

DESN110 VISUAL DESIGN

Color Harmonies

Color harmonies are color schemes or combinations of colors that create a harmonious effect. Colors that work well together and are pleasing to the eye. These are general guidelines to help you get started in choosing colors in your designs. As you advance and gain more experience, you will find that these color harmonies are only a starting point. There are many more color combination that will work in certain situations.

Color harmonies remain harmonious regardless of rotation around the wheel. So, any colors you choose, as long as they fit the definition of a particular color harmony will work. Color harmonies only analyzes the relationships of pure colors (hue). It does not involve tints, shades, and tones. They may be included in the color harmony, but when studying a color harmony, look at the hue of these color variations.

MONOCHROMATIC

Uses only a single hue with tints, shades, and tones of that hue. No other hues are used.

Pros: Appealing, easy to manage, always looks balanced.

Cons: Lacks color contrast, not very vibrant.

Effect: Clean, elegant, soothing, quiet, easy on the eyes.

Tips: Use a variety of tints, shades, and tones to make it more interesting.

ANALOGOUS

Uses up to 3 hues that are adjacent to each other on the wheel with tints, shades, and tones of those hues.

Pros: As easy to achieve and manage as monochromatic, but is more interesting.

Cons: Lacks color contrast, not very vibrant.

Effect: Same as monochromatic only with more variety and interest.

Tips: Make one hue dominant, while others enrich the design. Limit the design to 3 colors.

COMPLEMENTARY

Consists of 2 hues that are directly opposite from each other on the wheel, along with tints, shades, and tones.

Pros: Strongest contrast of any color harmony. Creates maximum attention.

Cons: Harder to balance than monochromatic and analogous.

Effect: Excitement, energy, high-impact, high-contrast.

Tips: Make one hue dominant, use other to accent.

TRIADIC

Consists of 3 hues that are equally spaced around the wheel along with tints, shades, and tones of each hue.

Pros: Easier to balance than complementary, but retains good contrast. Many possibilities.

Cons: Not as high-contrast as complementary

Effect: Excitement, energy, fun, impact, contrast, pleasing.

Tips: Make one hue dominant, use others to accent. Choose values and tones carefully – can look gaudy.

SPLIT-COMPLEMENTARY

Consists of 2 hues that on either side of a color's complement along with tints, shades, and tones of each hue. Could be considered an analogous harmony with a contrasting hue added.

Pros: High-contrast without the strong tension of the complementary harmony. More nuances.

Cons: Harder to balance than monochromatic and analogous.

Effect: Interesting, pleasing, contrast, soothing, but not boring.

Tips: Make one hue dominant, use others to accent. Use as an analogous harmony with a contrasting color for more interest. Use a single warm color with 3 cool colors.

TETRADIC (DOUBLE COMPLEMENTARY)

Uses 4 hues – 2 pair of complementary colors along with tints, shades, and tones of each hue.

Pros: Many possibilities and lot of variety.

Cons: Hardest to balance.

Effect: Excitement, energy, fun, impact, contrast, pleasing.

Tips: All 4 colors in equal amounts will look unbalanced. Use a dominant color, subdue some of the colors