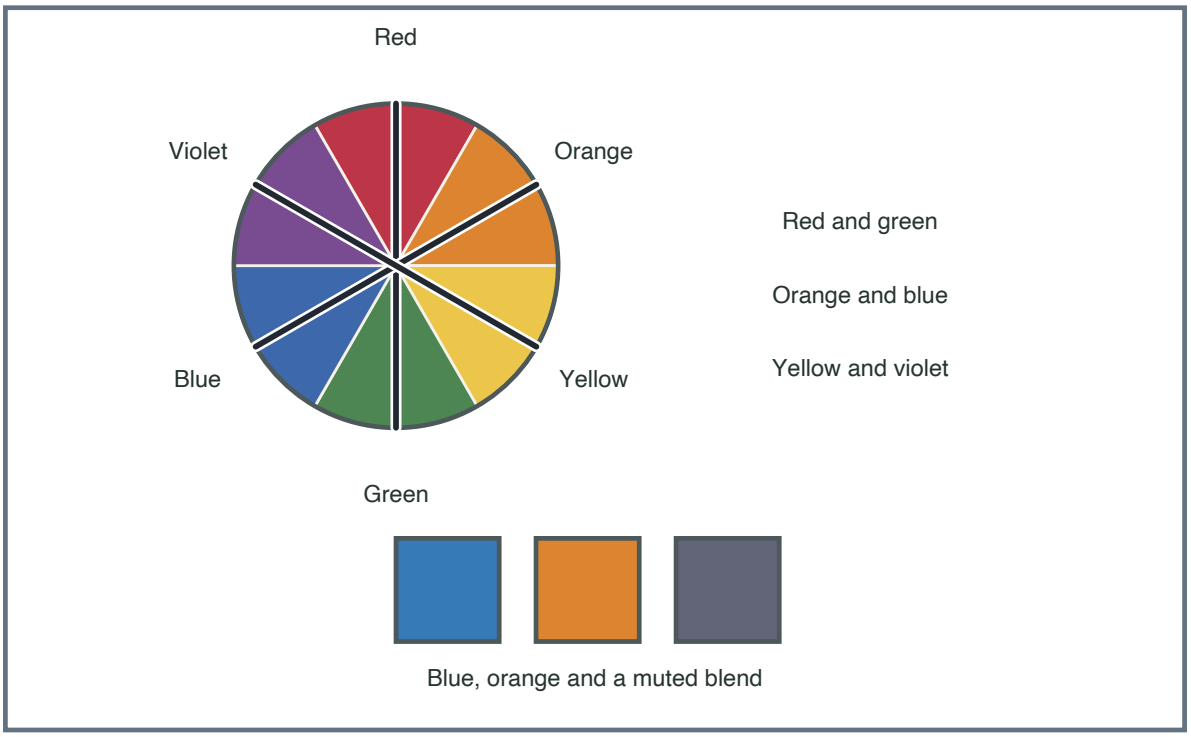
Draw with Complementary Colors

Reference | Colour wheel and blend | LETTER

Follow each straight diameter through the wheel's centre to its opposite hue.

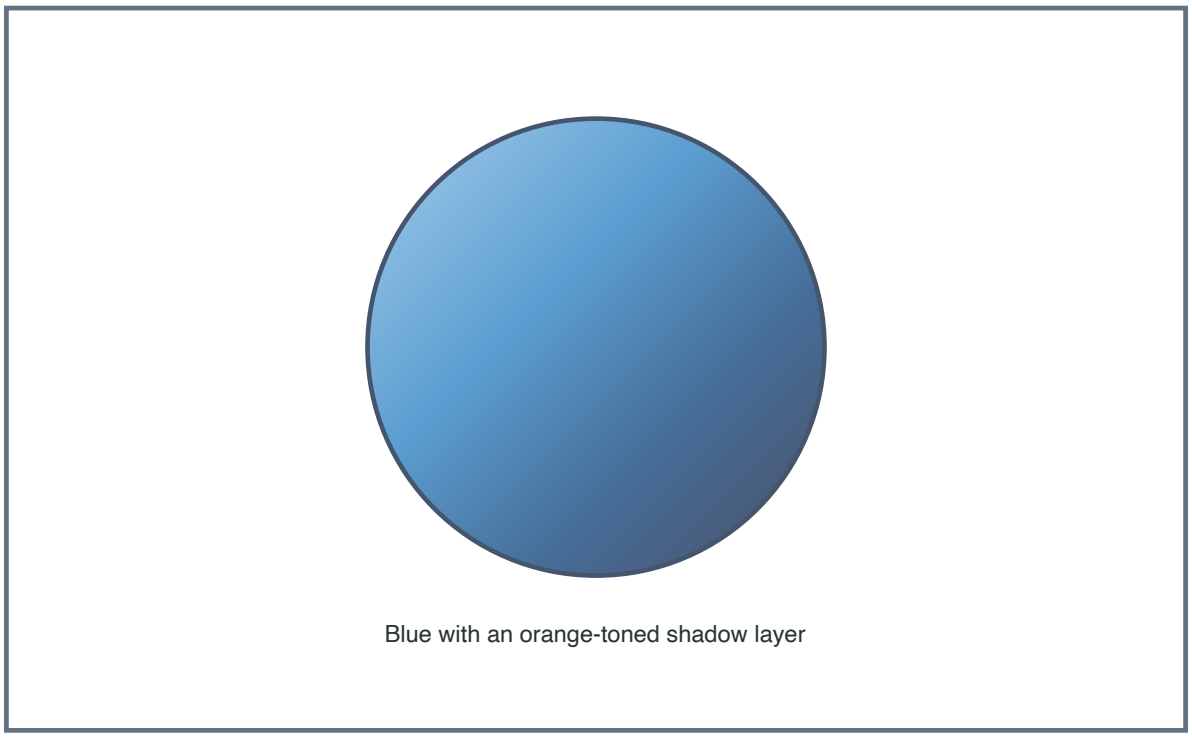


Draw with Complementary Colors

Reference I Worked example I LETTER

Original prompt

Worked example: shade a simple rounded form using a complementary pair.



Blue with an orange-toned shadow layer

Answer

Choose blue as the local color and orange as its complement. Draw a rounded form and fill it with blue. On the side away from the light, layer a thin wash of orange over the blue; the two hues neutralize toward a muted, darker blue-grey. Keep the lit side as clean blue. Check: the shadow should read as a duller, darker version of the same blue, not as a separate orange patch.

Reasoning

The complement is used in small amount on the shadow side so it dulls and darkens the local color without changing its identity. Keeping the lit side clean preserves the contrast between lit and shadow.

Check

Squint at the drawing: the shadow should look like a darker, less saturated blue, and the lit side should still read clearly as blue. If the shadow looks orange, too much complement was used.