

Working with **complementary colors** can bring amazing contrast, energy, and balance to your quilts, art, or design projects. Here are some helpful tips to make the most of this vibrant color relationship:

What Are Complementary Colors?

Complementary colors sit opposite each other on the color wheel:

- **Red (primary) & Green (secondary)**
- **Blue (primary) & Orange (secondary)**
- **Yellow (primary) & Purple (secondary)**

When placed side-by-side, they create high contrast and visual interest. When mixed, they neutralize each other.

Even though complementary colors are most commonly seen between the primary and secondary colors listed above, a tertiary color on the color wheel can be complementary color with the tertiary color directly across from it.

- **Red-Orange & Blue-Green**
 - **Yellow-Orange & Blue-Violet**
 - **Yellow-Green & Red-Violet**
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Tips for Using Complementary Colors Successfully

1. Choose a Dominant Color

Pick one color to lead and let the other serve as an accent. This keeps the quilt or design from feeling too “loud” or chaotic.

- Example: Use **blue** as the main color, with pops of **orange** in blocks, sashing, or binding.

2. Play with Tints, Tones, and Shades

Don't feel locked into the most saturated versions. Try:

- **Tints** (add white) for a softer look
- **Tones** (add gray) for a more muted vibe

- **Shades** (add black) for depth and richness

3. Break It Up with Neutrals (think background fabric)

Use white, black, gray, or beige to calm the high contrast and give your eye a place to rest.

4. Use Prints to Blend or Soften (great for a backing or border)

Look for fabrics that include both complementary colors in a subtle print—it ties them together without sharp contrast.

5. Let the Mood Guide You

Complementary color schemes can be:

- **Bold and energetic** (e.g. bright orange + electric blue)
- **Cozy and rich** (e.g. burgundy + forest green)
- **Elegant and soft** (e.g. lavender + butter yellow)

6. Test First!

Make a few sample blocks or lay swatches together before committing. Lighting can shift how complementary pairs look.