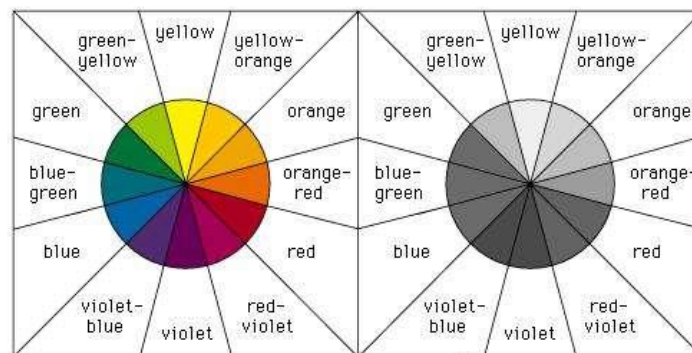


## Colour :

In many styles and periods of painting, the functions of colour are primarily decorative and descriptive, often serving merely to reinforce the expression of an idea or subject communicated essentially in terms of line and tone. In much of modern painting, however, the full-spectrum range of pigments available has allowed colour to be the primary expressive element.

The principal dimensions of colour in painting are the variables or attributes of **hue**, tone, and intensity. Red, yellow, and blue are the basic hues from which all others on the chromatic scale can be made by mixtures. These three opaque hues are the subtractive **pigment** primaries and should not be confused with the behaviour of the additive triads and mixtures of transparent, coloured light. Mixtures of primary pairs produce the secondary hues of orange, violet, and green. By increasing the amount of one primary in each of these mixtures, the tertiary colours of yellow-orange, orange-red, red-violet, violet-blue, blue-green, and green-yellow, respectively, are made. The primary colours, with their basic secondary and tertiary mixtures, can be usefully notated as the 12 segments of a circle. The secondary and tertiary colour segments between a pair of parent primaries can then be seen to share a harmonious family relationship with one another—the yellow-orange, orange, and orange-red hues that lie between yellow and red, for example.



©1995 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Colour (Left) Colour wheel made up of the primary colours and their basic secondary and tertiary mixtures. (Right) Colour wheel with approximate, inherent tonal values. *Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.*