

Colour

Unit

7

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Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this unit the candidate will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the characteristics of various colour systems,
- ✓ Explore various interior colour schemes.

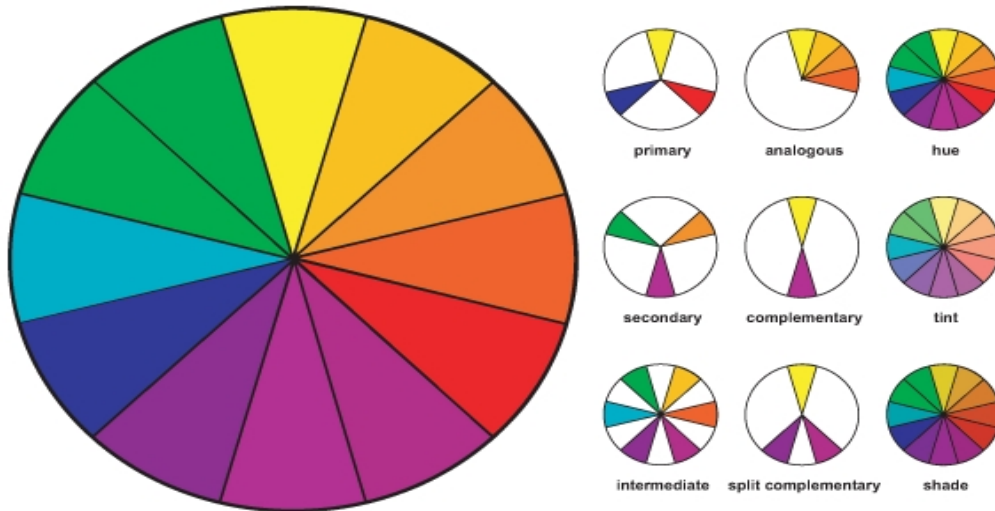
Colour is one of the most uplifting and practical ingredients you can bring into a scheme. Almost all designers have a magic wand in their tool box. It is called colour and it can:

- evoke a particular period
- change the proportions of the room
- make a small room look larger;
- lighten a dark room;
- help to create a certain mood;
- make a room feel 'cool' or 'warm';
- link different objects and areas in a house

A good colour scheme costs no more than a bad one. In the same way as you would not have to pay more for a chocolate ice-cream than for a vanilla, prices do not vary according to colour or flavour. A good colour scheme adds value to everything present in the room whereas a bad one loses every charm altogether.

The Colour Wheel

The colour wheel is representative of the way we perceive light. It is a tool to demonstrate relationships between colours. Understanding its principles gives a fundamental knowledge for designing beautiful colour schemes.



Primary Colours

Light is comprised of the colour spectrum. This spectrum is what we see in the rainbow. It is amazing that this splash of colour is built upon only three fundamental colours or hues. They are called the primary colours because they exist alone and are not created by the mixing of any other colours. These are red, blue and yellow. These colours lie an equal distance apart on the colour wheel.

Secondary Colours

The colours created when mixing any two primary colours are called the secondary colours, i.e. green colour is created by mixing the two primary colours yellow and blue; red and yellow make orange when mixed together.

Tertiary Colours

This mixing process can be extended further to create the tertiary colours. These are also called the intermediate colours. These are created when one primary colour is combined with one secondary colour combined in equal parts, i.e. a blue-purple hue is developed when the primary colour blue is combined with the secondary colour purple. The colour wheel demonstrates how the different hues visually relate to one another.

Tints, Shades and Tones

Various degrees of colour strength can be created by adding white or black to a particular hue. This way they take a slightly different flavour from the starting colour.

Tint - add only white to create a tint of a particular colour i.e. the colour pink is actually a tint of red.

Shade - add only black to create a shade of that colour.

Tone - add various degrees of both black and white to a colour to create a tone of that colour. The elements of colour related to the colour wheel also play a role in perception of space when you consider the colour schemes and colour psychology in the mix. These important aspects should be considered as part of the planning because they affect an overall look and feel of a room.

Choosing a Colour Scheme

When designing a colour scheme for a room take time to consider some important questions.

Selecting Appropriate Colours

Ask yourself these questions in order to narrow down the choice of colours:

What is the Room's Function?

In a bedroom you may find pastel colours more acceptable, while in a child's playroom primary bright colours might be more appreciated.

How much time is to be spent in the Room?

A strong vibrant colour may be fine for the cloakroom but unsuitable for the bedroom where more time is spent.

What is the Orientation of the Room?

If it is north facing you may counteract the coldness of the light by introducing a colour from the warm side of the wheel; whereas, if the room faces south, this will allow you to base your scheme on one of the cooler colours.

Does the Size of Room need Adjustment?

By painting or papering the walls in a warm dark colour, you can make a large room look smaller.

What Mood do you want to Create?

Is the living room, for example, to be lively or tranquil?

Will the Room be used mostly during the Day or at Night?

For a room like a dining room, which is mostly used at night, make sure that your selection looks good in artificial light.

What are the Colours of the existing Possessions you want to Accommodate in the Room?

These may inspire the starting point for your scheme. If the room is to be a place for rest and relaxation, soft greens and blues will tend to work well in prompting rest, and would be a good consideration for bedrooms.

On the other hand, more attractive social spaces like dining rooms or living rooms might benefit from colours on the warmer side of the colour wheel. Whatever the case, there is no particular rule about colour and where particular colours must go in the home.

Colour and Light

It is very important to consider the natural light when choosing colour because light can either bring a colour to life or deaden it. First be aware of the type of natural light coming into the room. The colder the light the better suited it is to use warmer colours; cream as opposed to brilliant white; terracotta rather than orange; aquamarine instead of turquoise. Secondly observe how the external factors affect the light in the room. The light in the built up area is filtered and flattened and is quite different to that found in the open spaces. The amount of light that a room receives also has a profound effect upon colour. A room with abundant sunlight from windows facing south will convey a warmer glow on the wall colour, whereas a room facing north will reflect a bluer light off the wall. It is tempting to paint a dark area brilliant white, but this will only make it look dingy. Work with the character of the room rather than trying to force a colour scheme on it. Dark rooms look magnificent painted in rich shades such as mushroom or vermillion red. These dramatic colours are ideal for the room used mainly in the evening or in winter i.e. dining room or cosy living rooms.

Consider the effect of artificial light on colour. In rooms with only one overhead lighting source the light becomes diffused and the colours become dull. It is therefore best to create a layered scheme, including up lighters that can be used to wash a wall or spotlights that highlight key features. The choice of bulb and shade is also important. Halogen bulbs produce a clear white light that has the least discernible effect on colour. However it is diffused or reflected. The halogen light is too bright for a room intended for relaxing. Here the warmer glow of tungsten bulbs is more comfortable.

Before completely painting a room with a chosen colour, paint a sizeable area on one wall of the room and observe how the colour looks at different times of the day and evening. If you decide that it is not quite the right hue that is finally required, you can fine tune it by trying a shade or two lighter or darker. The process will help you get the right colour scheme actually required and will save time and money.

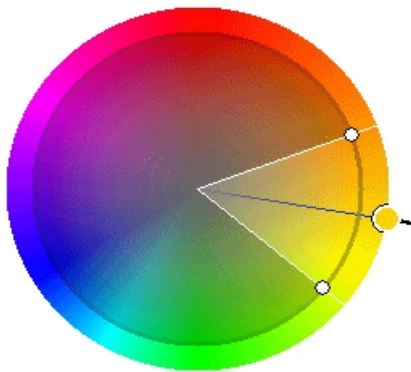
Colour Schemes

An interior design scheme can be inspired by anything, such as a beautiful rug, a beautiful pattern; even nature itself can spark the imagination. The possibilities are endless. A key to developing a good interior design scheme from any source of inspiration is to pull out a single dominant colour and then support it with one or two other colours from the scheme

but in lesser amounts. Working to achieve the right ratio between the colours within the scheme is very important. It can often make or break the look. Even if there is no particular inspiration for a scheme, still tempting interiors can be designed from these common colour schemes.

Analogous

This type of colour scheme consists of the hues which lie next to each other on the colour wheel. It usually projects a very unified and cohesive look. Analogous colour schemes work best if the colours are all from either the warm side or the cool side of the colour wheel and not a mixture of both.



Complementary

Consider using a complementary colour scheme, if you want to bring attention to the room. The main palette consists of the colours opposite to each other on the colour wheel.

Triad

This colour scheme consists of any three colours equally spaced around the colour wheel.



Monochromatic

In this approach one colour is used in various tints, shades and tones. Black and white may be introduced within this type of colour scheme. A monochromatic colour scheme can look

very sophisticated and unified. The key to success with this scheme is creating variations with the chosen colour scheme.

Split Complementary

This is a variation on the complementary colour scheme in a slightly more sophisticated way. It is composed primarily of one dominant colour and two hues that sit across on either side of its complementary colour directly across the colour wheel.



Colour Psychology

When planning a room scheme, interior design colour psychology should also be considered. The appropriate interplay of a colour and its tonal value help to achieve the feel that is required for a room. Colours can be perceived as warm or as cool depending on where they lie on the colour wheel. In interior design colour psychology, the yellow, red and orange region is considered a warm colour zone, whereas the purple, blue and green area is considered to give a cool feeling. There are beiges and muted greys that don't really have a warm or cool projection in interior colour psychology. These are referred to as temperature **neutrals**. The colours on the warm side of the wheel are advancing colours and give a closer and cosier feel. If you have to decorate a large space that lacks intimate appeal, consider using colours from this part of the spectrum. On the other hand hues from the cool side tend to recede visually, suggesting an open space. These are therefore good to use in small spaces.

The Warm Colours

Red

Red is associated with passion, heat and energy. This colour is very bold in its pure form. It can be very elegant and add a lot of character to a colour scheme, both traditional and contemporary. It is a good accent to the green family which lies opposite red on the colour wheel. The stronger values of red can be highly stimulating and overpowering. Even in its softer tint of pink, red can add much design to a scheme. Traditionally pink was associated with love and romance, but this is now disappearing. Red is also appetite-inducing, which is why many restaurants are decorated in this colour. The deeper, greyed values of red-plum,

rose and burgundy add warmth, richness and elegance without being too overpowering. Like all warm colours, these benefit from the introduction of a little contrast by a cool colour or definite neutrals such as pure white, black and clear grey.

Orange

Orange is associated with sunshine and cheerfulness. It brings together the energy of red and the intellect of yellow. In its pure form it is as demanding and advancing as red. Orange in Greek mythology was the colour attributed to Zeus, the supreme ruler of the gods.

Orange creates a highly stimulating scheme if its stronger values are used, or when it is contrasted with black, white or its complement, blue. Use these strong combinations for children's rooms, or to create a welcoming entrance hall. When used in its more muted form it is less overwhelming. Terracotta flooring, apricot fabrics or other muted varieties of this hue can be quite pleasing to the eye.

Yellow

Yellow is a joyful and uplifting colour associated with summer. The symbolic colour of the life giving sun hence linked with nature. Yellow is associated with creative energy, the mind intellect and power and symbolises wealth. Almost any value of yellow will bring warmth and light into the darkest and coldest room. Yellow can create a focal point with a neutral. The paler yellows have a high reflective value, it can make a small and dark room look much larger and brighter. In its pure form yellow can be overwhelming. Its lighter tints, however, can look clean and fresh. As an accent colour yellow can provide a nice level of appearance in a design scheme.

The Cool Colours

Purple

Purple is associated with tranquillity, opulence and fashion in interior design colour psychology. Because of its position on the colour wheel where warm and cool meet, its bias towards red or blue determines its degree of coolness. It takes on warmer characteristics with red tones. Some tones of violet can be a bit intense, but pastel lavenders give a very fresh and uplifting feel to a room.

Blue

Blue is associated with calm, trust and sensitivity. Blue can easily be paired with many other colours and is therefore a common choice in a colour scheme. Usually it is used with white, greens and yellows.

Green

Green is the colour of nature, relaxation and rest. Green is very versatile in working with other colours as it is the colour of nature. In many cultures green is also the colour of fertility. Today, the 'green' image also sums up the current refusal to accept pollution and spoiling of our environment. Coming half way between the warm and cool colours, green is the colour of harmony. It is easy on the eye and creates an atmosphere of relaxation. When green is contrasted with its complement red, the result is very stimulating. Green colour recedes, so in its pale values it gives an impression of space. Most greens are cool so you might need to warm them up with a few contrasting accessories and crisp neutrals.

Colour Tones

Tonal values play an important role in interior design colour psychology. Lighter tones are more reflective and therefore we see these as moving away from us. They give us the illusion of more space, whereas deeper and darker colour tones reflect less light and appear closer to us. This creates a sense of a closer, intimate space. Consider both hue and tonal value when planning a design scheme.

When planning a colour scheme you need to think about many things: the size and shape of the room you are going to decorate, its orientation (that is, which way it faces), and how much natural light it receives.

You also need to consider the intensity of the colours you choose. If you put too many similar tones together the effect will lack contrast, therefore different tonal values should be combined. This is particularly important when working with a monochromatic scheme, or one based on neutrals, or when you are decorating your room with mainly plain surfaces. The secret of all interior design lies in combining the practical with the aesthetic. It is therefore wise to choose the mid and darker tones for those surfaces which receive most wear, such as the floor and upholstery, and to use paler colours on the walls and ceilings which are easier to wash or clean. Stronger and pure hues can be introduced in the shape of accents and accessories.

Bringing in Harmony

One of the most harmonious colour schemes is made by working with different values of one colour, to create monochromatic or single colour scheme. Such a scheme is calming and relaxing and when blues or greens are used, it suggests space and elegance. Colours that are next or adjacent to each other on the colour wheel naturally harmonize with each other.

Bringing in Contrast

Contrasting and complementary colour schemes are most stimulating and therefore should not be used for areas used for relaxing. You can create contrasting schemes by using two dynamic opposites: blue/orange, yellow/violet, red/green but also think about the tonal contrast and the use of a neutral as a link. In a scheme, if pale primrose is combined with

rich plum-purple, cream can be used as the neutral. A simple way of creating a contrasting scheme is to combine a warm with a cooler colour, which need not necessarily be the complete opposite; blue can be used for instance with yellow.

Creating a Feeling of Warmth

All the warm colours in their various tints, shades and tones, work well in cold, dark and north or west facing rooms. The warm colours can be used to create a cosy atmosphere. The warm, long wavelength colours include red, red/orange, yellow/orange, yellow and some yellow/greens. You can also use their various tones, tints and shades such as pink, rose, wine red, gold, apricot, yellow and terracotta to create the same results. For added interest you can use strong cool accents into a mainly warm scheme.

Creating Excitement

The way you put colours together is called creating colour harmonies, although sometimes you may create excitement rather than harmony. For instance, a stimulating affect can be created in the children's playroom by using contrasting or complementary colours. Try combining a warm with a cool, such as red with green, blue with orange, purple and yellow. All these colours are directly opposite on the colour wheel, and can be very strong and dominant. A softer and still stimulating scheme can be created by using pale and subtle values of the complementary colours, or by pairing yellow and blue, grey and pink. It is also a good idea to add plenty of textural contrast to exciting stimulating schemes. To do this shiny and light reflecting surfaces can be combined with rough rustic and matt light-absorbing ones.

Creating Calm and Relaxation

There are the adjacent or neighbourly colours, which are found next to each other on the colour wheel. When creating a relaxing scheme, work with colour from the same family. You can try yellow/green and blue/green. Calm schemes can include mainly warm or mainly cool colours. For an even more relaxing scheme, you can work with monochromatic colour scheme where different values of one basic hue are used.

Using Neutrals

Natural and neutral textures can also be used to create a relaxing area, but they should come from the same family. The only true neutrals are black, white and grey. When these three non-colours are used together, they can be highly stimulating, especially if combined with bold patterns and lots of different textures. These days other accepted neutrals (although some may include a different colour bias) include cream, beige, off white, mushroom, brown and the colours of natural untreated materials, such as wood sea grass, jute, slate.

Suggested Further Readings:

- ✓ *Colour: How to Use Colour in Art and Design, (2006), By Edith Anderson Feisner*
- ✓ *Interior Color by Design: A Design Tool for Architects, Interior Designers, (1994), By Jonathan Poore*