

Through The Lens

*A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts.
After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*

OPCUG



*Users helping users
for over 40 years*

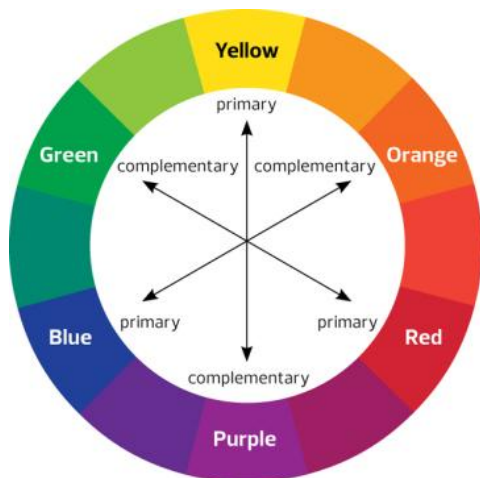
Complementary Colours

by Lynda Buske

Complementary colours are the opposite hues on the colour wheel. They comprise one primary color plus a secondary color created by mixing the other two primaries. For instance, blue and orange are complementary colours because blue is a primary and orange is made up of the remaining two primary colours, red and yellow. By the same logic yellow and purple (red+blue) are complementary as are red and green (blue+yellow).

The wheel illustrates the range of complementary colours as you rotate around and find the corresponding colour on the opposite side.

The advantage of using complementary colours is that they can make each other look brighter and stand out in a more distinct manner than remaining colour pairings.



Autumn in Canada is a great time for photographing with complementary colours since the red autumn leaves are often paired easily with green leaves/trees and orange leaves look great against a blue sky. Having an equal proportion of two complementary colours can be overwhelming so some photographers suggest having one as a smaller part of the photo or as an accent colour only. This would work well for clothing on a model where you might not want a purple and yellow striped dress but a pale-yellow dress with a mauve scarf might look nice. You don't necessarily have to pair colours with the same intensity of shade. For instance, a dark green could go well with a light red or pink.



In the photo below, you can see how much more striking the orange and yellow leaves are against the blue sky than the evergreen.



Don't get too hung up on exact opposites across the colour wheel. Blue goes nicely with yellow and dark turquoise goes well with light pink even though the colours are not directly across from one another on the wheel.



Blue and yellow are close enough to complementary as are turquoise and pink.



If you are not satisfied with how your camera captured the colour, you can make adjustments with photo editing software. You can deepen colours using a saturation function or you can change the tint or temperature (warmth or coolness of the light). More advanced programs will allow you to emphasize a single colour in your photo if, for instance, you wish to intensify just the orange leaves but leave the rest of the image as it was originally captured.