

Art: How to paint (or draw) a colour wheel

Emma Holliday



You will need:

- Paper (cartridge or watercolour)
- Three colours – red/blue/yellow
- Water
- Paint brush
- Pencil
- Plastic lid for mixing, or paint box lid

Drawing instead of painting?

If you're drawing, follow these steps but replace 'paint' with 'pencil'. The main aim is to experiment with colour mixing so once you get the hang of it you can use any medium and any colours. The first three are primary colours, which we'll be mixing into secondary colours. After this you could try with reds and browns or crimsons and blues.

Here we go:

1. In your paint set select one red, one blue and one yellow. These will be the only three colours you'll be using.
2. Draw a circle on your paper – you could draw around a cup or plate. Smaller than a cup would be a bit small to work on. Feel free to do a free hand circle!
3. Draw three lines across your circle as in Figure 1. You are dividing the circle into six segments, as equal as you can make them (but you don't need to get the ruler out, although of course you can if you like accuracy!). This is actually quite tricky so don't be downhearted if it's all wonky, it happens to us all.
4. Look at figure 2 and write the same colours on your circle edge. The idea is colour segment, then a gap, then the next colour. You'll notice that at the end I've written the name of the colour – next time I might do it with a cadmium yellow so it's good to record this.
5. Mix up your first colour and fill in the segment. You can make it as watery or strong as you like, have stronger colour in the centre and make it weaker at the edge. Everyone will make their own individual colour circle.
6. Wash your brush and fill in the next segment with its labelled colour, and again with the last of your three primary colours. See Figure 3 for how it should look.

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7. This last part is to fill in the missing segments. The segment between the two colours is made up of a mixture of the two side colours. In between the yellow and the blue you'll be mixing yellow and blue for example. Mix them in your paint box (or on a plastic lid) and fill in. If your side colours are still wet you might want to leave a gap to prevent them running into each other – or maybe this is the effect you'd like! Remember not to be tempted to use a different colour from your paint box to make, for example, a 'better green' – the whole idea of the wheel is to learn with how these colours blend. Your next wheel can use another three colours and you'll learn how to get that bright orange, or that cloudy purple.

Your colour wheel is complete!

Now your colour wheel is complete. Once it's dry you will see how nice it looks. Hopefully you've enjoyed doing it and also found it relaxing. Mixing and blending colours is magical, go ahead and do another using different colours, or add some spots! Next time we will be doing a watery wheel – which expands on this lovely idea.

Thank you for doing this activity – do feel free to share your results. Everyone will make a wheel which is unique.

- Emma Holliday

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