# Create Your Own COLOR WHEEL


- *2 levels*
- *for grades 1-5*
- *with templates for both English & Spanish!*

*Using only 3 colors!*


teach Kids ART

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# Create Your Own COLOR WHEEL

Why purchase pre-mixed paint colors
when students can learn to mix their own colors
for **more variety** and **more interesting results**?

Making a color wheel teaches students how to
mix the colors they want while learning the basics of **color theory**. Kids feel empowered when they're able to create a wide range of colors on their own!

In this lesson, we will be mixing **13 different colors**
using only the **3 primary colors**: red, yellow, and blue.


*The 3 primary colors (red, yellow and blue) are all you need*
*to mix all of these beautiful colors - and everything in between!*

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# Tips for Color Mixing SUCCESS!

## Tip #1

### Always use a quality tempera paint.

I recommend "testing" the quality of a paint before you purchase a large amount of it. What I've found helpful is to **mix some of the red and blue together to see if you can create a good range of violets**. If the red and blue mix well together, the other colors probably will, too. Try painting on a paper plate or heavy weight paper or card stock and let it fully dry. **After drying, the paint should be clean and bright, not chalky looking, and without any cracking or chipping.**

**Avoid paint labeled as "washable"**. It's been my experience that "washable" paints do not have the same consistency, opacity, or vibrancy as the regular version in the same brand, so I rarely buy them. If paint gets on clothing, treat the area immediately with soap and lukewarm water, then with stain remover as soon as you're able to. I've never had a problem getting tempera or watercolor paint out of kids' clothes when I do this!

## Tip #2

### Try subbing "turquoise" for "blue" tempera.

I like to substitute **turquoise** tempera for my **blue** because it yields the most beautiful mixtures of secondary and intermediate colors - at least with the brands I've used. This may be because turquoise is the closest in color to the cyan ink used in the four color printing process (magenta, yellow, cyan, and black). You may prefer the blue, but it's worth checking out!

**Test your paint before you buy a large amount of it!**

- Buy one of each primary color: red, yellow and blue (or turquoise), and experiment with mixing them.

**You might have poor quality paint if:**

- your colors look chalky and dull
- you see lots of cracking as it dries
- your tempera is thin, transparent, or doesn't cover well

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# Tips for Color Mixing SUCCESS! (cont.)

## Tip #3

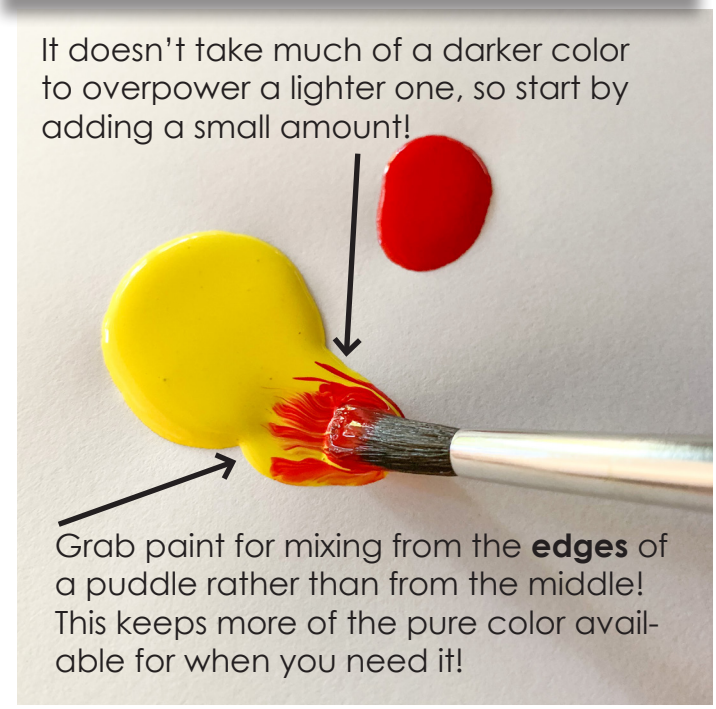
### Squeeze out just a small amount of each color on your palette to begin.

For this color wheel project, start with about a 1" diameter puddle each of red, yellow, and blue. Avoid the temptation to pour out more than you need. It's easy to add a little more of a color as you need it. We do a fun "scratch art" project with the paint left on our palettes at the end, but if you have too much leftover paint, the lines you draw will fill in and disappear!

## Tip #4

### When mixing colors, add a very small amount of the darker color to a larger amount of the lighter one.

When mixing colors, always start by **adding a very small amount of the darker color to a larger amount of the lighter color**. Dark colors can quickly overpower lighter colors. When this happens, it takes a much greater amount of the lighter color to lighten it again. Working from light to dark gives you more control and helps prevent mixing more paint than you will use.

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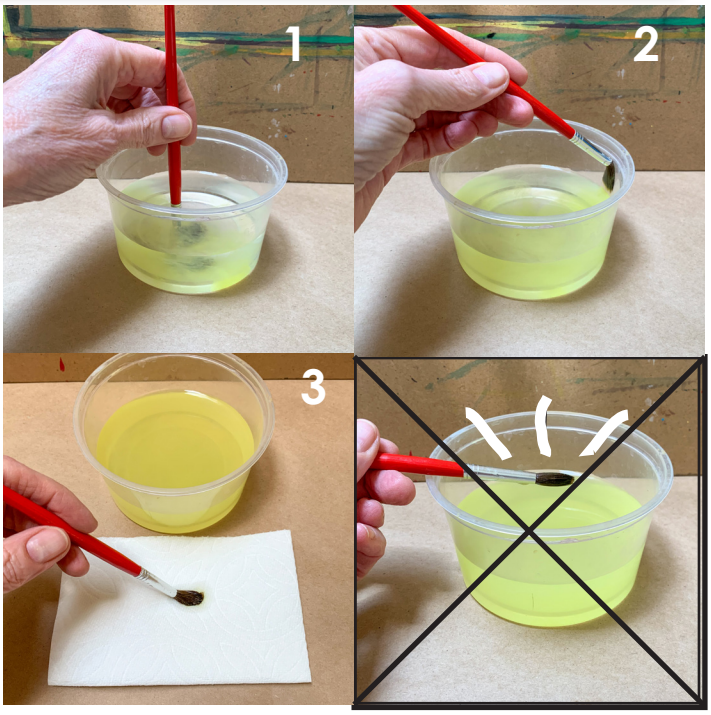
# Tips for Color Mixing success! (cont.)

## Tip #5

### Practice good brush rinsing habits.

To rinse your brush, **(1)** gently press it against the bottom of your water container 3 or 4 times, **(2)** then press it against the side (above the water line) 3 or 4 times, repeating these two steps until the water coming out of the brush is clear. Good brush rinsing should be **completely silent**! Finally, **(3)** blot any excess water on a paper towel. **Avoid swishing or tapping, which splashes water everywhere!**




**Shhhhhhh!!!**
Good brush rinsing should be completely **silent**!

## Tip #6

### Only rinse your brush when you really need to.

Students are surprised to learn that they don't need to rinse their brush between ***every*** color change! For example, if you're painting with a primary color (ex. yellow) and want to switch to one of its secondary colors (ex. orange or green), you can wipe off some of the extra (yellow) if you want to, but both orange and green already have yellow in them so it's not necessary to remove the yellow. This tip will help keep your water clean longer, and your colors may even be more interesting, too!

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# Create Your Own Color Wheel:

## Objectives:

Students will...

- Learn the basics of color theory
- Learn color mixing vocabulary
- Practice mixing secondary, intermediate, and tertiary colors to create their own color wheel


## You Will Need:

- ☐ **Paper plates** (*uncoated* work best), 2 per student - one to use as a palette and one for the color wheel *(paint adheres best to the "uncoated" paper plates, and they're cheaper, too!)*
- ☐ **Color wheel template**, cut out and glued onto one paper plate
- ☐ **Tempera paint**: red, yellow, and blue (or turquoise)
- ☐ **Water in a clear plastic container** (the clear, pint size containers from the deli don't tip over as easily as a taller cup will)
- ☐ **Brush** (medium size)
- ☐ **Paper towel**, folded to blot brush

**Color wheel poster** (optional, but very useful for explaining color relationships to a large group)

## Vocabulary:

**Primary Color -** a color that can't be created by mixing other colors (red, yellow, and blue are the primary colors)

**Secondary Color -** a color created by mixing two primary colors together (orange, green and violet are secondary colors)

**Intermediate Color -** a color created by mixing a primary color with one of its 'related' secondary colors (a secondary color next to it on the color wheel: ex. yellow + orange = "yellow-orange"). Mixing uneven amounts of two primary colors is another way to mix an intermediate color.

**Tertiary Color -** a brownish (sometimes grayish) color created when you mix any amount of each of the three primary colors together

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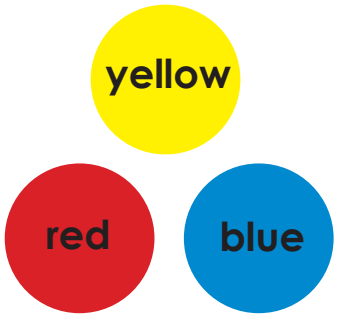
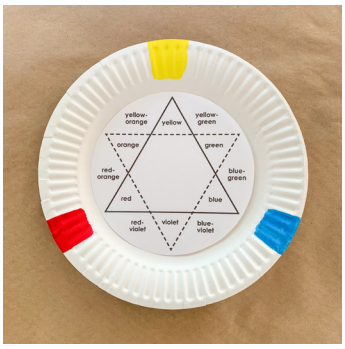
# Create Your Own Color Wheel cont.

**1.** Make sure each student has **two paper plates**: one with a color wheel template (English or Spanish) cut out and glued in the center, and the other one plain. **Write student's name on the back of both plates!**

**2.** Introduce the **primary colors**: **red, yellow, and blue**. Explain that these are the colors that cannot be made by mixing other colors.



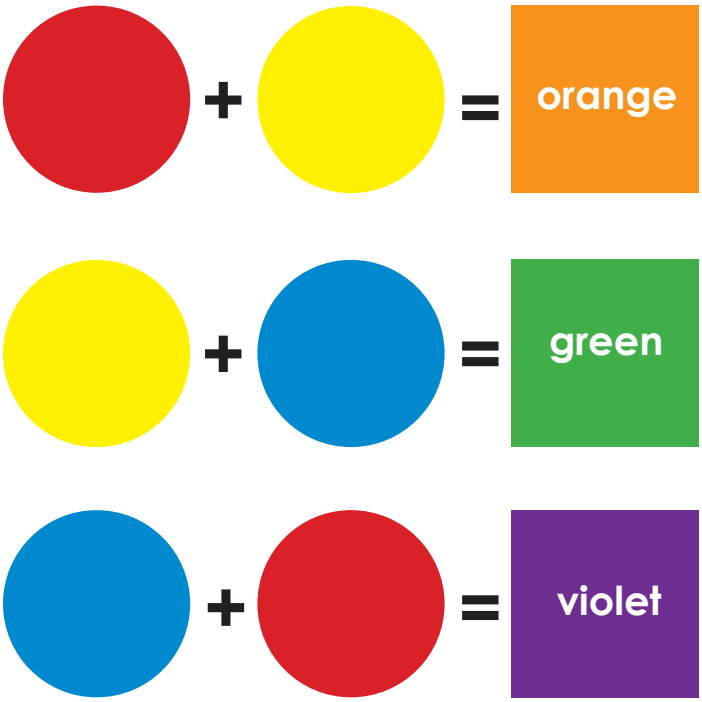

**3.** Invite students to paint along with you as you demonstrate. Turn your color wheel template so that the triangle labeled "yellow" is at the top. Then paint a swatch of yellow along the rim of your paper plate, where the triangle labeled "yellow" is pointing.

**4.** Rinse your brush and blot any excess water on a paper towel.

**5.** Paint the red swatch and the blue swatch in the same way, rinsing and blotting your brush each time you change colors.

**6.** Now introduce the **secondary colors (orange, green, and violet)**.

Mix 2 primary colors to paint each secondary color where it belongs.





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# Create Your Own Color Wheel cont.

**7.** Explain that when you mix all three primary colors together you get brown! **This is helpful for students to know so they can mix brown when they want to, and *not* when they don't!** *(For older kids*, you can explain that the brown you get when you mix the 3 primary colors together is called a "**tertiary color**".) Now, mix a little of each primary color to make brown and paint a small circle in the middle of your color wheel.

for grades 1 & 2 use this template →


**8.** ***Grades 1 & 2*** stop here and jump to the grand finale, **"Tertiary Scratch Art"**! **Grades 3 & up** - add your Intermediate Colors next.

for grades 3 & up use this template →


## The Great "Tertiary Color Debate"

Everyone agrees that a "**primary color**" is a single color that can't be mixed from other colors. The term "**primary**" refers to there being **one** of something, so that makes sense.

Then, if you mix 2 primary colors together you get a "**secondary color**". The term "**secondary**" refers to there being **two** of something, so that makes sense, too. (An "**intermediate** color", like yellow-orange, blue-green, or red-violet is a secondary color with an uneven mixture of 2 primary colors.)

Following that line of reasoning, when you mix 3 primary colors together, you'd get a "**tertiary color**", because the term "**tertiary**" refers to there being **three** of something... in this case, three primary colors. (The color behind this text is a tertiary color!)

That all makes sense, but a quick Internet search will leave you completely confused. For some reason, many people now use the term "**tertiary**" to describe "**intermediate**" colors. Even Merriam Webster gives *two* definitions of tertiary color: "(1) a color produced by mixing 2 secondary colors" *(true!)* ***and*** "(2) a color produced by an equal mixture of a primary color with a secondary color adjacent to it on the color wheel". But **both** of these definitions cannot be true, as they mean very different things!

Understanding tertiary colors is important because mixing 2 complements (or 3 primaries) will result in a neutral (grayish or brownish) version of the dominant color. Knowing how to tone down a color in this way (or how not to, if that's *not* what you're trying to do!) is an important skill for every painter to learn!

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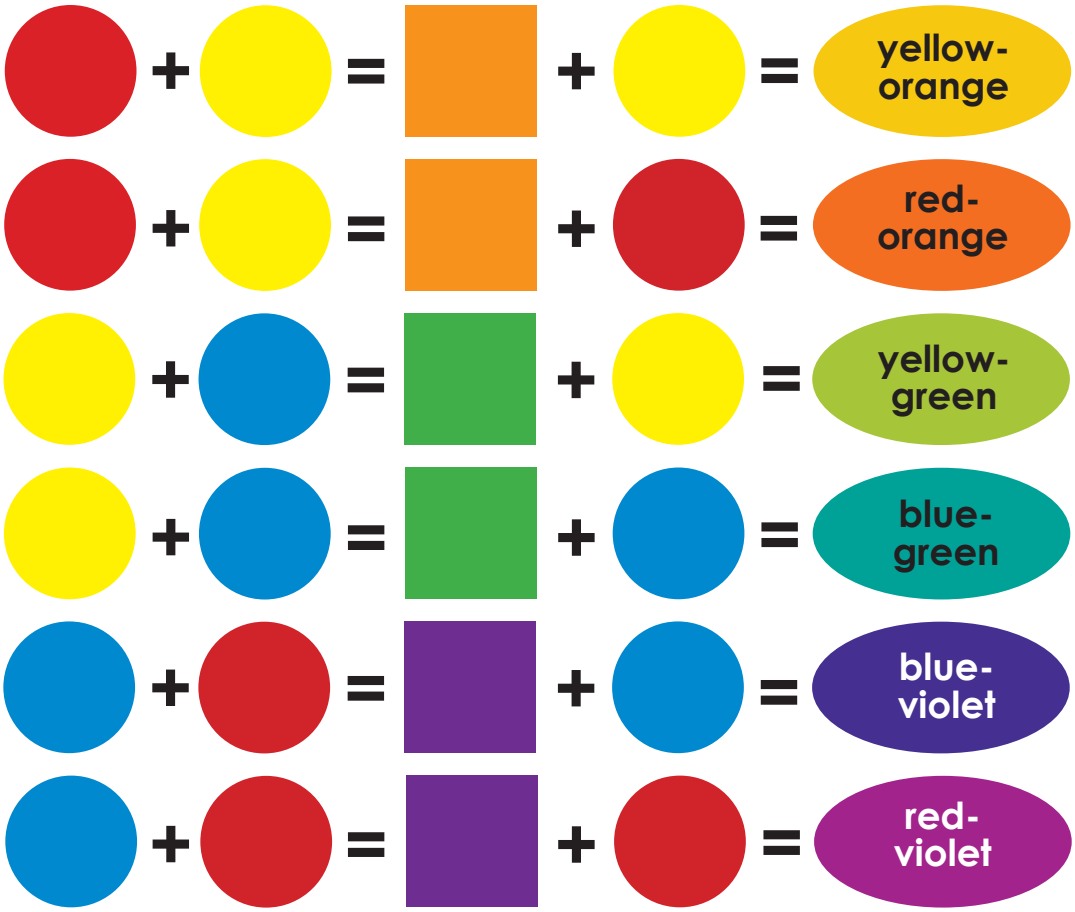
# Create Your Own Color Wheel cont.

**9.** For grades 3 & up, now paint an **Intermediate Color** between each primary and secondary color.

For each intermediate color, mix some of the primary color with the secondary color next to it, adding just a tiny amount of the darker color to a larger amount of the lighter color.

(The name of an intermediate color always begins with its dominant primary color, followed by its secondary color, such as "yellow-orange" or "blue-green".)


## Intermediate Colors

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# Tertiary Scratch Art

## When your color wheel is complete, it's time for "Scratch Art"!

*Students **love** using the paint that's left on their palettes to make their own "scratch art"! Have them ask permission first to make sure you agree they're completely finished with the colors they've mixed... because once they mix them all together, there's no going back! Students will ask to make scratch art every time they paint with tempera paint!*

### Directions:

**1.** Mix all your colors together with an even, swirling motion to create a large painted circle in the center of your plate. Be sure to leave the edges of the plate unpainted so you have a dry area to handle it by!

**2.** Before this new mixture has a chance to dry, turn your brush over and use the end of the handle to scratch a design into your paint.

(**Important!** If you have too much paint on your plate, your design will start to slowly fill in as you draw it. If this happens, have an adult wipe off some of the extra paint, smooth it out with your brush and try again! This is a good motivation for using only as much paint as you really need - an amount about the size of a quarter for each primary color is usually enough for this color wheel project.)

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# Practical Ways to Use Your Color Wheel

*Your new color wheel looks awesome! But did you know it makes a useful reference tool for painting, too? Finding complementary colors and creating color schemes are two helpful ways you can put your new color wheel to use!*

## Use Complimentary Colors Creatively

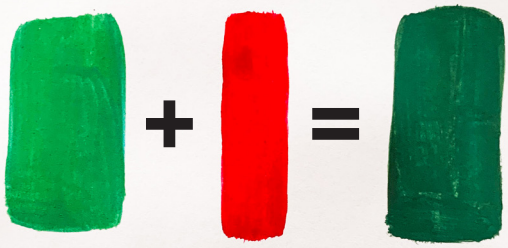
Your color wheel will help you quickly locate **complimentary colors - any** two colors that are directly across from each other on the color wheel (ex. yellow and violet, red and green, or blue and orange). **Once you know your complimentary colors, you can use this relationship to increase attention to a given area of your painting or to control the intensity of your colors.**

### *To increase attention:*

Place **complimentary colors** near each other in a painting to make those colors "POP"! Both colors will look brighter and will stand out more when placed close together!

### *To decrease color intensity:*

The best way to tone down a color that's too bright or intense is to mix just a little bit of it's complement into it. When **complimentary colors** are *mixed together,* they "neutralize" each other, eventually creating a form of brown or gray. You can control this effect by the amounts you mix of each color. If a color looks brighter than you'd like, you can mix just the tiniest bit of its complement into it, continuing to add small amounts of that complement as needed until you have just the effect you're looking for. Remember that when you mix complimentary colors, you are essentially mixing all three primary colors and creating a tertiary color!



**Is your GREEN too bright?**

Add a little RED (the complement of green) to tone it down.

How many different greens can you mix? Try varying the ratio of blue & yellow, and add some red, too!

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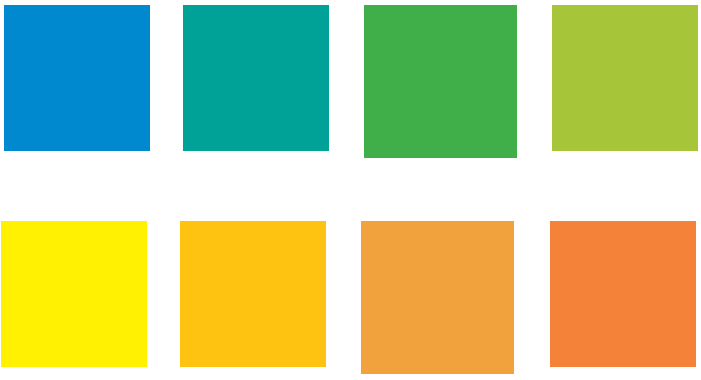
# Practical Ways to Use Your Color Wheel cont.

## Try a Color Scheme!

*Using a color scheme can help to make a painting more harmonious or pleasing to look at, because it groups colors together with something they already have in common. Colors can be grouped by temperature (warm or cool colors), by value (tints and shades of a single color), or by their location on the color wheel. Color schemes can also be used to create a mood, like sadness or excitement. It can be fun to experiment with different color schemes, and work within the limitations they provide.*

**Analogous Colors** are a group of colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. Blue, blue-green, and green are analogous colors, as are yellow, yellow-orange, and orange. Try picking one color to be the dominant one and use the other colors in more of a supporting role.



**Warm Colors** are the reds, oranges, and yellows that remind us of the warmth of the sun, or of fire.

**Cool colors** are the blues, greens, and purples that remind us of the coolness of the ocean or a shady forest.

*Warm colors tend to come forward in a painting, while cool colors tend to recede.*

**Monochromatic colors** are **tints** (color + white) and **shades** (color + black) of a single color. The lightness or darkness of a color (a.k.a. **hue)** is called its "**value**". A painting made with a range of values of just one color would have a "monochromatic color scheme".

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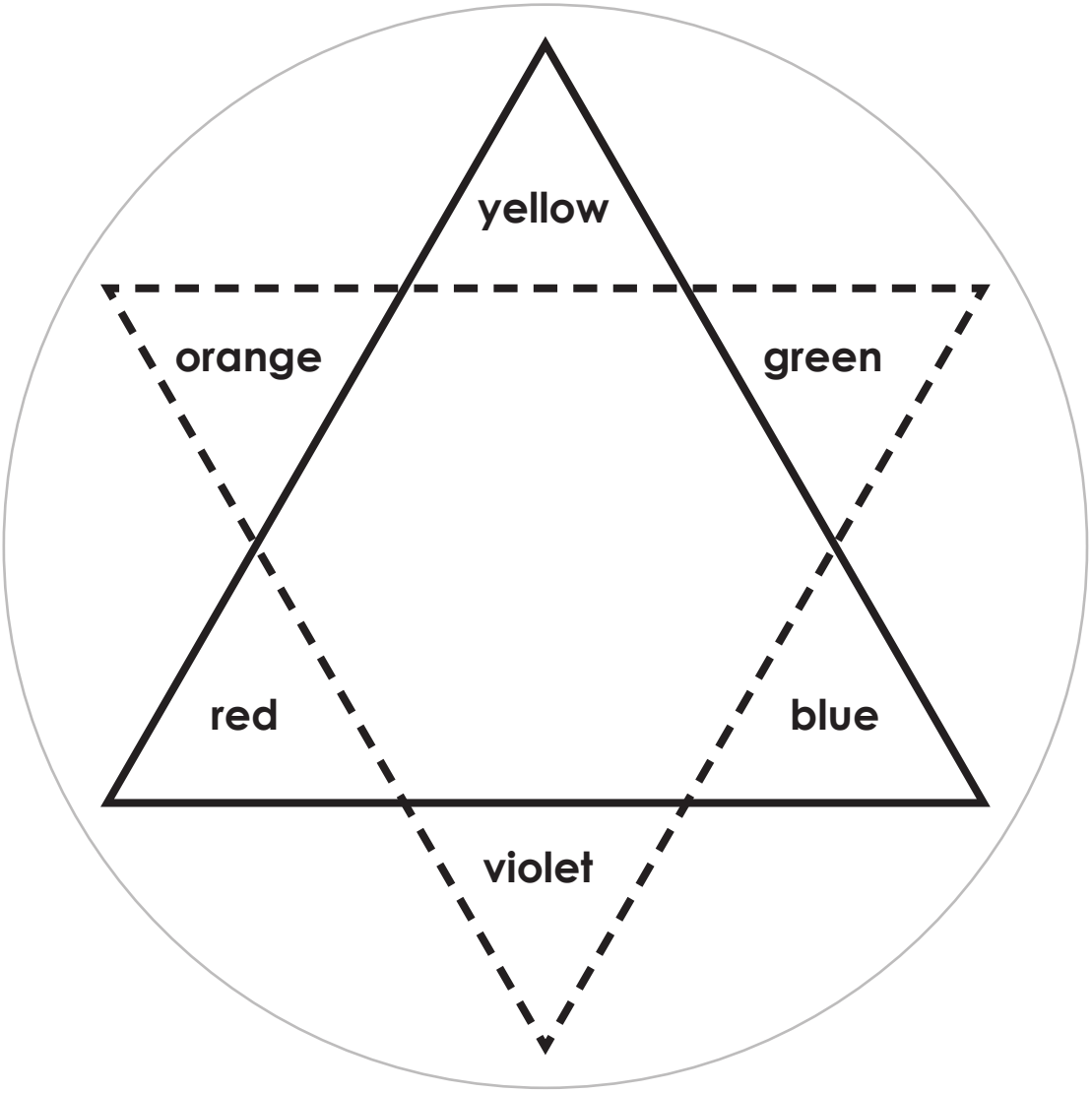
# Create Your Own Color Wheel:

## Color Wheel Template

*with Primary & Secondary Colors*

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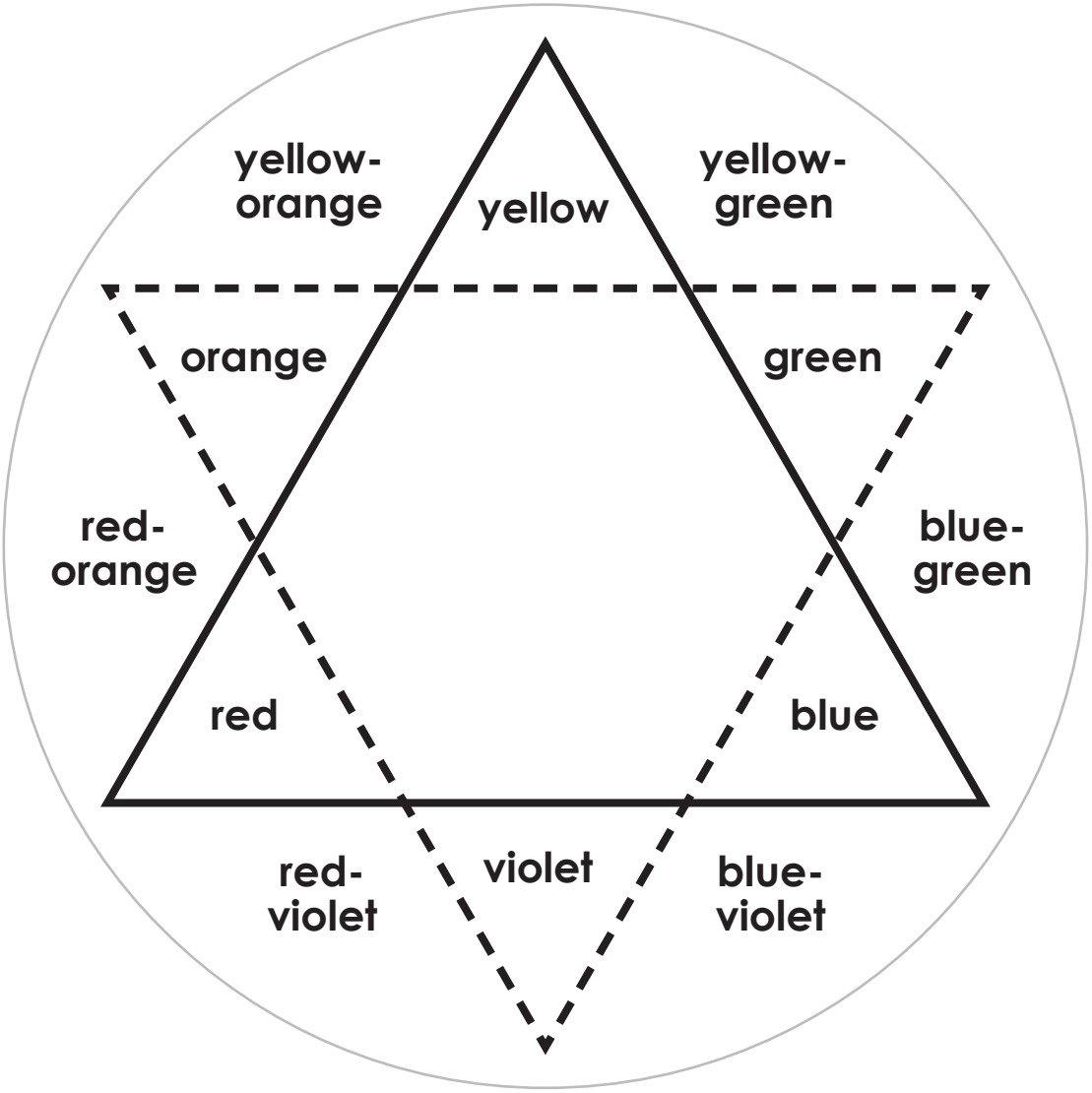
# Create Your Own Color Wheel:

## Color Wheel Template

*with Primary, Secondary, & Intermediate Colors*

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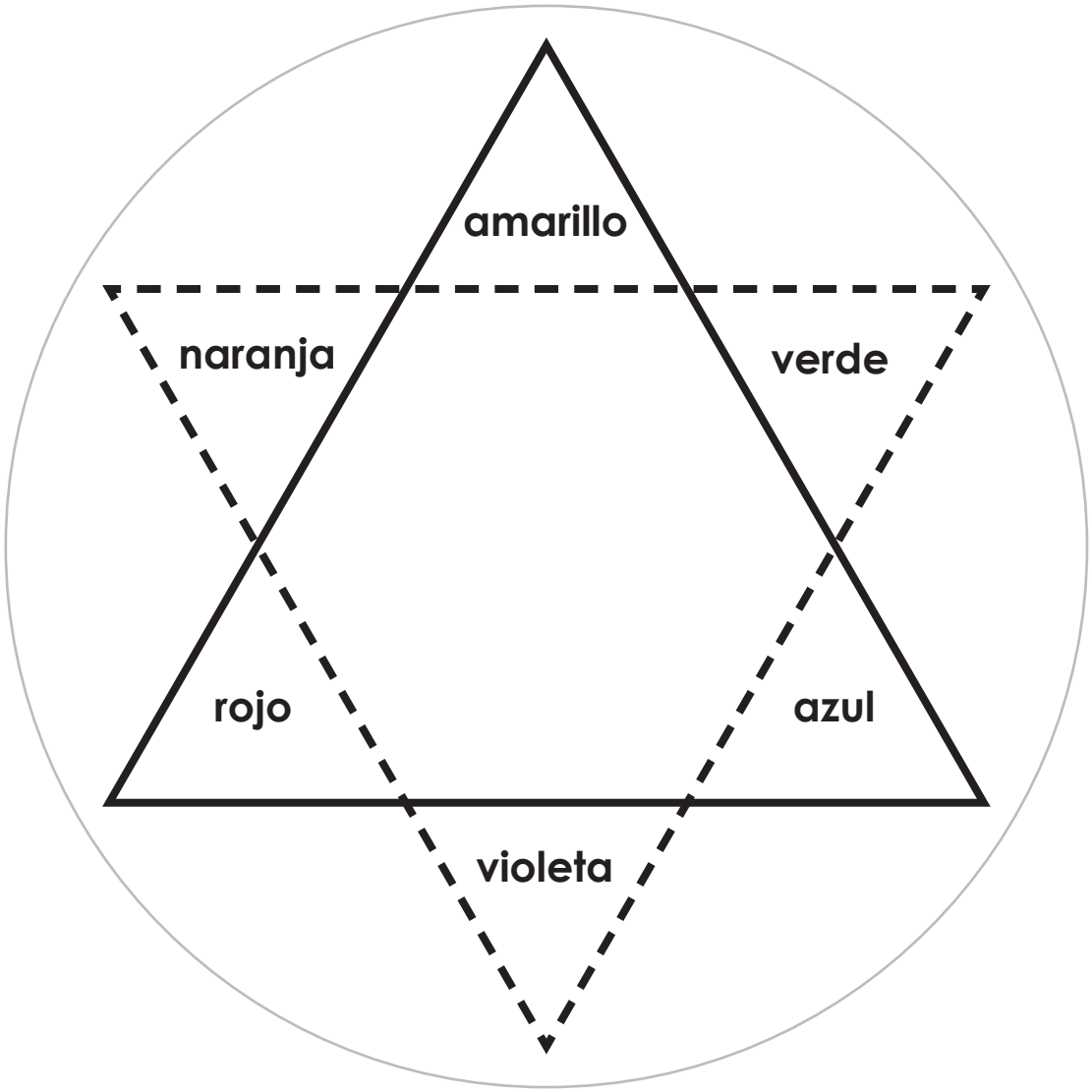
# Create Your Own Color Wheel:

*En Español:*

## Plantilla de la Rueda de Colores

*(con los colores primarios y secundarios)*

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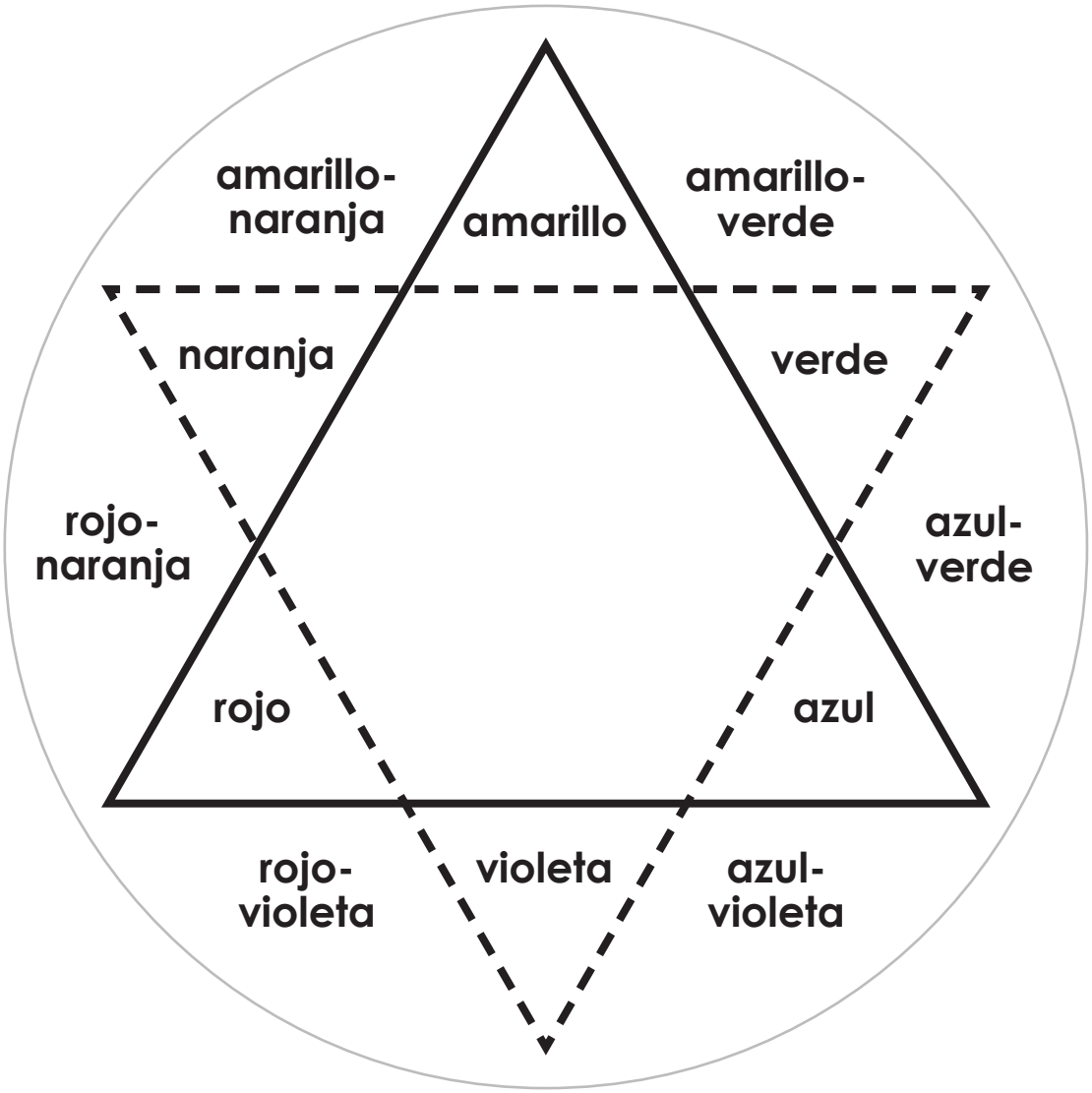
# Create Your Own Color Wheel:

*En Español:*

## Plantilla de la Rueda de Colores

*(con los colores primarios, secundarios, e intermedios)*

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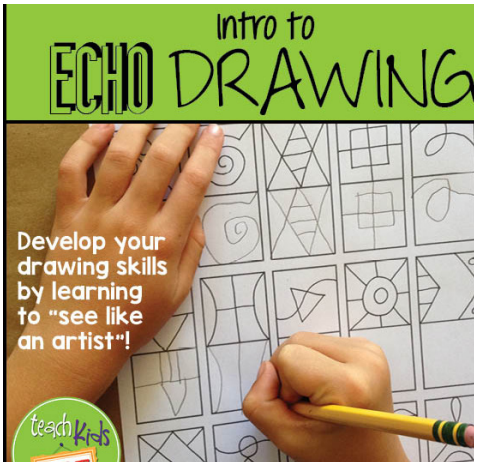




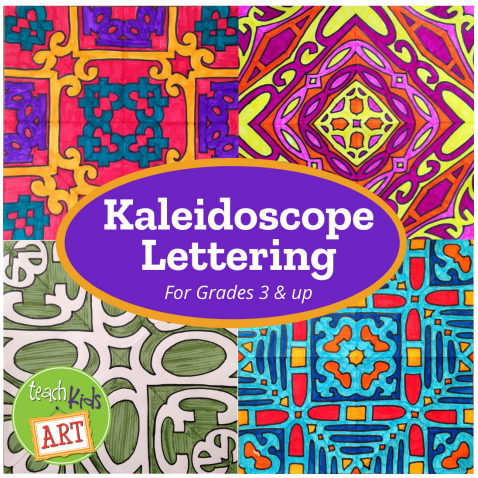


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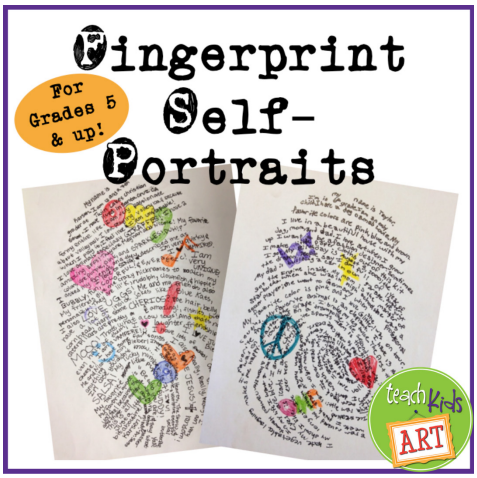


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