



Acrylic Painting The Bare Bones Basics – Color Theory & Mixing

HOW TO CREATE RICH BEAUTIFUL COLOR AND GORGEOUS
NEUTRALS USING ONLY THE PRIMARY COLORS AND WHITE

The Color Wheel

How to Mix Secondary/Tertiary Colors

Primary, Secondary, Tertiary

- ▶ Primary: Red, yellow, blue
 - ▶ Cannot be mixed
- ▶ Secondary: Orange, green, violet
 - ▶ Mixed from two primary colors (50/50 mix)
 - ▶ Ex: Green - one part blue and one part yellow
- ▶ Tertiary: Red-orange, red-violet, yellow-green, yellow-orange, blue-green, blue-violet
 - ▶ **one** primary + **one** secondary color (25/75 mix) **
 - ▶ Ex: Blue-Violet – this will be 3 parts Blue and one part Red paint
 - ▶ Ex: Yellow-Green – this will be 3 parts Yellow and one part Blue paint



Color Wheel Layout

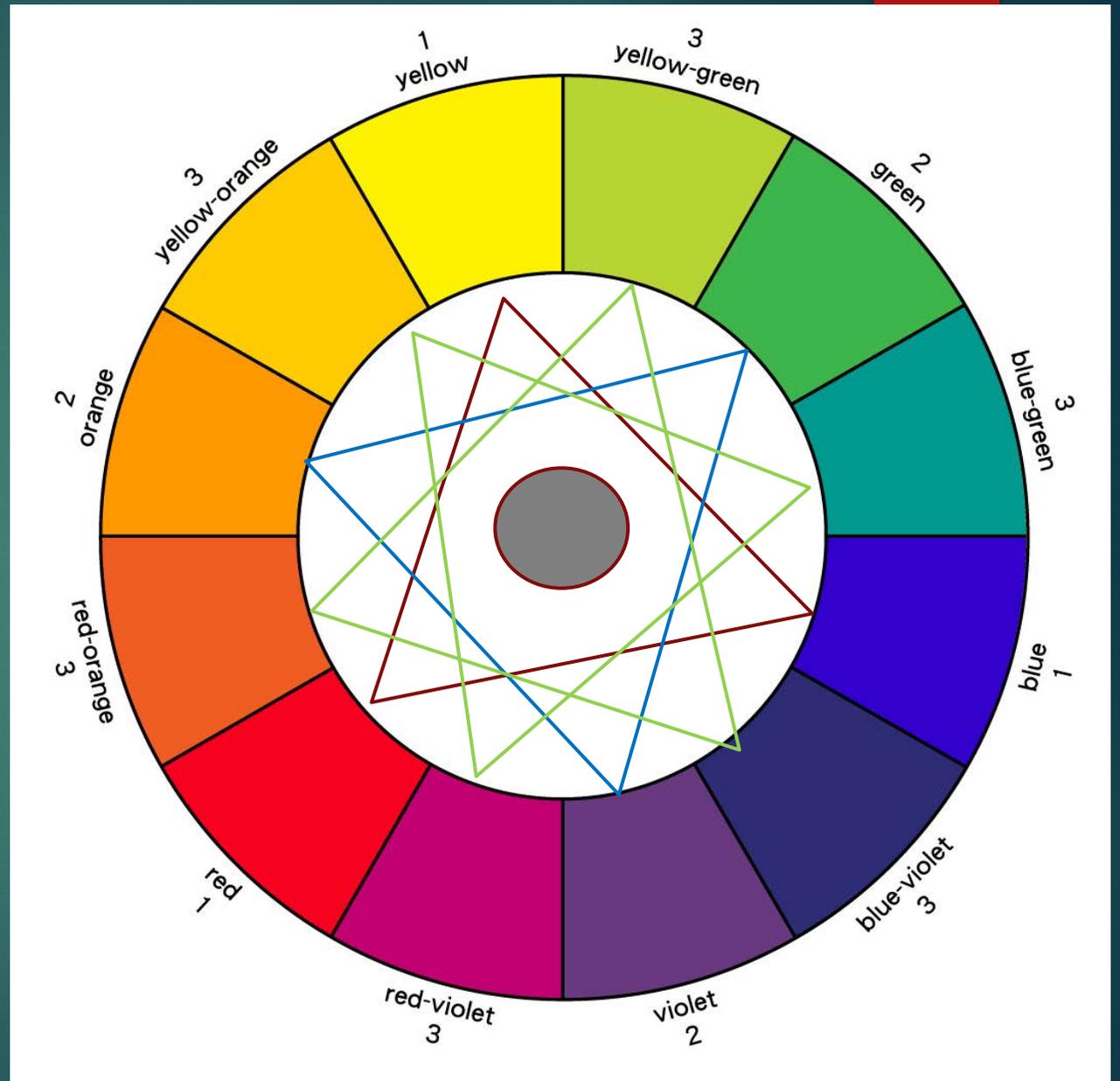
Primary Colors (Labeled #1) – Form an equilateral triangle – RED triangle

Secondary Colors (Labeled #2) - Also form an equilateral triangle – BLUE triangle

Tertiary Colors (Labeled #3) – Form two equilateral triangles – GREEN Triangles

Complementary Colors – ANY two colors opposite each other on the color wheel

Analogous Colors – Any 3-5 colors side by side on the color wheel (ex: Violet, Blue-Violet, Blue, Blue-Green, Green)



More on Secondary & Tertiary Colors

- ▶ It is really important for students to understand that **mixing is a ratio** when it comes to painting (this is where listening in Math class comes in handy LOL).
- ▶ When mixing **secondary colors**, equal parts of the two primaries are needed for an accurate secondary color (mix and check against color wheel to make sure it is a secondary and not a tertiary).
- ▶ When mixing **tertiary colors** it is important to remember that the **FIRST** color in the tertiary color name is the primary that you need more of in the mix
 - ▶ **Ex:** When mixing **Red-Violet** (Red + Blue) you will need more red and less blue paint to achieve the best Red-Violet (check against color wheel to make sure it is actually Red-Violet and not Violet or Blue-Violet – if the ratio of primary colors is correct the tertiary color will be perfect)



Mixing Tints & and Tones/Shades

▶ **Tint:** any color (hue) plus varying amounts of white (depending on desired value)

▶ **Tone/Shade:** any color (hue) plus its complement (I use the term Tone in my classroom, you may refer to Tones as Shades)

▶ **to the right are examples from the Acrylic Value Scales Lesson

Gradually add Blue-Green to the Red-Orange to darken

Gradually add Red to the Green to darken

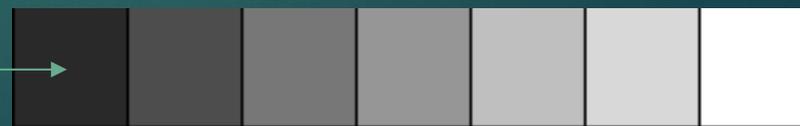
Gradually add a tiny bit of yellow to the Violet to darken

Gradually add Red-Orange to the Blue-Green to darken

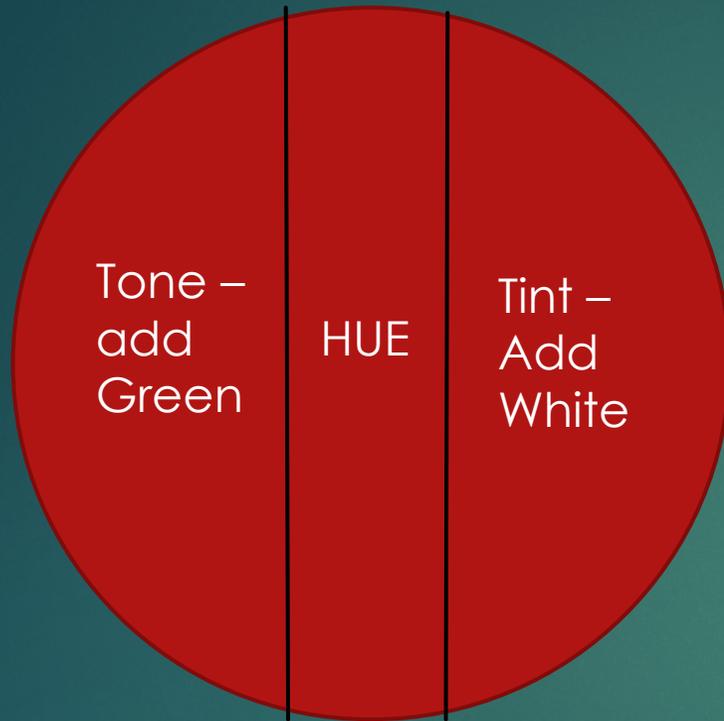


Gradually Add White to each Hue in increasing amounts to create lighter value sections of the scale

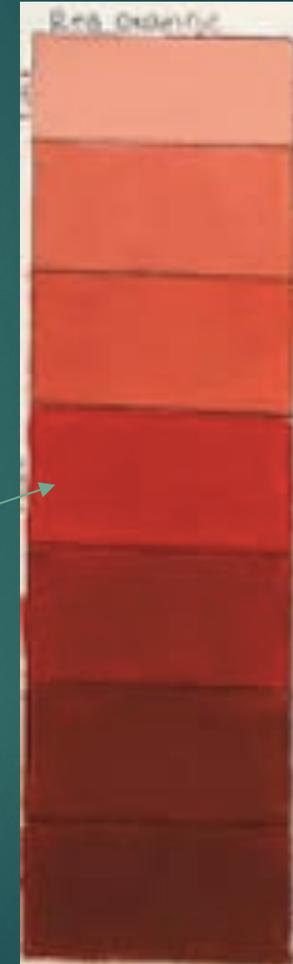
I always have the students use a value scale reference to make sure they understand how to match value to color



Practical Mixing to achieve consistent results



Mixed
Paint



Tint

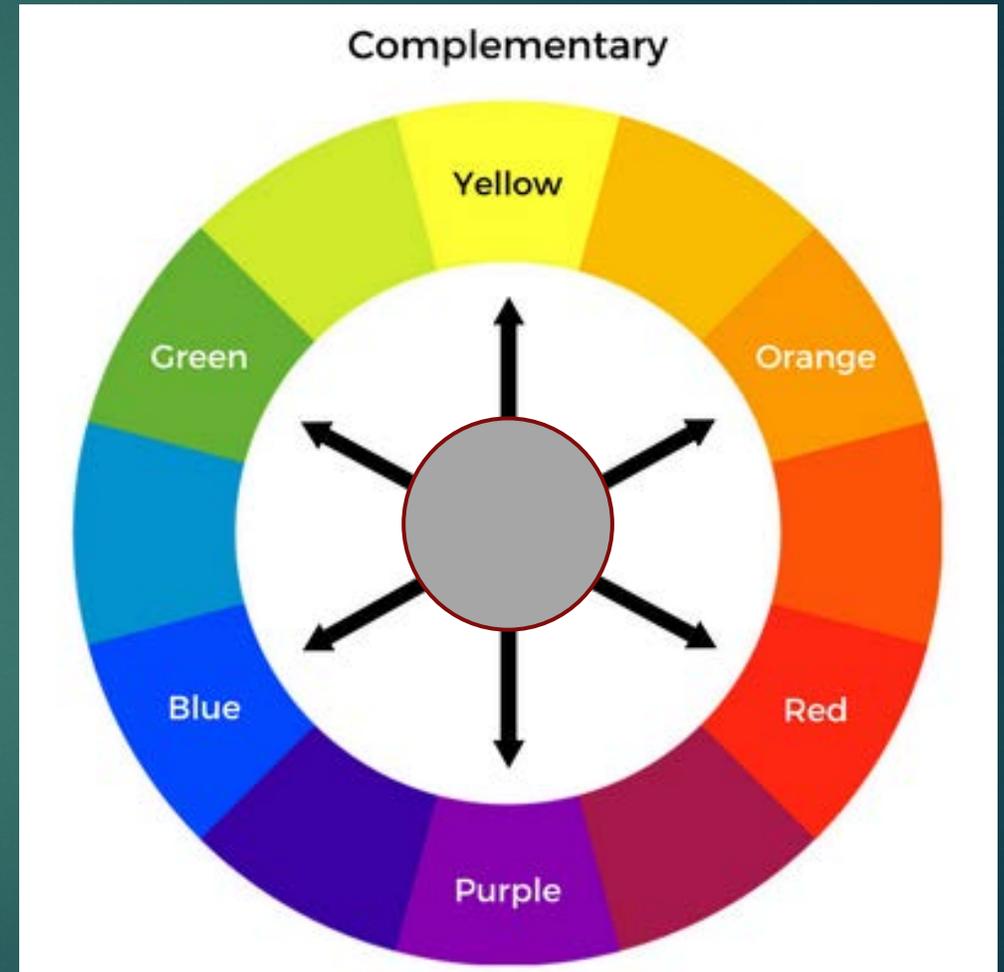
Hue

Tone/Shade

Have the students mix a large enough portion of the original HUE (in this case Red-Orange) and then paint the **center section** first. Then have them add white in gradual increments and paint the tints and then move to the other portion of the original mix and gradually add the complement (in this case Blue-Green) to mix the tones/shades – they will only need a small amount of the complementary color to create the tones/shades. If they add too much complement too quickly they will get a muddy gray (the ratio will be off and they will get the grays)

How to Mix Complementary Colors and Neutrals

- ▶ Complementary Colors – ANY two colors opposite each other on the color wheel
- ▶ In acrylic painting - when mixed equally - complementary colors create a neutral gray (add white to this mix to create the lighter gray seen in the center of the color wheel here)
- ▶ Note:
 - ▶ When mixing complements to achieve a gray, make sure the amounts of each complement are equal as if the ratio is off the neutral may appear as a version of brown or muddy green
 - ▶ **Ex:** when mixing red and green, if the result appears to be a warm neutral (brown) simply add more blue to bring the neutral back to the dark gray family – remember, you will need to add white to the final gray to make it light gray.

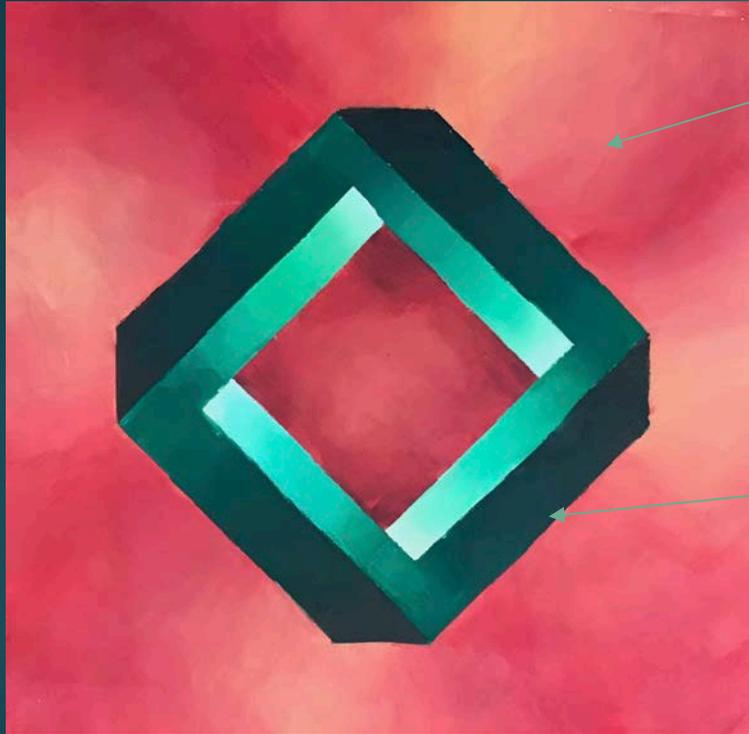


How to mix a Chromatic Black

- ▶ **CHROMATIC BLACK** – black paint is not a necessity in the painting studio. Simply mix a Blue-Violet (3 parts Blue/1 part Red) and add a tiny bit of yellow to the mix. This will produce a gorgeous chromatic black.
- ▶ **Chromatic Black**
- ▶ **Gray** made with complementary colors Red and Green
 - ▶ Same Gray Tinted with white



Basic Painting Techniques



▶ **Wet-into-Wet:** This is when you add wet acrylic paint to an already wet painted area. This is great for creating a **soft value or hue transition** between two sections in your painting. Just blend the edges of the different painted (like frosting a cake) to create a soft transition.

▶ **Wet-onto-Dry:** This is when you add wet acrylic paint to a painted area that is already dry. This is great for creating a **crisp edge** in a painting, as once acrylic paint is dry it is set and cannot be reactivated. It is also great for adding another layer, either to re-paint an area paint up against an area for a crisp edge.

A few more acrylic painting tips:

- ▶ **Keep your brush water clean!** I tell my students that dirty water makes for dirty colors. It's a good habit to get into that when you can't see through the water anymore (it looks like cream soup) dump it out and get fresh water.
- ▶ **Keep the paint out of the ferrule** (the metal part that holds the bristles) while painting. When the brush becomes so globbed with paint that a crisp clean edge is impossible to create, craftsmanship will suffer. Once the mixing is complete and the desired hue or value is achieved, rinse the brush and dry it off and then start to paint. This allows for nice clean edges and nice clean colors. If there is a bunch of red stuck in the brush and it is not cleaned well before moving on to the next hue, then that red will contaminate the new hue and cause muddy colors.
- ▶ **Keep paper towels handy** to dry off the brush once it is cleaned. If there is water left in the brush the colors will be runny.
- ▶ **This stuff dries fast!** Make sure to let an area dry completely before trying to paint over it again (if trying to correct a mistake). Acrylic dries from the top down and sometimes it will appear dry but when another layer is added the paint from underneath will "lift" causing a white area because the new paint is pulling up the half dry paint underneath. This also happens if an area is overworked too long before moving on.

Supplies:

These are the paint colors we use in my classroom. All projects displayed in my lessons are painted with the hues found below. Blick Art Materials has representatives that work with school districts to offer us the best possible pricing. I would check with your bookkeeper to see if Blick is on your preferred vendor list. (I have no personal affiliation with Blick, I have just always had a great experience with them and I hope you do too! 😊)

Blick Studio Acrylics DickBlick.com

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Alizarin Crimson | Cool Red |
| Cadmium Red Deep | Warm Red |
| Primary Yellow | Warm Yellow |
| Cadmium Yellow Light Hue | Cool Yellow |
| Cerulean Blue | Warm Blue |
| Ultramarine Blue | Cool Blue |
| Titanium White | Neutral |

Brushes: Dynasty Brand Golden Taklon in $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 inch widths (flat brushes)
Filbert long-handled brushes in a white taklon