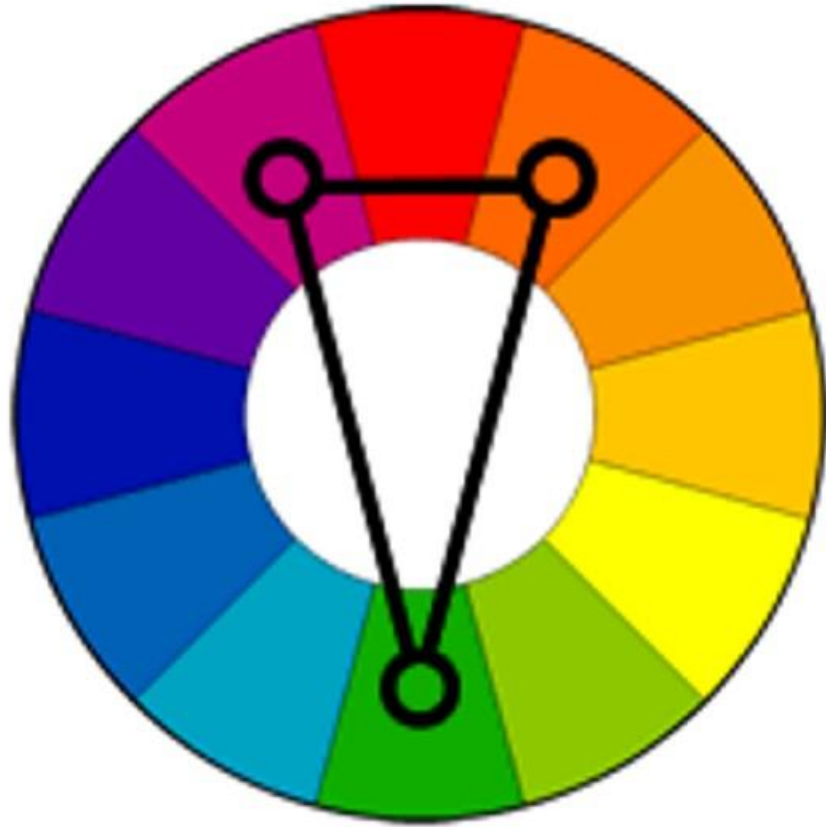
Triadic colour schemes tend to be quite vibrant, even if you use pale or unsaturated versions of your hues.

To use a triadic harmony successfully, the colours should be carefully balanced - let one colour dominate and use the two others for accent.







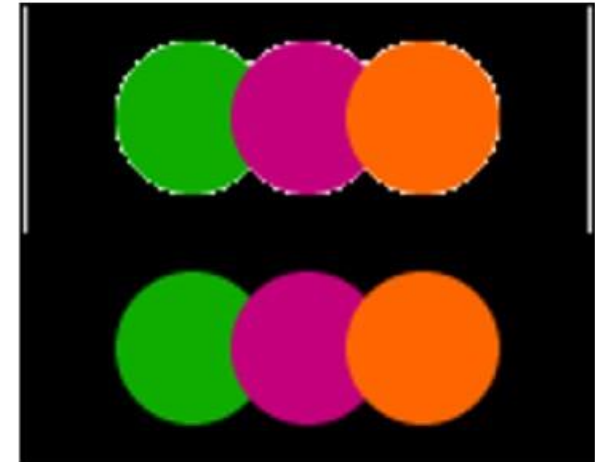


### -Complementary colour scheme

The split-complementary colour scheme is a variation of the complementary colour scheme. In addition to the base colour, it uses the two colours adjacent to its complement.

This colour scheme has the same strong visual contrast as the complementary colour scheme, but has less tension.

The split-complimentary colour scheme is often a good choice for beginners, because it is difficult to mess up.

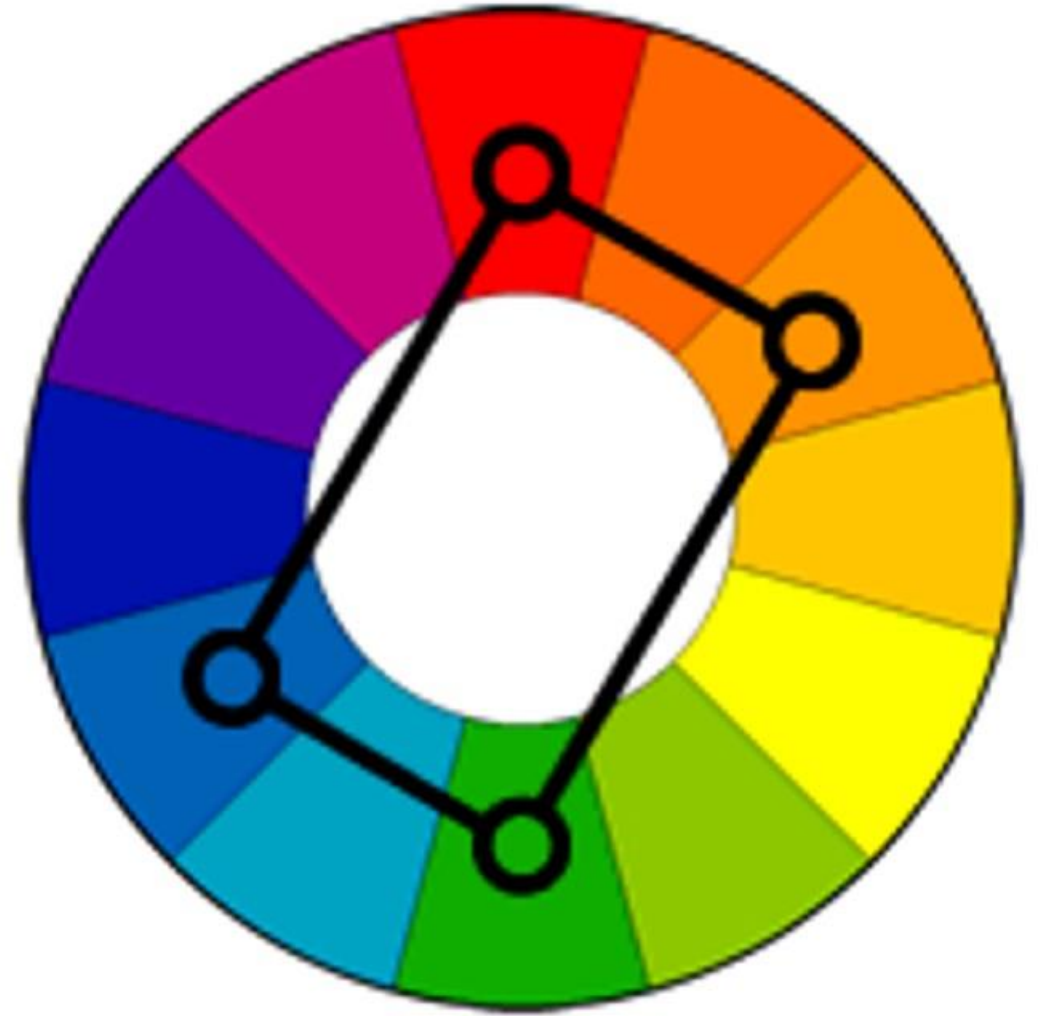
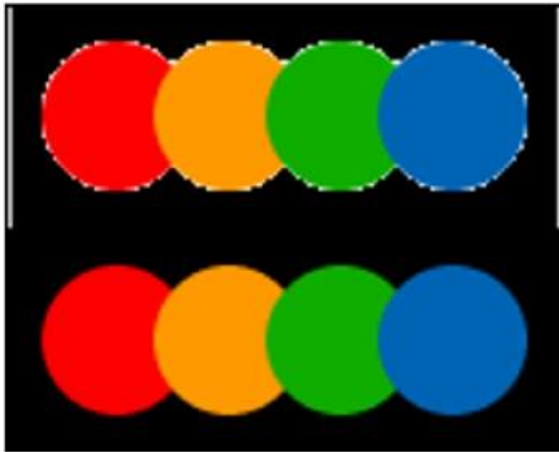


### Rectangle (tetradic) colour scheme

The rectangle or tetradic colour scheme uses four colours arranged into two complementary pairs. This rich colour scheme offers plenty of possibilities for variation.

Tetradic colour schemes work best if you let one colour be dominant.

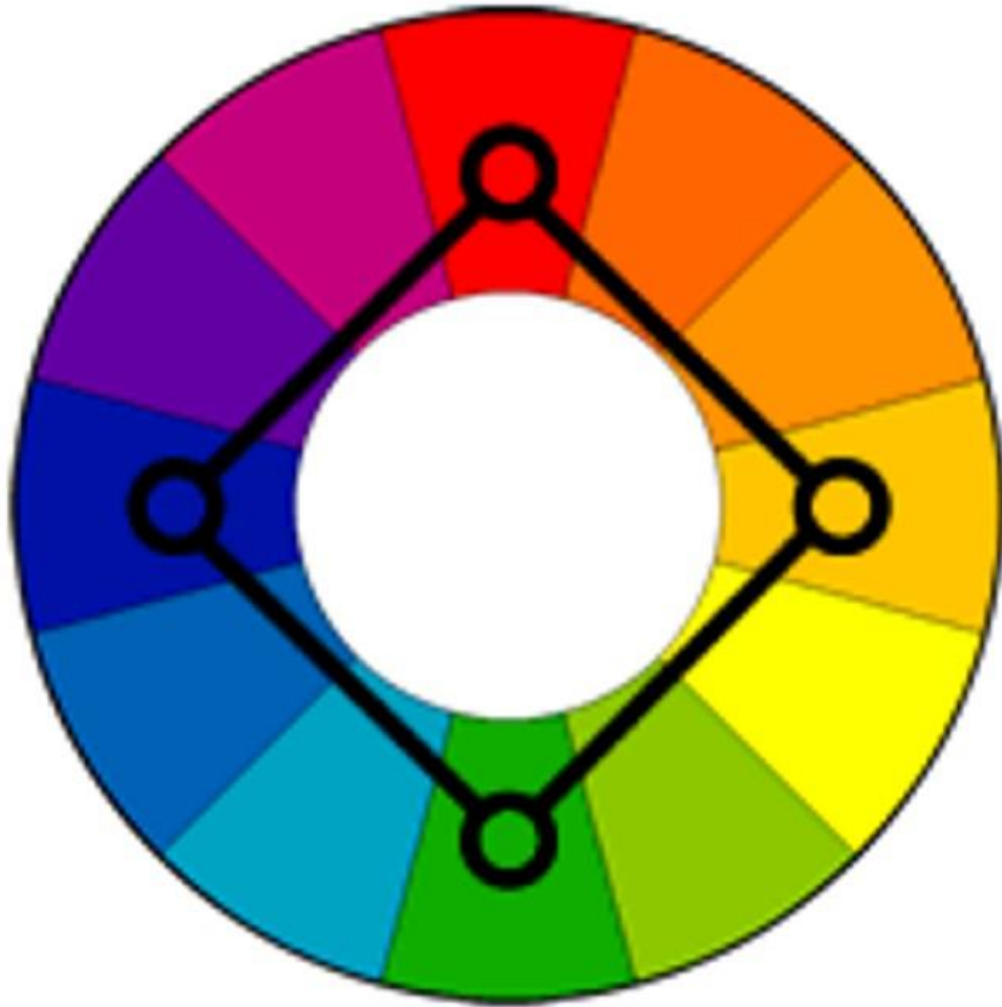
You should also pay attention to the balance between warm and cool colours in your design.





yellow, violet, red- orange, blue-green tetradic color scheme | Watercolor in the Village: Tetradic Color Schemes ([barbarasailorblogspot.com](http://barbarasailorblogspot.com))



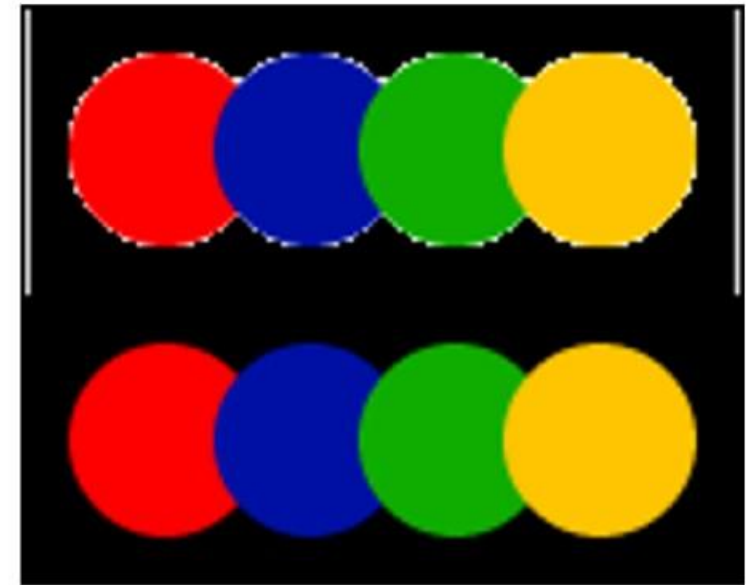


### **Square colour scheme**

The square colour scheme is similar to the rectangle, but with all four colours spaced evenly around the colour circle.

Square colour schemes work best if you let one colour be dominant.

You should also pay attention to the balance between warm and cool colours in your design.





That's all Folks

