

Color Harmony Cheat Sheet

Color Theory for Pattern Design

About This Document

This reference accompanies the article: Color Theory for Pattern Design

Read the full article at: <https://svgeneration.com/docs/color-theory-pattern-design>

Article Summary

How to choose harmonious colour palettes, manage contrast, and create patterns that work in any context.

The ForegroundBackground Relationship

Every pattern has at least two elements: a background fill and a foreground motif. The relationship between these two colours their hue, saturation, and lightness determines the pattern's visual impact. High contrast (dark on light) creates bold, graphic patterns. Low contrast creates subtle textures. Tonal palettes (same hue, different value) create sophisticated, refined surfaces.

HSL: The Designer's Colour Model

Work in HSL (Hue, Saturation, Lightness) rather than HEX or RGB. HSL makes it trivial to create harmonious palettes: fix the hue, vary the saturation or lightness. A foreground at HSL(245, 70%, 62%) and a background at HSL(245, 50%, 95%) will always look balanced because they share the same hue family.

Colour Harmony Schemes

The classic harmony schemes all work beautifully with patterns. Monochromatic: one hue at different values the safest, most versatile choice. Analogous: adjacent hues (e.g., indigo + violet + blue) harmonious and rich. Complementary: opposite hues (e.g., indigo + amber) vibrant and high-energy. Triadic: three equally spaced hues complex and lively.

Free Resources

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