

# CONTRASTING COLORS

## BLUEPRINT

Knowing how to use contrast will help you create eye-catching images. Contrast is a tool you should use to direct the viewer's attention to your subject. There are two types of contrast - tonal and color contrast.

You can use color contrast to achieve great compositions. Colors with opposite characteristics, like red and green, contrast strongly when placed together.

When two opposing colors are placed together they complement and enhance the qualities of the other color. Cold colors and warm colors almost always contrast, light colors make dark ones more prominent and saturated colors make desaturated ones more interesting.

Always consult the color wheel if you don't know what colors to put together.

Typically, if you want to introduce more color contrast to your compositions, you can combine complementary colors, dark and light ones, or play with different levels of saturation.

Examples of photos with contrasting colors



## 1 COMPLEMENTARY COLORS

Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel are called complementary colors. They cancel each other, if you mix them.



Complementary colors offer the strongest contrast, creating a vivid and energizing effect. This effect is most prominent at maximum saturation. There are three traditional pairs of complementary colors - red and green, yellow and purple, orange and blue. Combining these colors is the easiest and most powerful technique to catch the viewer's attention.

### TIP:

You can shoot an object of a complementary color to your background in order to achieve contrast. This works great in portraits and product images.

## 2 DARK/LIGHT, WARM/COOL

The contrast of opposite values such as black and white or a shade and tint of any hue is very powerful. The same goes for the contrast of cool colors such as blue, green or purple to warm colors such as red, yellow and orange.



Strong light and dark contrasts are the most striking. When it comes to warm and cool colors, warm colors make cool ones seem cooler, and vice versa. Usually, unequal amounts of warm and cool colors are most pleasing because the color combination will create a unified idea of either warmth or coolness.

### TIP:

Don't be afraid to experiment with both dark and light and warm and cool colors in the same image!

## THE ESSENTIALS

## 3 SATURATION

Another characteristic that impacts contrast is saturation. An increase in saturation results in an increase in contrast, brightness, and sharpness.



A change in saturation normally has a more noticeable effect on vibrant colors and less on dull colors or colors that are almost neutral. This is because to change saturation, there must be some color saturation to work with in the first place.

### TIP:

You can play with saturation in post-processing and decide what colors to saturate (or desaturate) in order to create more visual impact.