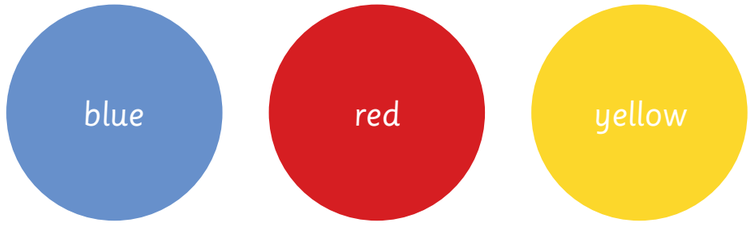
Mixing Colours

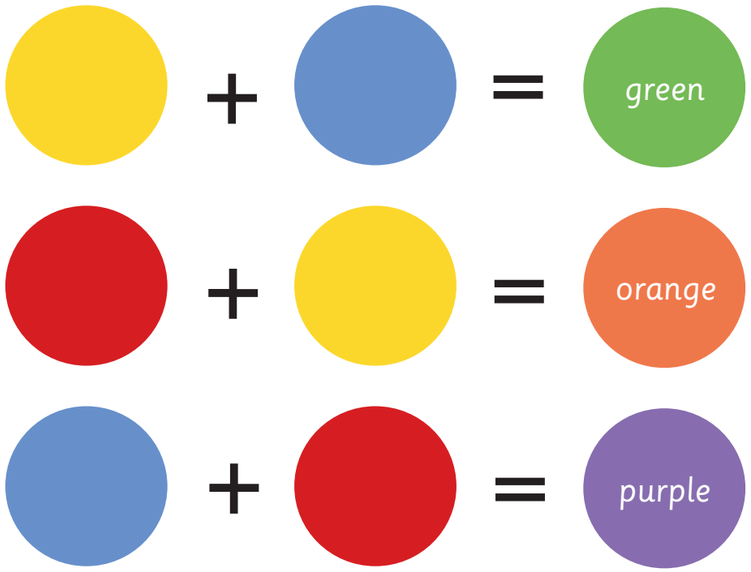
Primary colours

The primary colours cannot be made by mixing other colours. The primary colours are blue, red and yellow. All other colours can be made by mixing the primary colours.



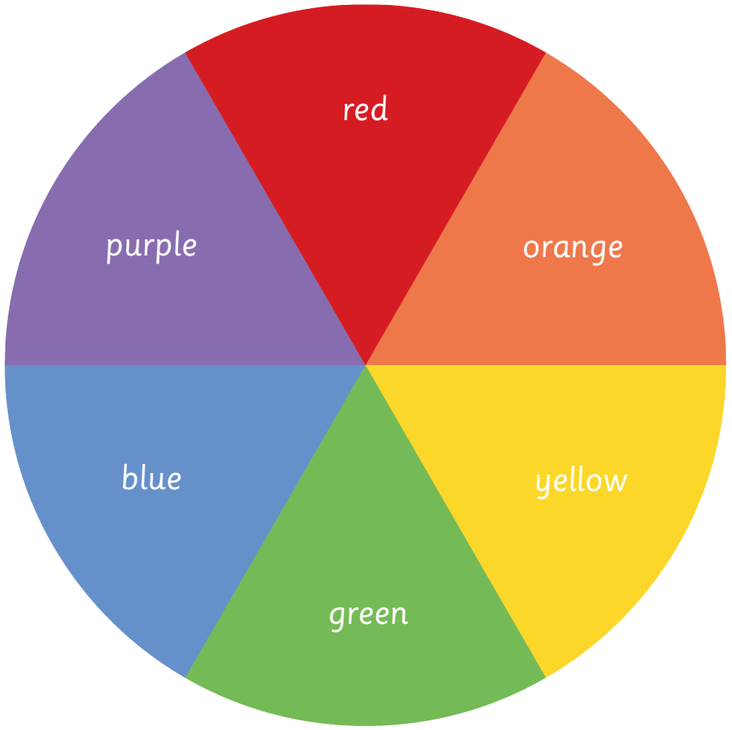
Secondary colours

The secondary colours are green, orange and purple. They are made by mixing equal amounts of primary colours. Yellow and blue make green. Red and yellow make orange. Blue and red make purple.



Colour wheel

The colour wheel is a diagram that shows how colours are organised. The secondary colours sit between the primary colours from which they are made.



Colour mixing

Colours can be mixed in palettes using paintbrushes or directly on the paper using rollers.

Colour in art

In this painting by Edwin Lord Weeks, the limited use of the primary colour red makes the elephant stand out against the dull colours of the setting.

An Indian Hunting Party by Edwin Lord Weeks, 1849

In this painting by Faith Ringgold, the primary and secondary colours give the painting a vibrant and lively effect.

The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles by Faith Ringgold, 1996

Glossary

colour wheel	A tool used in art and design to show colours and their relationship to each other.
primary colour	A colour that cannot be made by mixing other colours.
secondary colour	A colour that is made by mixing equal amounts of two primary colours.

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