

What is colour theory?

In visual art, colour theory is a guide to colour mixing and the use of colour in artwork. Colour theory can be expanded to clothing and fashion, interior design, advertisements, cooking and food presentation and more.

But colour theory is so boring!

You may hear this from people who remember filling in the circles around the “clock” with a variety of colours and never taking it any further. Or from people who did more theoretical exercises in simple squares or grids across the page. As with any subject, it is often the approach to the lesson which is boring, not the subject matter itself.

Here are some books to get you warmed up:

- [The Day the Crayons Quit](#) Written by Drew Daywalt and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers
- [Red is a Dragon – a Book of Colors](#) Written by Roseanne Thong and illustrated by Grace Lin

Discussion questions:

- In *Red is a Dragon*, what colour was used to illustrate the dragon? What colour were the flames? What colour were the crabs on the warm beach?
- Was red also used to describe something cool? What was it? How can a colour that describes something warm also describe something cool?
- In *Red is a Dragon*, what colour was used to illustrate the cool pool? The cool jade bracelet? The cool, damp clouds?
- Did you enjoy the book *The Day the Crayons Quit*? Do you have a favourite colour? Which one is it?
- If your crayons could talk to you, what would they say?

**Explore the World of Colour
and Have Fun!**

Warm vs Cool Colours

People always talk about warm and cool colours – what does that mean? If you think of warm objects, what comes to mind? The sun? Fire? A stove element? What colours are those usually (red, yellow, orange)? If you think of cold or cool colours, what comes to mind? A lake? Icebergs? The ocean (unless you are in Hawaii)? The interior of a northern rain forest? What colours come to mind when you think of those things (blue and green)?

When you look at a colour wheel, you can usually divide it in half into warm and cool colours with the dividing line being between purple and red-violet and yellow and yellow-green (see below). *Within each colour family, we have warm and cool varieties (i.e. warm red and cool red; warm blue and cool blue).* To see how this looks on a colour wheel, check out our [Colourful Collage Art Explorations at Home lesson plan](#).



To make this colourful umbrella picture:

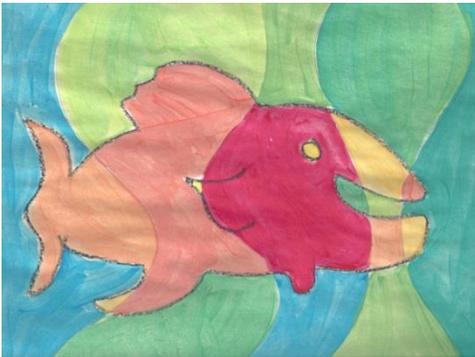
1. Draw your umbrella and use a black crayon to separate the sections. Fill in the sections using coloured pencils, markers, or paint. Cut out your umbrella.
2. Find some feet (with legs attached) online and print them, or draw some from your imagination. Cut them out.
3. Glue the feet to a sheet of paper. Glue the umbrella over the feet/legs, as shown.

Warm/Cool Exercises

Supplies: Paper, pencils, black crayon (optional), paint

Method:

1. Draw a simple sea creature on your paper (starfish, fish, turtle...). Just concentrate on the outline and maybe an eye or fin here and there.
2. Draw some wavy lines from one edge of the paper to the other, drawing right through your creature. The lines can be vertical or horizontal.
3. If you like, define the outline of your critter better with a black crayon.
4. Use warm colours to paint in the sections of your creature. Make sure you use different colours in the sections that are next to each other.
5. Use cool colours to paint the ocean. Remember to ensure that sections next to each other are not painted with the same colour.



Try this colour combination, too: Cool critter/warm background (think lizards in the desert).

Or, make a rocket in outer space, like the person in this video: [A Rainbow of Rockets](#). He collaged his picture, but you could also use markers or paint to get the same effects.