In this video, we will go through some specific strategies in design that will give you the basic tools and frameworks in making decisions when composing your project. This video will explain how value and contrast and colour relationships can affect your overall project and how they can be used to help communicate or direct attention.
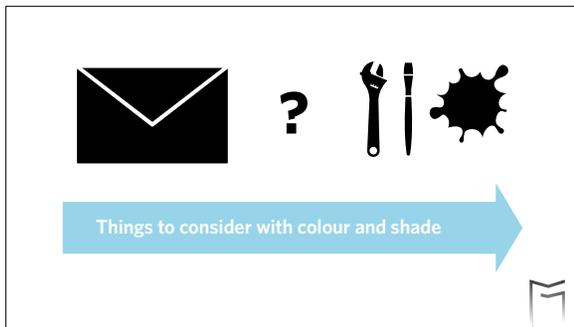
Factoring in your audience and intention; some good questions to ask throughout the design process are, what message are you trying to convey? How will you drop hints to convey and direct your purpose?

Value is the level of brightness or darkness in a color, object or element. Using value contrast in a project can help you lead the viewer's eyes intentionally to a focal point in your project.
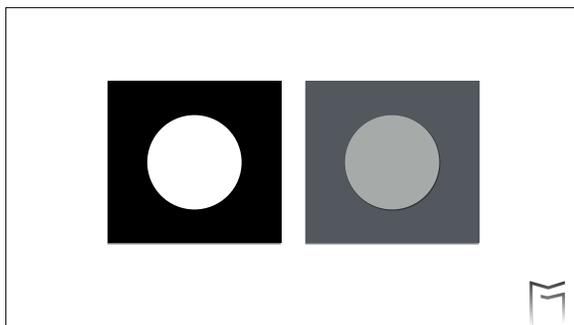
Having contrasting values together such as black and white will make your image pop. Having a low contrast in values will make your image appear more soft and quiet, like the one on the right.

For example, in this image the numbers are all the same tone or shade of grey, however because the background gets lighter as you go to the right, the number three looks very dark and the background is very light. This makes the number three pop against the light background as this is a point of highest contrast between the background and the number. When we moved to the left side of the image, the one and the background it lies against are both quite dark causing the one to disappear into the background.


In this image, you can see that your eyes will go to the point of high contrast between the number itself and its respective background value. Both numbers 1 and 3 have a high contrast, especially the top of the one, and the bottom of the three. Number 2 in the middle is not as much, so it won't catch your eye as much as the other high contrast areas.
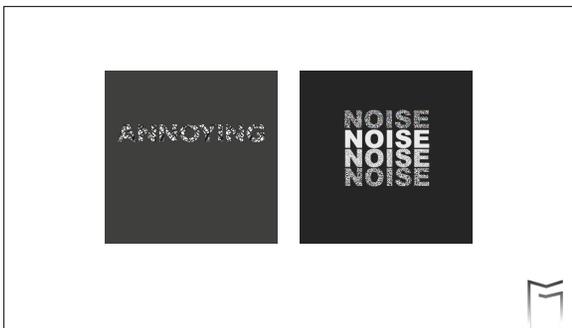

Be careful when introducing patterns and textures of high contrast in your text, because it can make it illegible.
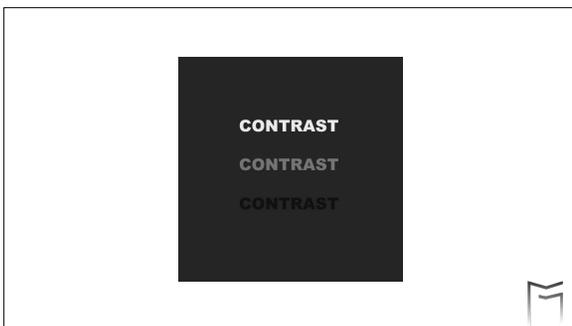
Playing around with the different value contrasts and visual relationships they can create is crucial to having an effective project.
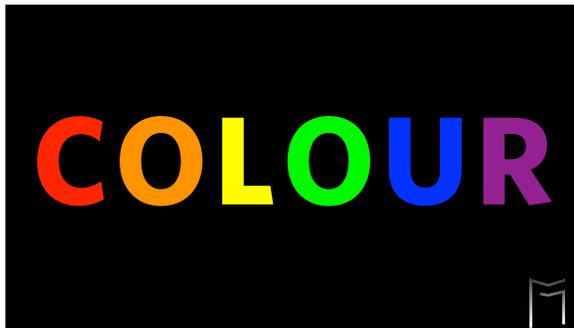
Applying specific colour relationships can also strengthen a project and direct a viewers eye. Color evokes and orchestrates cultural histories, senses and emotions. It is a language of its own and is a lifetime's work of experimenting.


HUE
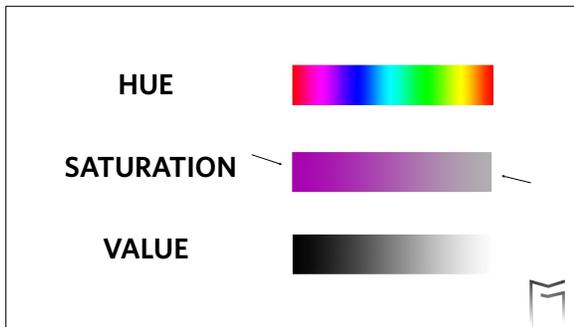
SATURATION

VALUE

Three elements form a specific colour; hue saturation and value. As a quick refresher, hue is what people know as a colour in its purest form such as pure red or pure yellow. Saturation is the intensity of the colour. For example, the colour on the left is a highly saturated purple, therefore appearing bright and loud, whereas the colour on the right has a very low saturation causing it to look dull and grey. Finally, value is a level of brightness or darkness of your colour.
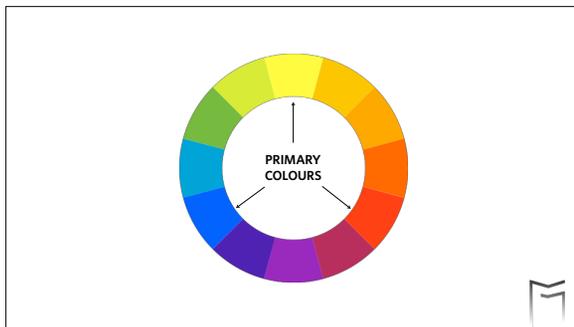

PRIMARY COLOURS

Primary colours are pure red, pure blue and pure yellow.
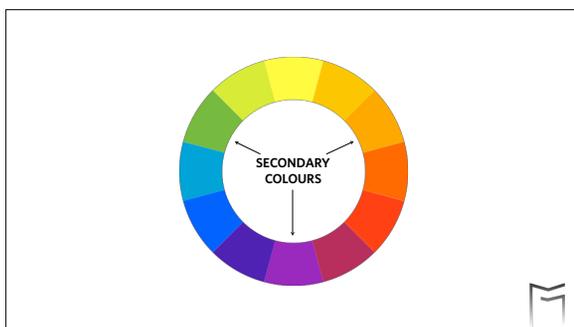
SECONDARY COLOURS

Secondary colours are the colours that result from mixing said primary colours together in equal parts. Red and blue makes purple blue and yellow makes green and red and yellow makes orange
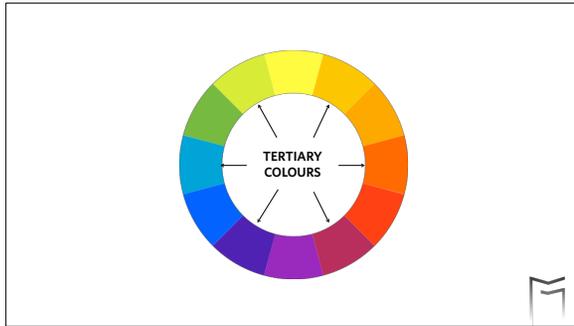
Tertiary colours are what is made when a secondary colour is mixed with a primary colour in equal parts. Red plus orange makes it red, orange, blue plus green makes a blue green and so on.
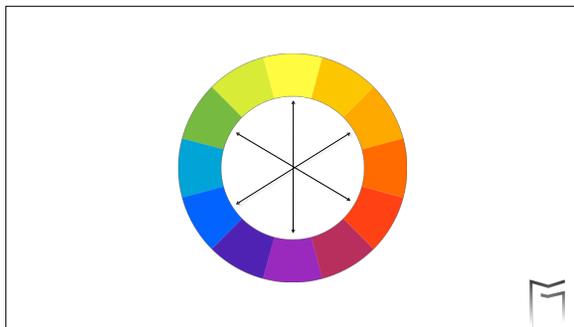
These three levels of colours make up the basic colour wheel and many colour relationships can be made from this. This image points out complimentary colours, which are colours across/opposite from each other on the colour wheel, in particular red and green, then blue and orange and purple and yellow. Using complimentary colours in your projects can make for vivid and bold compositions as eyes are highly active when they see complimentary colours beside each other.
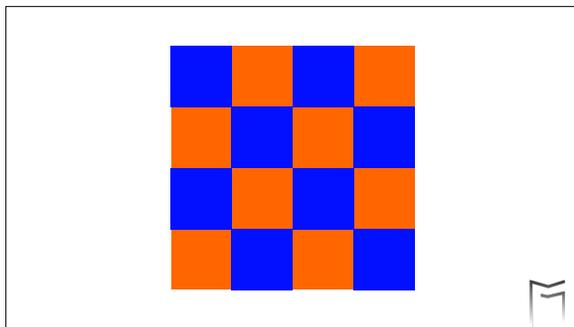
When an image has equal parts of both colours in a compliment, as seen here with blue and orange, the image appears to be vibrating to the eyes -making the image look unstable. This is because the cones in our eyes can't actually process both colours at the same time and therefore jumps from blue to orange resulting in a loud and vibrating composition
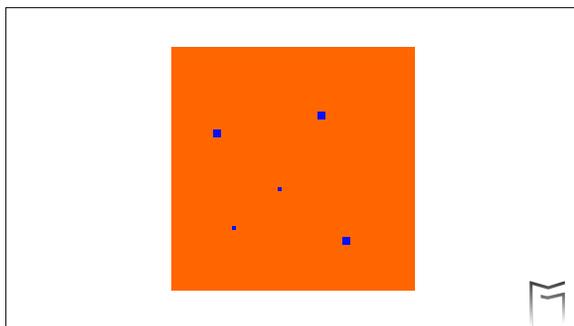

When the proportions are drastically different, as seen here, the image reads as more stable but the smaller area will appear to float. However, it should be noted that when having two brightly complimentary colours, the competition between them makes it difficult to create a focal point and can be hard for legibility.
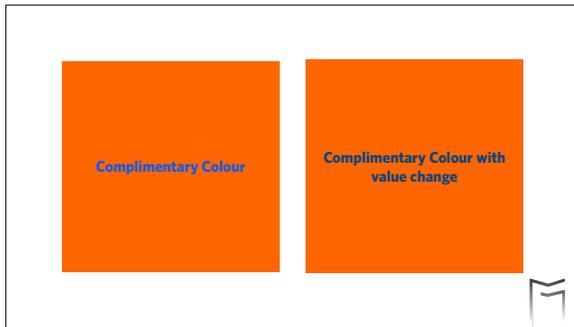
Therefore, it is a good practice to have a value change in one element to make it read better.
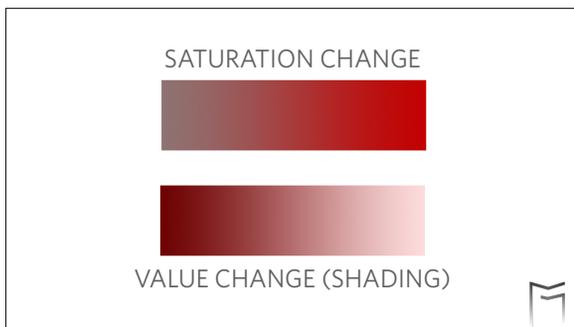
To explain the last image more, there is a difference between changing your saturation and changing the value of a colour. As you can see here with the colour red the saturation change goes from a deep intensity to a dull red, whereas the value change goes from a dark red to a light red.

Using text as an example, if we use colour for the text and background, a saturated text pops and flies off a background that is desaturated. While a desaturated text on a desaturated background is mute and dull.

Whereas desaturated text does not read very well on a saturated background, unless there is a large value change, as in the sentence below.
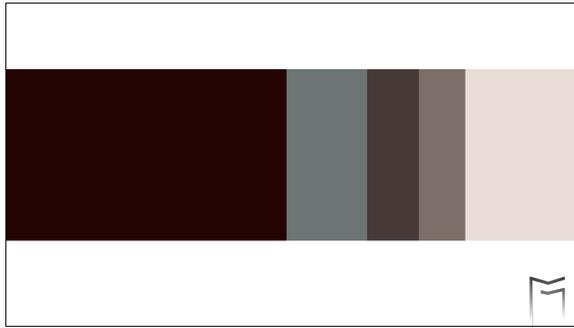
Overall, it is best not to use contrasting colour in a composition because it is too active for a viewers eye. Instead you might want to go for different colour combinations. There are some great web-sites on the internet that can help you to come up with a colour palette for your project such as Adobe Colour, or Paleton, there are millions of combinations!
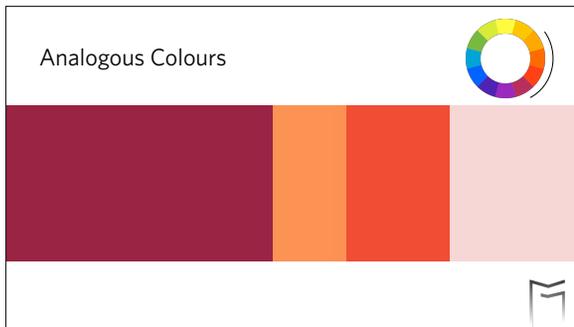
Analogous Colours

There are many ways to plan your colour palette. One great place to start is by looking at analogous colours, these are colours that are close together on the colour wheel, like shown here.

Analogous Colours
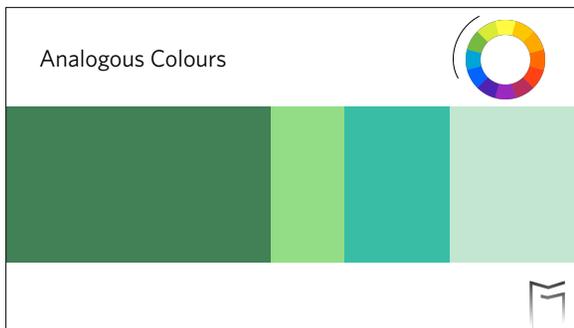
Also notice the change in value and saturation in these with the colour combination. Not all colours are fully saturated, which can strain the eye of your viewer.
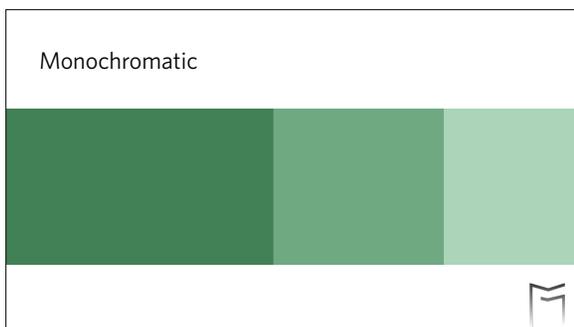
Monochromatic

Another tool is to use a monochromatic colour scheme -using the same hue with different values.
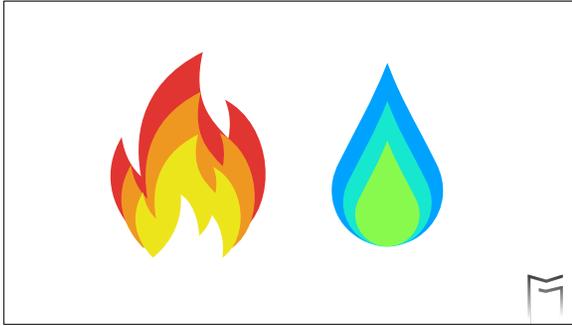
Typically colour groups can be described as warm or cool colours depending how much blue or red is in the hue. Warm colours can evoke a sense of heat and intensity, while cool colours can be calming and serine -though this is not always the case.


In addition to the emotional connections tied colour, there are many symbolic connections, such as green being connected to nature, purple denoting royalty and blue connected to water or sky. Of course these connections are not always universal.
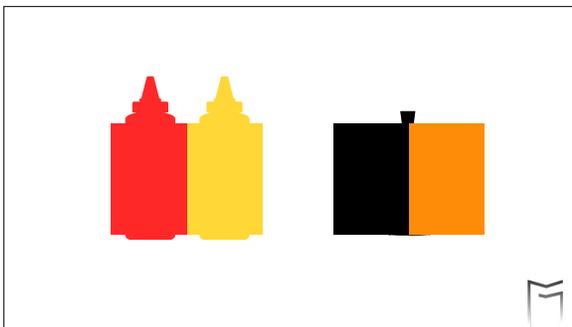

Another important consideration, when planning your colour scheme is to think about what relationship these colours have and how your viewer might interpret the relationship. For Instance, if I paired this red and yellow together, my viewer might think of ketchup and mustard. Or if I paired orange and black, my viewer maybe reminded of a spooky jack-o-lantern and halloween. It is important to think about common colour combinations when planning your colour scheme to avoid unwanted connections.
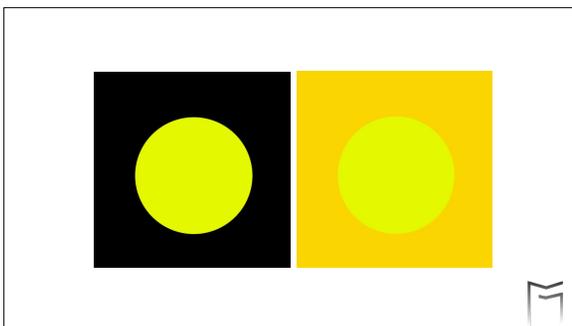
Color relationships can be further explored if you experience how colour can change when working with foreground and background relationships. Especially since the same colour can appear different when against different coloured backgrounds. In these images, the yellow circle on the left appears to be a lot brighter when against the black background. On the right it appears to be cooler, toned and duller when against a warmer yellow.
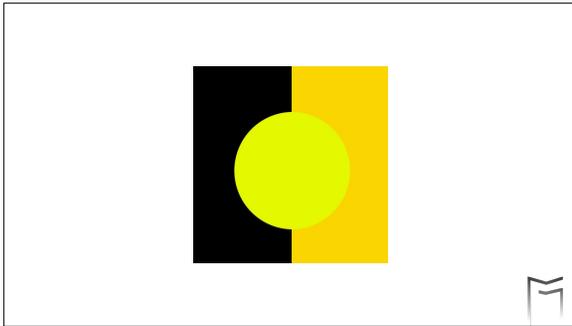
But the middle circle yellow is the same!
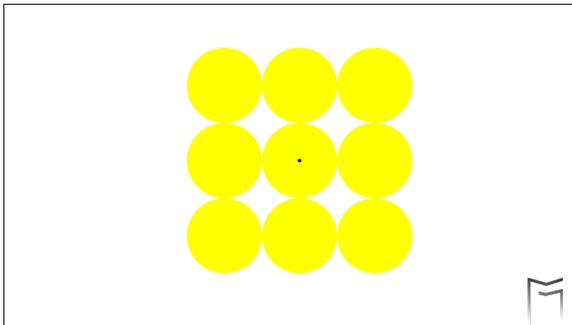
For the next example of how our eyes negotiate colour, please stare at this image for 10 seconds.

You are experiencing a stain, or an effect of how our eyes react when the yellow circles are removed. Your eyes will see its imprints in its compliment purple. This is because your eyes become tired of processing one specific colour and recover by processing its opposite. In this case yellow and then switched to a white background the complimentary colour of purpose comes into effect. Our eye muscle memory also remembers the imprint, which is why you still see the circles with diamonds.

TIP - Look at images in magazines and books
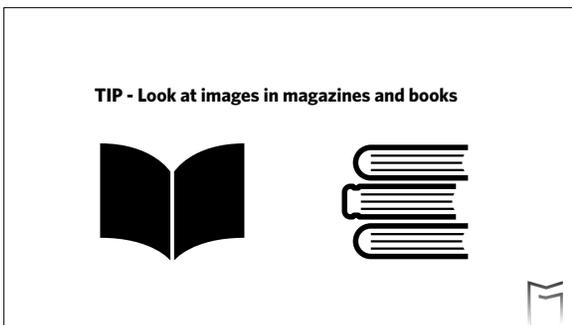
Look at images in magazines and books, to help develop your sensitivity of how colour and value are used in professional contexts. They usually have good examples of density and colour balance that you can follow. It is important to consider colour and value choices to create emphasis in your work. These were some basic points on the fundamentals of design can help you clarify your project's intent.

MULTIMODAL PROJECTS

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