



CHOOSING COLORS



Today we tackle a big topic. A topic that you could spend a semester studying, and still wonder about. Choosing colors. Many patterns seem to call out for specific hues (for skin, fruit, leaves, etc.), but that doesn't mean that your colors will be naturally chosen for you. There are over 500 DMC floss colors, which makes for a somewhat overwhelming number of options. And not to add any pressure, but color can make or break your work.



Choosing colors is a science. There are a lot of technical terms for colors and all of the variations of them, but I'll try and keep those to a minimum. We'll start with a color wheel.

This isn't the most accurate, because I was working with floss that I had on hand, but you get the idea. A color wheel can be simple or more detailed, but essentially it takes the colors of the rainbow, puts them in a circle, flowing into each other.

These colors naturally have hues that work well together, and you can find them by how they fall on the color wheel. These are the safest color schemes.

Here's a monochromatic color grouping. I took a basic purple, then grabbed lighter and darker versions of purple.





A complementary color scheme...wait. Olive! Not *that* kind of complimentary! Where was I? Oh. A complementary color scheme is two colors that are directly across from each other on the color wheel.



Analogous is when you choose three colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. In this case, it's yellow-orange, yellow, and yellow-green.



You can also combine these, and add in a complementary color to go with your analogous colors. Either of these purples would work well!



And then there's triadic. These are three colors that are an equal distance from each other on the color wheel. Red, yellow and blue are the best example of this.

The fun part comes when you start making variations on these basics. For example, what if, instead of using the truest version of a color, you use a lighter or darker one? What you see here is red, yellow, and blue, but in different strengths of each color.

warm-----cool



Another aspect of choosing colors that can make a big difference is color temperature. It is easy to see blues as “cool” and oranges as “warm”, but within each color there are warm and cool shades. Can you see them in these purples?

Keeping all of your colors warm or all cool can really help keep your color scheme looking pretty. Look at what happens with the purple monochromatic colors when I add a cool lavender in with the warm shades.

It just doesn't work. There are ways to break this rule, but keeping color temperature in mind can make things easier.

Choosing colors is not a science. A color wheel and the types of color schemes are a great place to start, but ultimately, you need to feel the colors. (Is that helpful? Probably not. But there it is.)

This grouping of colors started with the complementary colors above, but then I went with my gut and added in a few more shades. They don't really fit within the color theory “rules”, but it works.

Now, after all of this technical talk and working hard to choose colors, I'm going to tell you how to cheat. Use colors that people have already found and put together.

Yep, it's that simple. There are all kinds of websites that feature amazing colors. My newest favorite is Design-Seeds.com, but I also like Color-Collective.blogspot.com, and CreatureComfortsblog.com. These sites take images and pull out the colors for you to easily see and match. And you can do the same thing with images.

There are also sites like Kuler.com that allow you to play with groupings of colors. I've even started a Pinterest pinboard specifically for lovely colors. Now all you have to do is find floss that matches your colors!