



How to...
★

COLOUR ME HAPPY!

THE HUMAN EYE CAN SEE MORE THAN 16 MILLION COLOURS – THAT'S A LOT OF COLOUR MISTAKES JUST WAITING TO TRIP US UP! *YARNWISE* IS HERE TO HELP KEEP YOU FROM MAKING KALEIDOSCOPIIC ERRORS

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No wonder so many of us have trouble in deciding which colours to use in a knitting project and ultimately end up using the original colour scheme suggested by the garment designer.

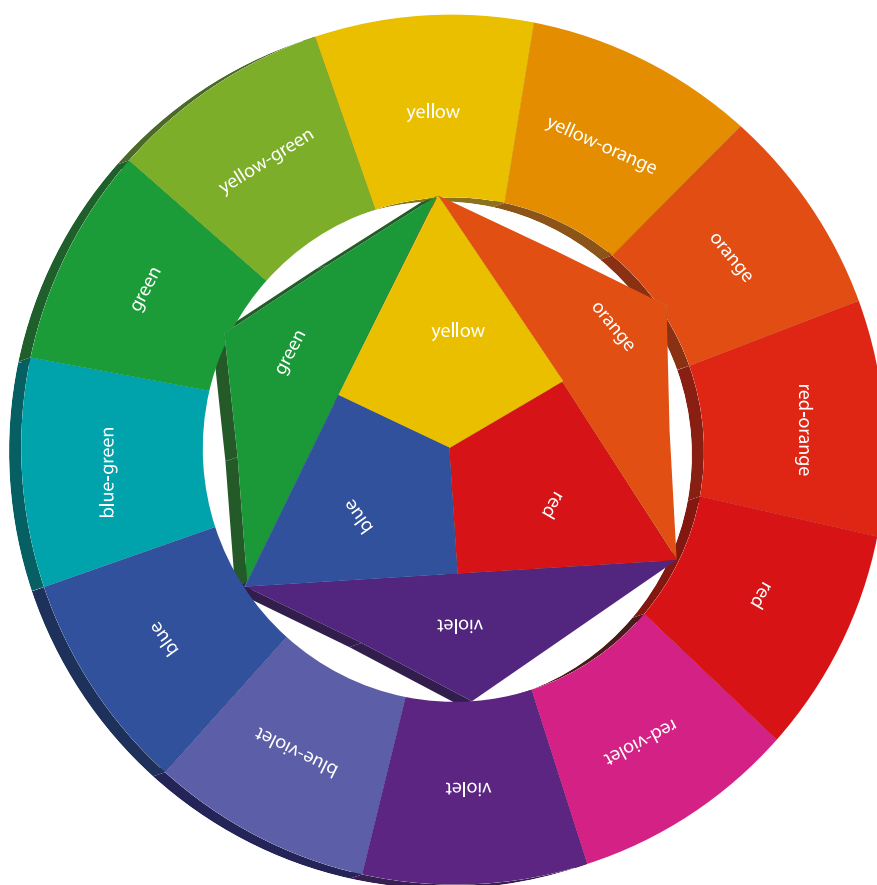
Don't fret, though, deciding on your project in terms of colour can be as easy as 60-30-10. Don't believe us? Take a look at colourwork projects that appeal to you, whether in books or online and you'll notice that the ones you like the most are almost invariably divided into percentages of 60-30-10. Why this works is anybody's guess, perhaps it is the human tendency to see an overall theme in the 60% hue, unifying the colouration. The 30% provides visual interest and the 10%, not unlike jewellery, provides that little glint of sparkle.

Colour can affect the mood of a garment, giving you that 'love it so much I want to wear it every day' feeling – and with zingy colour very much in vogue at the moment it is easy to feel overwhelmed with which hues and tones, let alone colours, to choose.

Often colour selections naturally come late in the design process, but it is an aspect which has a huge affect on our perception of the finished item, and can be so personal, so start looking around you as to what pleases your eye and how the colours or tones have been combined.

Over the centuries artists have spent hours, days or weeks debating about which colours suit the particular piece they are investing their life energy into at the time. And we knitters, and crocheters, are exactly the same, and want to have the same guidance for our painting in yarn colours for our own masterpieces!

Colour itself has three dimensions: hue, value and saturation. All are important in selecting or discarding colours for our palette of choice. All the colours we see are made up of a very small palette – red, blue, yellow. Even black (which in some circles wouldn't be classed as a colour) is made up of a combination of intensely dark, or saturated, red or blue.



BACK TO BASICS

Before we talk about colours that work together, let's go back to the basics!

Primary Colours: These are the three main pigment colours (red, yellow and blue) that can't be formed by combinations of other colours.

Secondary Colours: These colours are formed by mixing primary colours, giving us orange, green and purple.

Tertiary colours: When a primary and secondary colour are mixed, we get yellow-orange, red-orange, red-purple, blue-purple, blue-green and yellow-green.

These colours can be seen to best effect in the colour wheel (above), a traditional symbol used originally for art,

but now is used in a lot of other design mediums. It was originally developed by Sir Issac Newton in 1666 and has been developed over time to the more familiar colour wheel we know today. It is not just a picture, however, it is incredibly useful!

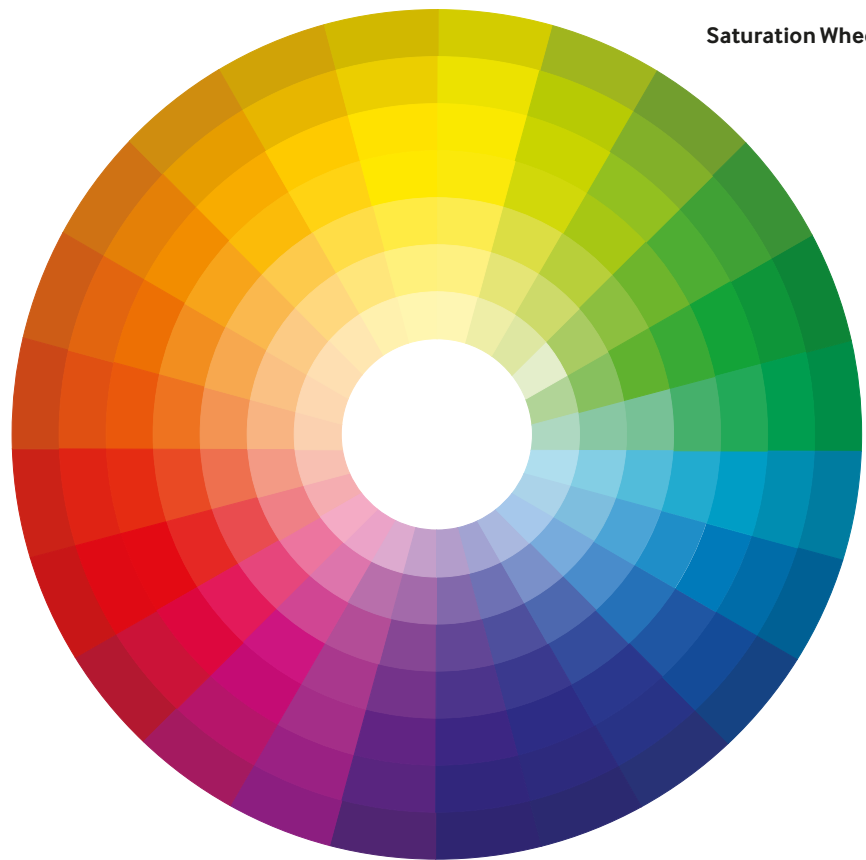
Colour is more than just a blend of pigments, however, each colour has different grades that can be broken down as follows:

Hue: This is our pure colour choice: red, blue, green, etc.

Value: This is how light or dark the colour is, how close to white or black the colour appears to be. Whether you're looking at delicate pastels or rich, lush hefty versions of a colour basically it's the same colour with different 'values'.

Playing with hues, values and saturation can completely change the look of your finished piece

Saturation Wheel



Saturation: This refers to the intensity of the colour, saturated colours are strong, bright colours, low saturated ones have considerably less colour ending up looking grey and then ultimately white. It's within this saturation that we find the often referred to 'tone'. This really refers to a hue with grey added to it, or 'toning' the original down.

HARMONY OF COLOUR

Colour, when used harmoniously, is pleasing to the eye. It can create calm, be balancing, and just seems to 'work'. Where it clashes, it can be over-stimulating, chaotic and harsh. Where it blends too well, it can be unexciting and, well, frankly boring! There are several formulas (don't worry, no taxing maths involved!) that can help in colour selections.

Analogous combination: These are hues that sit alongside each other on the colour wheel (see example, right), using primary, secondary and tertiary colours – for example, blue, blue-green and yellow-green. You may think the colours would blend to a less than thrilling mix, but where one of the colours is used more than others, it creates a harmonious and polychromatic mix. A colour scheme made up of analogous hues is less contrasting and can provide a rich look, and is often viewed as a classic sophisticated palette, whichever colour or hue you use.

Complementary combination: Take two colours, directly opposite each other on the colour wheel – whether primary, secondary or tertiary. Maximum contrast is created, but they are stable. This is a contrast often seen in nature. It works well, producing vibrant combinations, although it can be jarring if used over a large area but works well for making elements stand out.

Tertiary combination: This is also known as a Triadic combination. If you draw an equilateral triangle from any point on the colour wheel, the three colours found at

each point will be your palette. If using primary or secondary colours, these can be a rather raucous mix, but fun!

Split complimentary combination: This is a variation of a complementary combination, but instead of taking the colours opposite each other, we use the main colour and the colour either side of the opposite colour (forming another triangle). It has good visual impact, but is a bit quieter. Take care with this one, as it can be tricky to get right sometimes!

Rectangular combination: Here, four different colours are picked, one from each section of the colour wheel, forming a rectangle. It includes both warm and cool colours, and works very well where one colour is dominant and the other three are supporting.

Square combination: Similar to the rectangle, but forming a square instead. As with the rectangle, one dominant colour is preferable.

COLOUR CONTEXT

It is not just the colour choices that have an impact on the finished design, but also the placement and ratio. Colour behaves differently when placed next to another colour. Red, on it's own, well, it's just red! Pop it against a white background and it can appear a little dulled, but against a black background? All of a sudden it really pops! Up against orange, however, it can start to look a little murky.

This leads us back to our 60-30-10 ratio of colours. A highly saturated colour is best chosen for the 10% of the project as a 'jewel' which will draw the eye. Fair Isle designs often use a single stitch within

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Inhouse Swatch 1 – Analogous



Swatch 3 – Complimentary



Swatch 2 – Analogous reversed



Swatch 4 – Complimentary Reversed



a pattern repeat and this is ideal for a jewel colour – it can just as easily be a saturated monochrome rather than a vibrant tone; a black within a palette of greys and whites, for example.

Colours, or hues, can also be recessive or dominant. The balance between these two is vital in the overall effect of your finished piece. Dominant colours tend to keep their hue when placed amongst a variety of other colours, recessive colours tend to blend and happily mix with other colours to create a background.

Fair Isle designs traditionally appear to have one colour forming the background and one colour forming the 'figure' or design. Playing with hues, values and saturation can completely change the look of your finished piece. Saturated colours appear to dominate with de-saturated colours receding and appearing in the distance, or the background. However colours which are closer together in their values appear to cling together and alter our perception of the form, or pattern.

Play with coloured pencils and squared paper – play with your

chosen colours and see what appeals. Ultimately nothing is wrong and sometimes we have to step outside of our comfort zone to find a new and wonderful colour combination.

Colour perception has a spectacular emotional effect on all people, think of the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican City. Michelangelo's use of colour is breathtaking – and the Japanese tourist will see it in very much the same way as the Norwegian visitor would. The combination of those colours will produce the same emotional states.

This sounds complicated but truly it isn't! Go and pull together a bundle of various coloured items, whether it's yarn or other objects from around the home, and play with them using the colour wheel as a starting point. Next you could try colouring in the greyscale chart (right) before swatching, if you like – and you'll soon start to see what combinations work. We can't all be a Michelangelo, but with a bit of courage and planning we can be create something beautiful ourselves and turn knitting into the true art form we all know that it can be!

