

OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

4-H Fabrics & Fashions

Home & Personal Living Space

Room Anatomy

Color

Adding color is the easiest, fastest and often cheapest way to make a major change in a room. With its amazing ability to transform surroundings, create moods, uplift and inspire, color should play a pivotal role in your decorating plan. But if it's noticeably absent or nondescript in your home, perhaps you're uncertain how and where to use it successfully.

Color psychology

To create the desired ambience in a room, remember the psychological effects of color. Colors are divided into categories described as "warm" (red, orange, yellow) and "cool" (blue, green, violet), depending on how they make us feel. Warm colors tend to advance, making a space look smaller, more intimate and cozy. Cool colors recede, making an area look more spacious and airy.

Colors also evoke distinct responses. Red excites; pink soothes; yellow cheers; blue calms; green relaxes; orange stimulates; and violet awakens the imagination. Black, the perfect contrast, makes other colors look sharper. And while many hues are described as "white" – bone, sand, ecru, ivory – each has a cool or warm undertone, making it anything but "pure" white.

Beyond these basic mood-inspiring properties, your reaction to color is both emotional and personal. In all likelihood, you already have color preferences. The following exercises will help you find them:

Review magazine clippings accumulated in your design notebook. You'll probably find a certain color or colors that are predominant throughout.

Study art books, visit museums and galleries and note the colors used in paintings that please and excite you.

Open your closet door to reveal your favorite colors in clothing and accessories. You can dress your home in these shades as well.

Look closely at the patterns and colors of your room accessories. What colors inspired you to purchase them and use them as a starting point for your scheme.

Color rules

Follow these rules to create harmony among your chosen colors and with the environment in which they live:

1. **BALANCE WARM AND COOL HUES.** If your room's shell is finished in cool green, blue or violet, introduce warm red, orange or yellow. Bring this balancing color into the room with draperies, furniture coverings, pillows and other accessories. By integrating warm, vibrant colors you'll reduce the chill in a cool space. Add soft, cool tones of greens and blues to turn down the heat in a blistering hot room.
2. **VARY TONAL VALUES.** There should be three different tonal values in any room – light, medium and dark. If you use only pale pastels, your room may

appear washed out. With all mid-tone values, the effect may be bland. Used exclusively, dark values may produce a drab, gloomy environment. Keep this concept in mind, and plan a mix of tonal values instead of covering all your room's basic surfaces in pale beige or dark brown. Furnishings can provide one of the values.

3. **CONSULT A COLOR WHEEL.** Once you've decided on the main color for your room, choose other colors from a color wheel purchased at your local art supply store. Let this excellent tool assist you in combining colors in an effective, attractive manner, using one of the following color schemes:

A tonal scheme creates a safe and comfortable harmony, because it involves choosing three different values of the same color. This virtually foolproof scheme can be as subtle as three tonal values of tan or as dramatic as black, white and gray. Introduce an accent color from the opposite warm or cool family for an element of drama.

An analogous scheme groups colors adjacent to each other on the color wheel. These related hues help create a harmonious, yet interesting, color palette.

A complementary scheme involves selecting colors directly or nearly opposite each other on the color wheel – red and green, yellow and violet, orange and blue. When used side by side, they appear to vibrate, adding energy and vitality to a room. To illustrate, try this exercise. Stare at a red dot intently, and then look away. You'll see that same size dot, but in green! This visual phenomenon works with any color, so introduce at least a touch of complementary color in your room to help nature do its job.

4. **INVOLVE NATURE.** Natural elements such as unpainted wood, marble or stone are essential to a well-balanced room.

You may have rough-hewn wood beams, a stone fireplace or a lovely natural wood floor. Incorporate their natural colors into your overall color scheme. For example, paint the walls adjacent to your stone fireplace deep ochre, to integrate the fireplace into the overall feeling of the space. Or emphasize the stone's presence by painting the walls in a receding soft aqua.

5. **YOU DECIDE.** Ultimately, you must live with what you choose. Use the following guidelines to help make color decisions with which you will be happy for a long time.

Choose carpet and wall coverings first. Unlike paint, which can be tinted in thousands of shades, carpeting, wallpaper and fabrics are offered in limited color ranges, so select them first.

Consider light sources. Bring home the largest fabric and wall covering swatches available, and study them under normal lighting conditions at all times of day and night. Color is influenced dramatically by light, both natural and artificial, and colors that appear harmonious during the day may fight each other when lights are turned on at dusk.

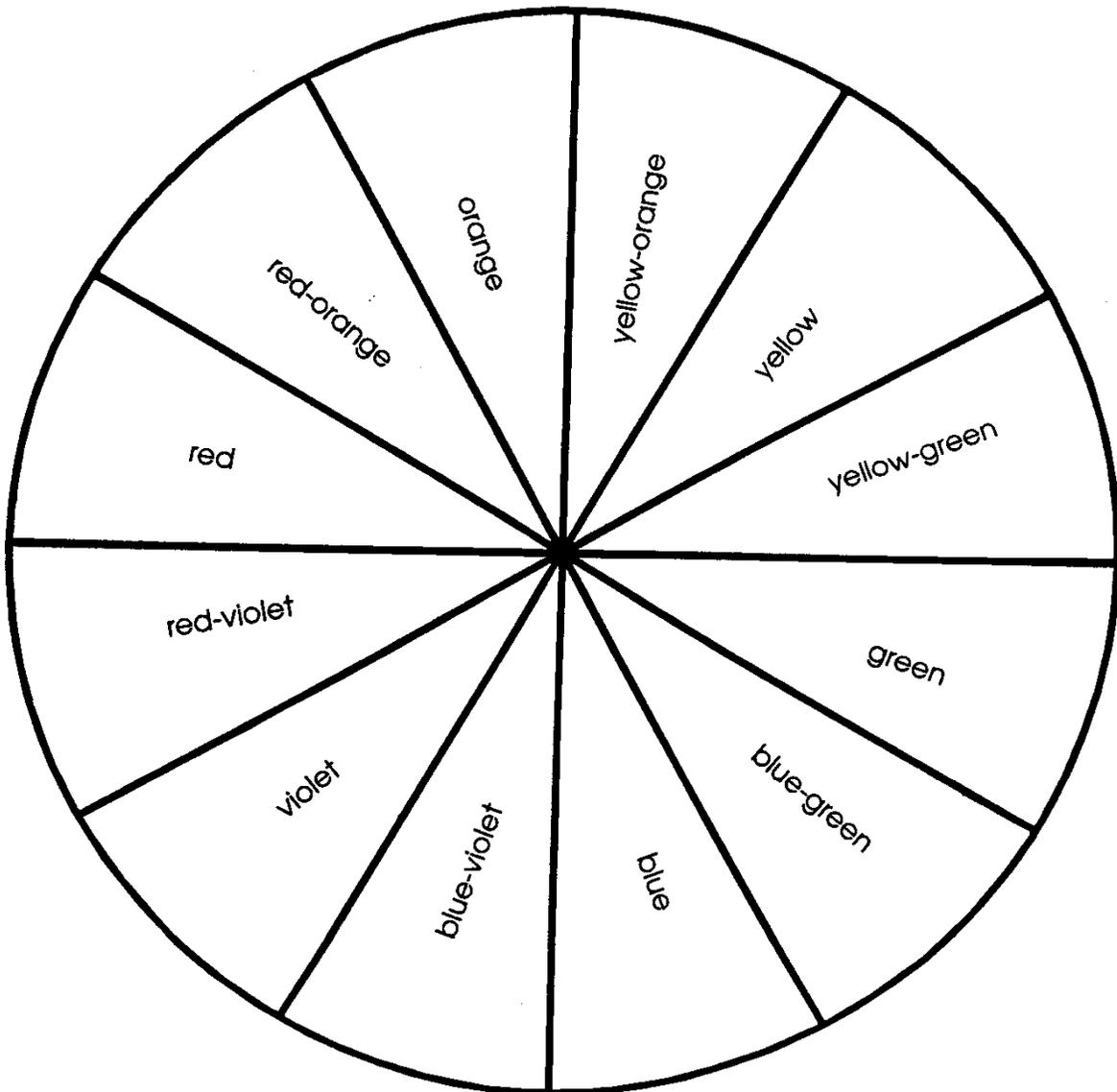
Sample paints. Paint color should be your last choice. Take time to select the ideal statement color. Your chosen color on a wall will be more intense than the small chip you studied at the paint store. To avoid too-dark walls, use a paint that is a slightly lighter value than the desired color. The paint's finish also affects its perceived value. A flat finish appears lighter than a semigloss finish. To safeguard against mistakes, invest in a quart of your chosen color and paint an area large enough to give you a true feel for its effectiveness, and then study the color's reaction to light from all sources.

Please yourself. One final note of encouragement: Listen to your inner voice and respect your color preferences.

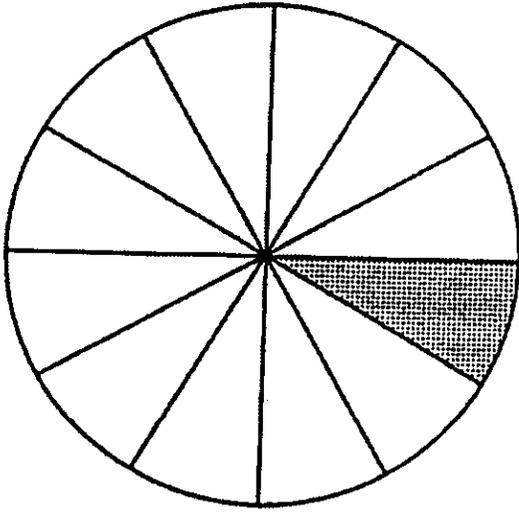
Avoid choosing a particular color simply because it appears to be trendy at the moment. If you're bored with neutral beiges, ivory and gray, have faith in yourself and dare to try vivid and exciting contrasts such as olive green and magenta or Wedgewood blue and goldenrod. If you prefer a paler palette of

undemanding cream, pink, lilac or powder blue, highlight moldings or other architectural details with classic white, then add contrast with dark wood furniture. Experiment and experience the satisfaction of surrounding yourself with the colors you truly love.

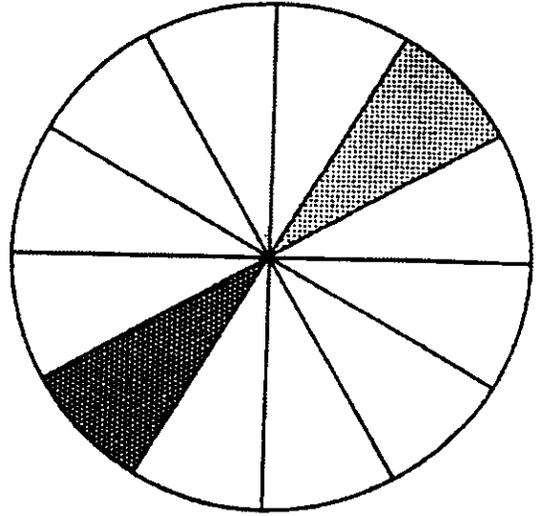
The Color Wheel



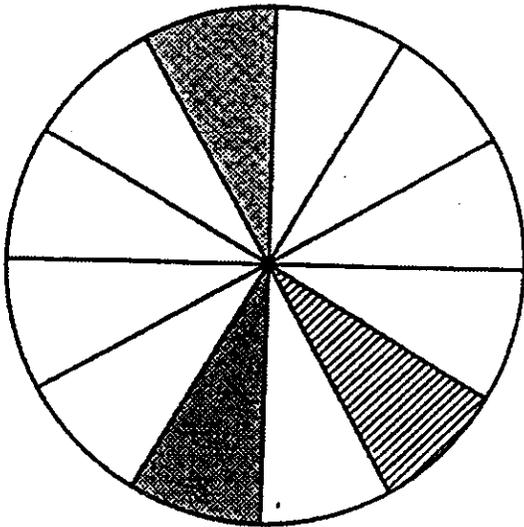
Types of Color Schemes



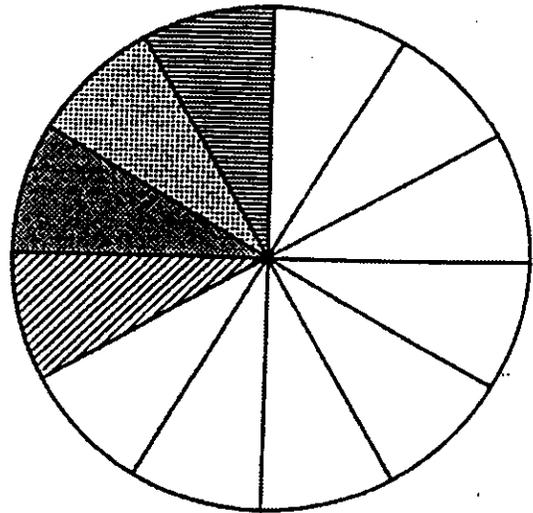
Monochromatic



Complementary



Split Complementary



Analogous

Layout

How you decide to arrange your furniture will affect the room's appeal, comfort and functionality. A few basic rules on furniture arranging will help get you off to a good start.

Concentrate on the purpose of the room.

If you are renting a studio apartment and need a place to study, you will want to ensure a place for a desk and chair. This may affect the size of the couch or chairs you add.

Determine the largest piece of furniture for each room.

In a living room, the size and shape of the couch will affect your choice and placement of the other pieces of furniture. *Allow for furniture that requires more space than is initially obvious.*

A good example is a hide-a-bed sofa. Make sure there is actually enough room to pull the bed out. The same theory applies to a table and chairs. Remember to leave space to pull chairs out from the table.

Position large pieces of furniture parallel to the wall.

Before you start arranging your furniture, think about your lifestyle and favorite activities. Work your furniture layout around these activities. If you enjoy watching television or videos, place your TV/VCR in a location that gives you a comfortable sight line from your sofa or chairs. If you like to read, don't forget to plan for good lighting and a comfortable chair. If listening to music is important, provide for easy access to your stereo and ample, convenient storage for your tapes and/or CDs.

Arrange living room furniture to create a conversation center.

People are more likely to converse comfortably if they can see others as they

ROOM LIGHTING NEEDS

Entry

- High-level general lighting.
- Decorative lighting.

Living Room

- Low-level general lighting.
- Specific lighting for reading.
- Decorative lighting for drapes, fireplaces, paintings, plants, fish tanks and for entertaining and conversation areas to set mood.

Dining Room

- Low-level general lighting.
- Specific lighting over dining table.
- Decorative lighting for drapes, paintings, buffets, china cabinets.

Kitchen

- High-level general lighting.
- Specific lighting for kitchen tasks.

Bedroom

- Low-level general lighting.
- Specific lighting for reading and makeup.
- Night light.

talk. If furniture is facing the television, people are more likely to watch the TV instead of talking.

Don't forget traffic lanes.

People normally establish familiar paths from one point to another shortly after moving into a new home. You may have to do some rearranging if you find the traffic lanes are continually obstructed or not convenient, based on the way you first arranged the furniture.

Remember the principles of design: proportion and balance