

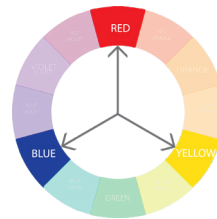
WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE COLOR?

This is a classic ice-breaker question. Even Buddy the Elf uses the question to answer the phone!

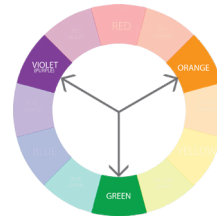
However, knowing how that favorite color is 'made' or what it pairs well with can be a struggle for some to understand. Color theory is both the science and art of using color. It explains in what manner humans perceive color and the visual effects of how colors mix, match or contrast with each other.

So, let's bring it back to the basics:

We have our primary colors red, yellow and blue.



Mixing two of those creates a secondary color like orange, purple, or green.



Take these secondary colors and mix them with one of our primary colors and we create a tertiary color like yellow-green or red-orange.



All these colors create the 'color wheel.'



Basics of the Color Wheel

COLOR THEORY

You might be thinking, "Okay great we have a pretty wheel of color, but how does this help me?" Using the relationship of where colors are located to each other on the color wheel, we can combine them to create cohesive schemes.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Favorite color red?

Pair it with red-orange and orange to create an analogous scheme. *ANALOGOUS* color schemes take three colors right next to each other on the color wheel to create a palette.



Favorite color green?

Pair it with red and allow them to complement each other. Possibly the most recognizable and referenced color palette, *COMPLEMENTARY* colors, takes colors directly across from each other on the color wheel and pairs them together.



Favorite color orange?

Go to each side of its complement (blue) and use blue-purple and blue-green to create a split-complementary scheme. The *SPLIT-COMPLEMENTARY* scheme is a twist on the classic complementary color pairs. It uses the same basic principle of complementary colors – except you match your main color with the color on each side of the complementary color.



Favorite color purple?

Pair that up with orange and green and have a triadic color scheme. The *TRIADIC* scheme pairs up three colors that are 120 degrees apart from each other on the color wheel – basically pair three colors up that will make an equal triangle.



Favorite color blue?

Use blue-purple, orange, and yellow-green to create a square scheme. The name of the *SQUARE* color scheme gives away how colors are paired. But using four colors that are evenly spaced on the color wheel (creating a square) is a great way to create balance between colors.



Don't have a favorite color? Or maybe you just love all colors equally and can't decide?

Try a *MONOCHROMATIC* scheme. Select one color and then create an entire palette by adjusting the value of the color. Monochromatic wardrobes are very popular in fashion right now - it allows people to easily select clothing while still ensuring that everything will 'go' together.

The next time that dreaded ice-breaker question comes around – impress your new friends and tell them not only your favorite color but also your favorite color scheme. Pro tip: If you ever do have a chance to ask Buddy the Elf his favorite color - know that he may be partial to the *COMPLEMENTARY* scheme of Red and Green.



Claire Sloan,
NCIDQ,

is an Interior Designer at frk architects + engineers, Iowa's leading architecture firm focused on education.

