Irvine Royal Academy—Technical Department

S3/S4 Graphic Communication

Colour Theory—Primary Colours

Primary Colours

There are only three **primary colours**—red, yellow and blue. You create **Secondary Colours** by mixing two primary colours together, e.g.
Red + Yellow = Orange
Red + Blue = Violet
Yellow + Blue = Green

Red

Red is classed as an **Advancing** colour and a **Warm** colour. You would use red in a picture to make the item more prominent, and attract your attention to it. It would be used in 'Buy Now' buttons on websites, etc.

Red gives you a feeling of **Danger, Heat, Festive, Energy, Passion, Speed, Love,** etc.

Contrasting Colours: Green, Yellow, Blue

Yellow

Yellow is used to present **Happy, Sunny, Intellect, Cheerful,** etc.
Use yellow on your pictures to represent happy thoughts. It is an effective colour for attracting attention. Men tend to think of yellow as being 'childish' so if your image is aimed at men, avoid using it.
Contrasting Colours: Violet, Blue, Red

Blue

Blue is the colour of the sky and sea, so it is classed as a **Receding Colour**. It is therefore often used as a background colour, behind warm colours, such as red or orange, which are used for the more prominent items.

Blue is used to represent: **Cold, Reliable, Trust, Faith, Heaven, Cleanliness, Calm, Masculine**, etc.

Contrasting Colours: Red, Orange, Yellow

Warm and Cold—Advancing and Receding

Colours like red and orange are classed as warm and advancing. They help to give a feeling of heat, and attract your attention more. In a graphic image, red colours are used for the main focus of your image, located on the **foreground,** with cold colours, eg. Blue or green, for the **background**.

Branding

Colours are important when branding businesses, e.g. In a logo or website, as the colour can reflect what the business does, or is trying to give an impression.