

Colour Psychology Guide

Colour Wheel Tricks



COMPLEMENTARY SCHEMES

Colours on opposite ends of the wheel (e.g. blue and orange) are **complementary**. When paired together, they help each other **stand out** and **add contrast** to your design.

When used as just a small part of a design, complementary colours are a great way to **draw the eye** to a specific point of interest. A *fully complementary* book cover uses only two colours (and will look a bit like a movie poster).

That said, good use of either saturation or tints and shades (i.e. white and black) can add additional variety where needed.

ANALOGOUS SCHEMES

Colours that are adjacent to each other are **analogous** (e.g. blue and turquoise, or indigo and violet). Together, they allow designs to **feel a bit more monochromatic** while **still adding variety** to your colour palette. Analogous colours tend to have a **subtle, harmonious impact**. A fully analogous book cover uses between 2-5 colours.

IMPORTANT!

Colour schemes are tools. Use them only when they serve your book. Bad use of complementary schemes can be distracting or even harsh on the eye. Bad use of analogous schemes, meanwhile, can be boring or even appear as visually indistinct from a distance. Don't be afraid to break the mould if it gives you a book cover that your readers love!

Advanced Tip: when it comes to colours, remember that darker variants of a colour tend to seem heavier, more intense, or more mysterious, while lighter variants seem lighter, more playful, or serene. More neutral variants of a colour can hint at subtlety, simplicity, or sophistication based on context, while more saturated variants tend to seem brighter and more energetic.

Advanced Tip: if you like the idea of a complementary scheme, but want it to be more subtle, consider playing with the saturation levels, tints, and shades of your chosen colours. A deep dark red and a pale, washed-out green (e.g. ribbons or blood on a soldier's uniform) are still complementary. The same goes for pink against dark green (e.g. a rose in a forest).

Advanced Tip: if you want to add a little more contrast to a harmonious colour scheme WITHOUT introducing a complementary colour, don't just play with tints and shades. Instead, also consider warmth and coolness (e.g. yellow and green are analogous, but the warmth of the yellow keeps it distinct, allowing a subdued level of contrast to enter into the design). If you want a specific element to seem brighter, try saturating its colours, perhaps while subtly muting or darkening the colours of the other elements around it.

Colour Meaning

Never forget that colour meanings shift according to time, context, and culture. For example, the colour blue used to have a much stronger connotation of being cold until scientists discovered that blue flames burn hotter than orange ones. In the case of the colour green, its connotations with paranormal activity came about BECAUSE of their use on alien-themed book covers, movie posters, and so on (i.e. sometimes you must follow the trends, other times you get to set them).

Since a single colour can contain many contradictory meanings, pay careful attention to trends in your genre and remember to use every element in your cover to accentuate the meanings you intend.



RED

Connotations: Power, passion, excitement, enthusiasm, danger, love, confidence, aggression, rage, lordship, ambition, food, urgency, violence



YELLOW

Connotations: Happiness, imagination, ambition, optimism, motivation, creativity, logic, mineral wealth, food, youth, cowardice, friendliness



PINK

Connotations: Youthfulness, playfulness, romance, happiness, silliness, weakness, nostalgia, innocence, dreams, femininity



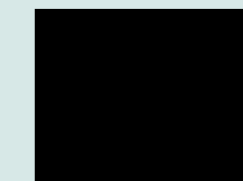
ORANGE

Connotations: Maturity, joy, achievement, warmth, energy, strength, passion, struggle, fire, hunger, food, excitement, fun, friendliness, relaxation



PURPLE

Connotations: Sensuality, spirituality, self-esteem, magic, mystery, fantasy, luxury, royalty



BLACK

Connotations: Authority, power, sophistication, evil, death, danger, suspense, grief, mourning, depression, space, commerce, pollution



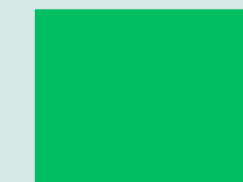
BLUE

Connotations: Peace, security, magic, calm, balance, reliability, relief, knowledge, intellectualism, meditation, nobility, mystery, logic, the mind, wisdom



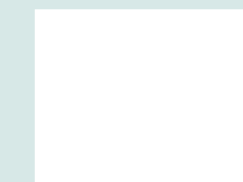
BROWN

Connotations: Warmth, seriousness, earthiness, reliability, stability, pollution, industry, dirt, simplicity, subtlety, wisdom, natural serenity



GREEN

Connotations: Nature, peace, health, vitality, life, rot, decay, sickness, paranormal activity, abundance, prosperity, food



WHITE

Connotations: Cleanliness, simplicity, purity, light, sterility, isolation, death, elitism, emptiness, mourning, winter