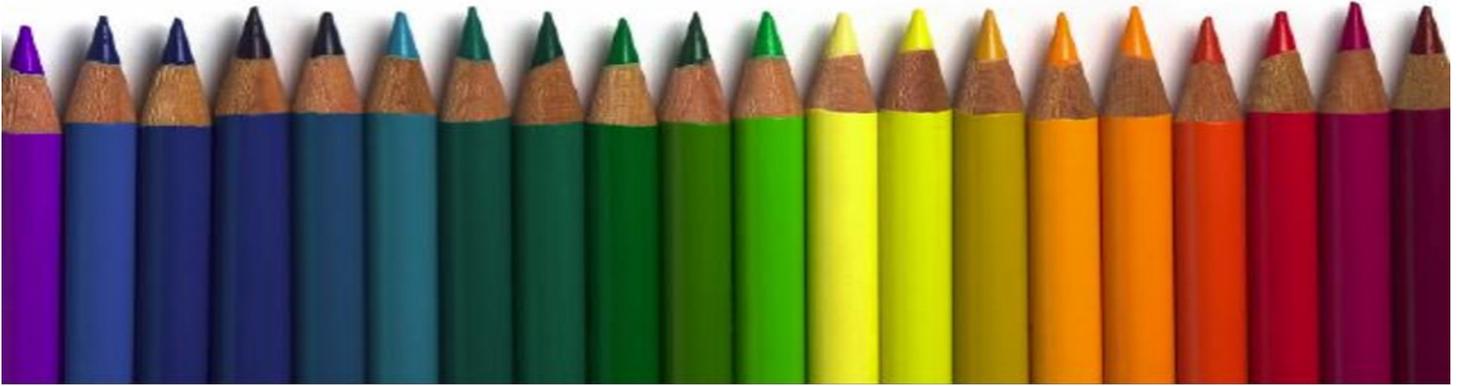# Color

What is Color Theory?

A useful tool for designers, color theory provides a basic understanding of how to select colors when creating documents.
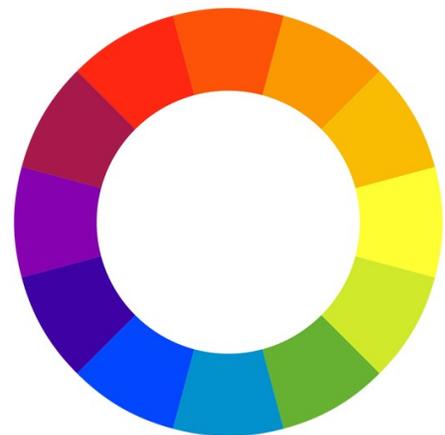
Concerns

According to Color Theory, three considerations emerge as important for the purposes of design: **aesthetics**, **readability,** and **tone**.

- •**Aesthetics**: Color can greatly enhance the aesthetics or overall visual appeal of a document when used to create harmony or contrast.
- •**Readability**: When effectively utilized color should not detract from the ability of the target audience to read the document.
- •**Tone**: Use of color can evoke an emotional response from the intended audience.

Color Wheel

A key resource for designers, the color wheel visually represents the relationships colors have with each other. Pictured on the Color Wheel are the three main color categories: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary.

- •**Primary**: colors that cannot be made from any other combination of colors. **Ex. Red, Blue, Yellow**

- •**Secondary**: colors produced by combining two primary colors. **Ex. Green, Orange, Purple**

- •**Tertiary**: colors made by combining a primary color and a secondary color. **Ex. Blue-Green, Yellow-Orange, Red-Purple**
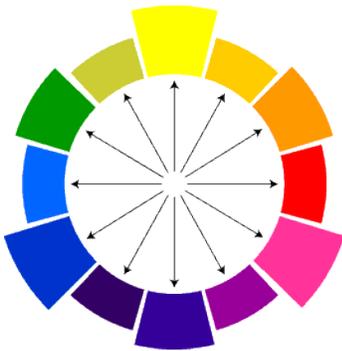
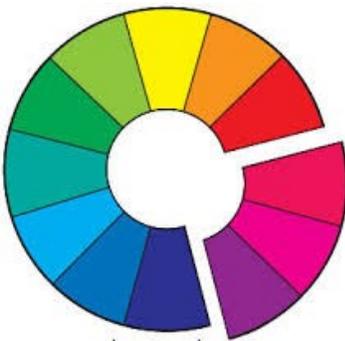# How to Use the Color Wheel To Determine Color Relationships

Anytime two or more colors are used as elements of a single design, a relationship is produced. To determine whether the relationship appropriately represents the purpose of the design, a designer may refer colors proximity to each other on the color wheel.

- **Contrasting:** formed when two colors opposite each other on the color wheel are used.

Use contrasting colors, colors on opposite sides of the wheel, to create visual interest.

- **Analogous:** formed when any three colors next to each other on a twelve part color wheel are used.

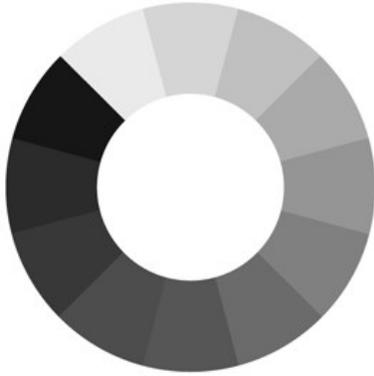When working with an analogous color scheme, you may want to use the third color as an accent.

- **Monochromatic:** formed when variations of a single color are used.

Using monochromatic colors creates a sense of harmony and produces a soothing effect.

•**Achromatic:** formed when no color is used, only black and white.

When creating a text-centered document, try using an achromatic color scheme.

Quick Tips

- Select colors appropriate to the purpose of your document. For example, use bright colors to design an invitation to a child's birthday party. Bright colors are not only fun and vibrant but they capture the appropriate tone of the event.

- Try to stick to one dominant color, and use other colors as accents. Too many vibrant colors create confusion and clutter.

- Create your own color scheme instead of relying on templates. Templates restrict your creativity and tend to look generic.

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have any questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library, or call 815-836-5427.

Sources consulted: Purdue OWL, Color Matters