

COLOUR THEORY

S3 GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION





Introduction

The use of colour is very important in illustration and graphic design. It is not an after-thought or an add-on, it is integral to the design of products and how we communicate graphically.

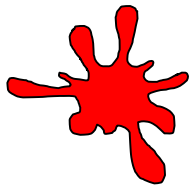
Colour is used to create particular moods or feelings as well as helping to make images look realistic.

Within the Graphic Communication course, you will be asked to justify your colour choices throughout the units, so it is important that you have a clear understanding of the impact of colours.

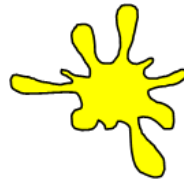


Primary Colours

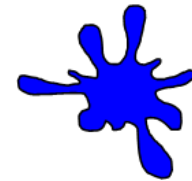
Primary colours are colours that cannot be made by mixing two or more other colours together. Primary colours are stand alone colours that are used to make all other colours. The three primary colours are:



RED



YELLOW



BLUE

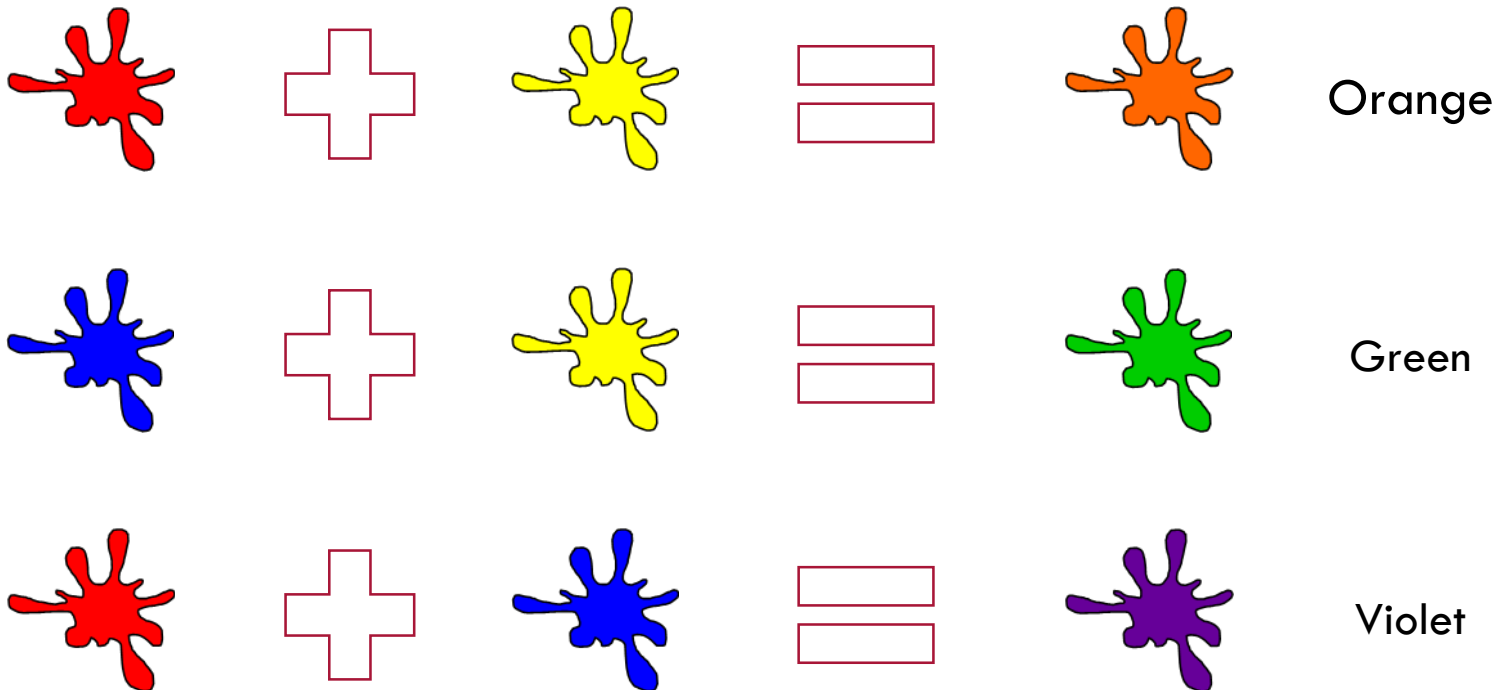
Many companies that make products aimed at young children will use primary colours. This is because they are bright and are likely to attract the children to them.





Secondary Colours

Secondary colours are made by mixing two primary colours together in equal quantities as shown below:



The three secondary colours are orange, green and violet.

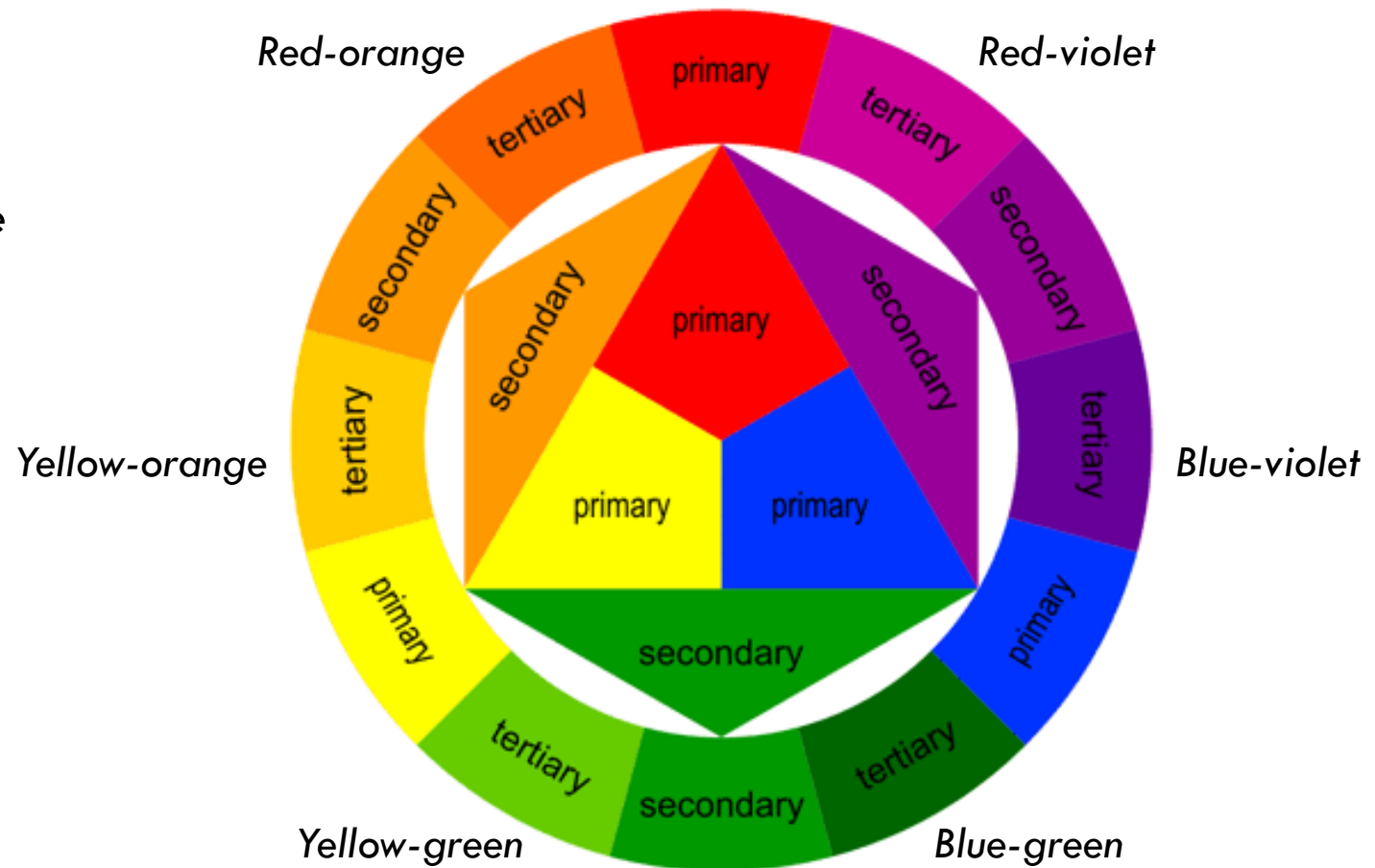
*NOTE: in Graphics, we refer to the colour more commonly known as purple as **VIOLET**.*



Tertiary Colours

Tertiary colours are created by mixing a primary and a secondary colour together. These are shown on the colour wheel.

Tertiary colours are named by combining the names of the primary and secondary colour mixed to create them.

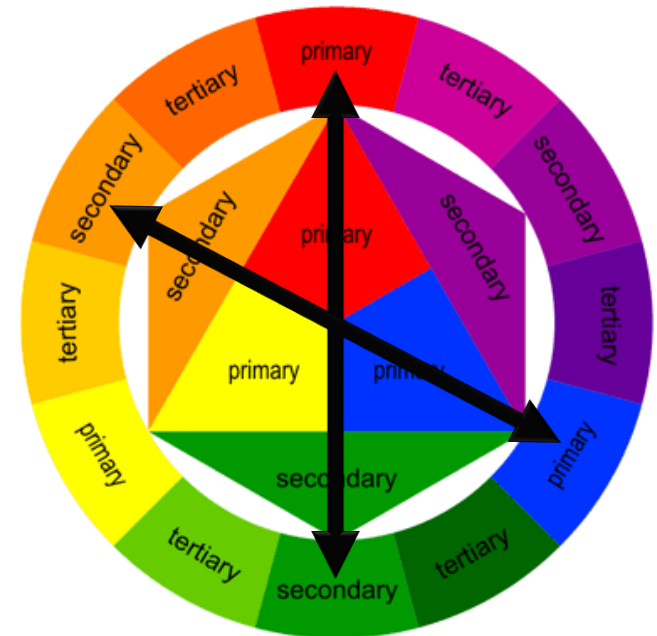




Contrasting Colours

Contrasting colours are colours which are **OPPOSITE** one another on the colour wheel e.g. red and green or blue and orange.

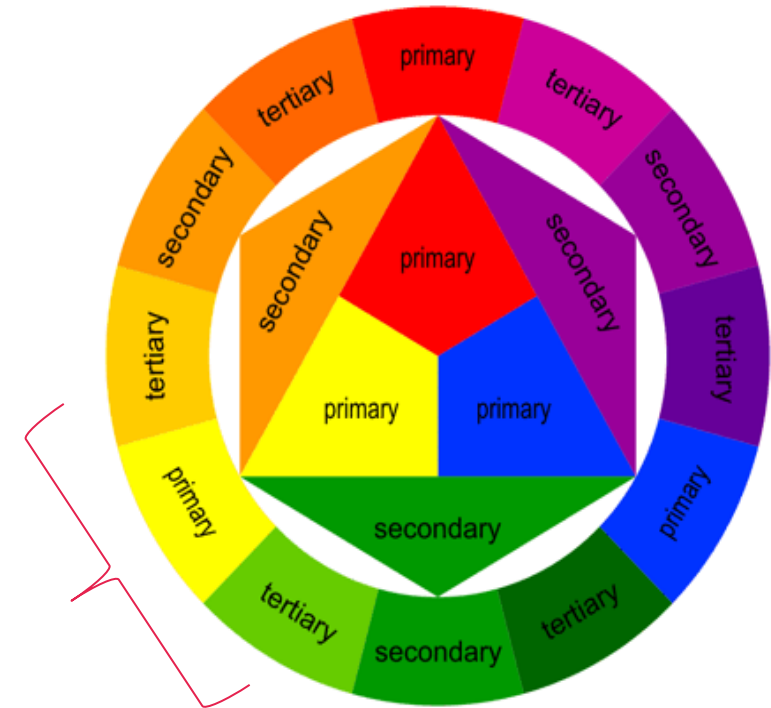
Choosing contrasting colours can help to make your layout or design stand out and make it eye-catching, bold and exciting. You will often find that food or drinks companies will use contrasting colour schemes on their packaging to help their product stand out from their competitors on the shelves of shops.



Harmonising Colours

Harmonising colours are colours which are **NEAR** one another on the colour wheel e.g. red and orange or blue and green.

Harmonising colours work well together and are easy on the eye. They can be used to create a relaxed and elegant mood.





Advancing Colours

Advancing colours are colours which appear to come towards you when you look at them. Examples of advancing colours are:

- Red
- Orange
- Yellow

If a room was painted in these colours it would make the room seem smaller and cosier as the walls would appear to come towards you when you looked at them.

Advancing colours are also known as **WARM** colours. These are used to give a sense of warmth or are used to indicate heat e.g. on a temperature control or a tap.





Receding Colours

Receding colours are colours which appear to move away from you as you look at them. Examples of receding colours are:

- Blue
- Violet
- Green

If a room was painted in receding colours then it would seem bigger as the walls would appear to move away from you as you looked at them.

Receding colours are also known as **COOL or COLD** colours. These are used to give a sense of coldness.



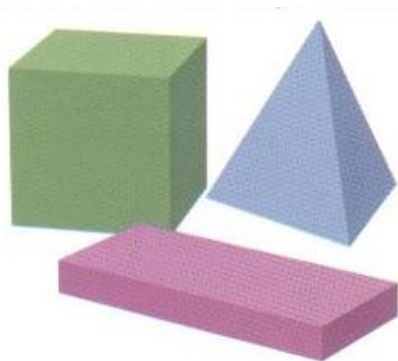
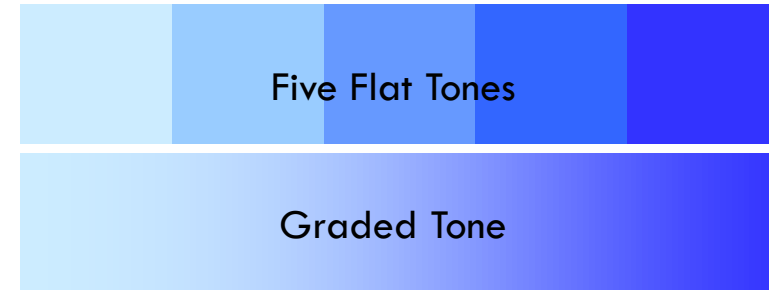


Tones, tints and shades

The **TONE** of a colour is how strong or weak it is. All colours can be produced in a range of tones, from strong tones with lots of depth to weak tones, which are very pale.

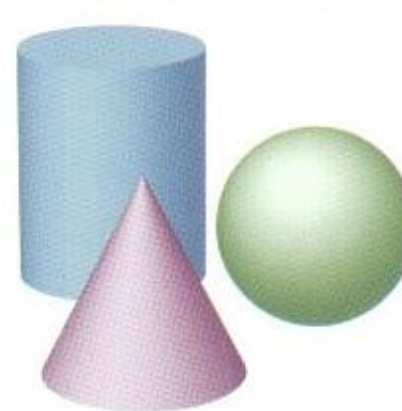
Surface Tones

Surface tones on 3D objects change depending on the way light falls on the surface.



On flat sided objects the surface facing the light source is pale, while the opposite surface is dark or strong.

Each surface has a **flat tone**.



Objects with curved surfaces reflect light differently. The tone changes from dark to light as the surface curves towards the light source.

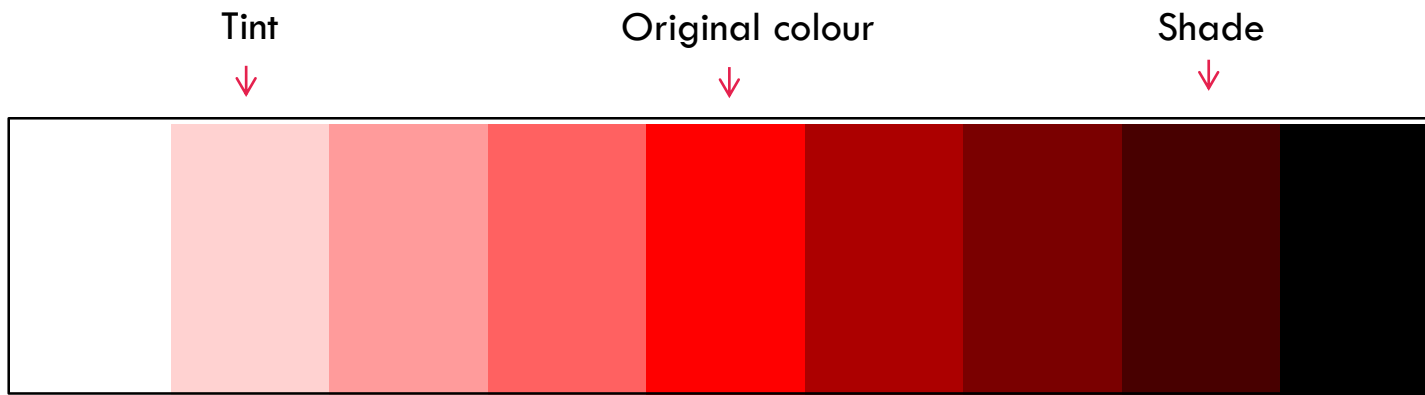
This is called **graded tone**.



Tints and shades of a colour are made by adding either white or black to it to make it darker or lighter.

To make a **TINT**, white is added to the colour.

To make a **SHADE**, black is added to the colour.





Colour Psychology

Colours can evoke different thoughts and feelings when a person sees them. Designers can use colours to their advantage to help sell their product or service.

When you choose colours for a layout, it is useful to understand how we react and respond to different colours. You can energize or create calm through colour alone. Colour can be an powerful design tool if you learn to use it effectively.

Let's take a look at the psychology behind different colours on the next few slides:



RED

EXCITING

POWERFUL

LOUD

PASSION

EXCITEMENT

HEAT

ANGER

CAUTION

DANGER

YOUTHFUL

NETFLIX



"The shiny red color of the soles has no function other than to identify to the public that they are mine. I selected the color because it is engaging, flirtatious, memorable, and the color of passion."



If you have a loud brand that you want to stand out, then red could be the colour for you. It can be used as an accent colour to draw attention to something. It is also said to have appetite-stimulating properties, making it ideal for food products and restaurants.



ORANGE

VITALITY

VIBRANT

FUN

YOUTHFUL

ENERGETIC

HEALTH

WARMTH

CREATIVE

CAUTION

CONFIDENT

FRIENDLY

ENTHUSIASTIC



Orange can be a great choice for a youthful and creative brand that wants to be a bit different to the mainstream. It's a friendly colour that also stimulates action so, like red, it can be used as an accent colour to catch the eye and promote activity.



YELLOW

POSITIVITY

SUNNY

FUN

HAPPY

HOPEFUL

CAUTION

HEALTHY

YOUTHFUL

NATURAL

WARMTH



Yellow is a great choice if speed, fun and low cost are attributes that you want associated with your brand. Be careful with different shades, though: a bright yellow will grab people's attention right away and it's a useful way of highlighting or accenting a design, a pale or warm yellow can look natural and healthy, while a neon yellow can instead be very artificial.



GREEN

PROSPERITY

RELAXING

RENEWAL

GROWTH

STABILITY

SOOTHING

NATURAL

MONEY

SPRING

ECO-FRIENDLY



Spotify®



The connection to nature makes green an obvious choice for a brand that's eco friendly, organic or sustainable. As with yellow, be wary of the fact that while muted or lighter shades of green can represent nature, neon versions will have the opposite effect and will feel more artificial and less harmonious.

BLUE

RELAXING

COOL

FORMAL

CLASSY

SOOTHING

RELIABLE

ELEGANT

CALM

TRUSTWORTHY

SOPHISTICATED

RESPONSIBLE

If you want to be immediately associated with professionalism and trust, then blue is the colour for you. Since it's universally liked, it's also a great choice if you want to appeal to both men and women. Its association with calm and tranquillity means that blue is also a good fit if your business is in things like relaxation, therapy or meditation.



SAMSUNG



PayPal



BANK OF SCOTLAND



VIOLET

MYSTERIOUS

RELIGION

CALM

WEALTH

ROYALTY

WARM

LUXURIOUS

SPIRITUALITY

COOL

PROSPERITY



JustGiving



Use violet when you want to evoke those luxurious, royal connections—combine it with gold for that extra ‘wow’. Or use it when you want to add a dash of mysticism and spirituality to your brand. Add some green for a really striking contrast or with pink to emphasize the feminine.



PINK

CUTE

YOUTHFUL

GIRLY

FEMININE

CHARMING

SENSITIVE

SWEET

ROMANCE

COSMOPOLITAN



benefit
SAN FRANCISCO

Using pink is a shortcut to communicating “this is for women” and if you know it’ll appeal to your female target market, then it’s a great choice. For some audiences, though, it can be off-putting and you may want to be more creative in communicating femininity without resorting to clichés. You can also use it in unexpected ways to stand out versus your dull and dreary competitors or add a surprising element to an otherwise sophisticated design.



WHITE

HYGIENIC

CLEAN

INNOCENCE

PURITY

SIMPLE

MODERN

MINIMALIST



White space can be as important in a design as all the other creative elements. White tends to be the colour used for website backgrounds as it ensures that your text is easy to read. It's also often used as a secondary accent in a colour scheme. Together with pastels, it can bring to mind spring and femininity; combined with simple black it becomes classic and minimalistic. When it comes to white, it's a lot about the colours you put it with.



GREY

CONSERVATIVE

SERIOUS

SUBDUED

MATURE

FORMAL

DEPENDABLE

SAFE

RESPONSIBLE



Use grey if you have a serious brand and you want to communicate the authority and stability of a corporate institution. Combine it with blue for the ultimate in conservatism and dependability. It's actually also a very popular colour in web design. You may want to consider using grey as an alternative to white for a softer website background—or as an alternative to black text for a less harsh contrast and an easier read.



BLACK

UNAPPROACHABLE

MYSTERIOUS

EXCLUSIVE

POWER

GRIEF

INTIMIDATING

FEAR

ELEGANCE

SOPHISTICATION

POWERFUL



If you want to convey a sense of luxury, you can't go wrong with a simple black-and-white colour scheme. Combined with a gold or silver, you'll give your brand an air of exclusivity. On the other hand, black can also be used with bright colours for contrast and when combined with other powerful colours like red or orange it can be quite impactful, even aggressive.



BROWN

NATURAL

GOOD

REASSURING

STRONG

SIMPLE

EARTHY

SECURE

RESILIENCE

SAFE

RELIABLE

COMFORTABLE

DEPENDABLE

Brown is a natural colour that evokes a sense of strength and reliability. It's often seen as solid, much like the earth, and it's a colour often associated with resilience, dependability, and security. The colour brown relates to things that are natural and simple. Although frugal and unsophisticated, brown is a colour of safety and confidence.



NESPRESSO



Throughout the Graphic Communication course, you will be asked to **justify** your own colour choices as well as comment on the choices of others. Here are some examples of colour analysis:



Pearl Drops Toothpaste

The packaging is white which suggests cleanliness and hygiene. The blue on the label gives the impression that the toothpaste is cool and fresh.



Nature Valley Oats 'n' Honey Cereal

Here, they have used green to try to create the impression that this cereal is healthy and only has natural ingredients. This is to make people think that this cereal is good for them.



Irn Bru

Barr have chosen to make the can orange and blue which are contrasting colours. This makes the can eye catching and so will grab people's attention when it is in shops. The orange also gives a sense of energy and fun.