

When selecting colors for your wardrobe, consider three factors of your personal coloring: your skin color, your eye color, and your hair color. Personal coloring gives clues to your best-worn colors in clothing and cosmetics. Some people even go as far as to use their personal coloring to determine the colors they use to decorate their home.

The colors you select to wear are important in creating an attractive appearance. Flattering colors can brighten the skin and emphasize the color of the hair and eyes. Unflattering colors can make the skin look drained, sallow, or unhealthy.

However, you can wear any color in the right location, amount, and combination. Some colors may not look unattractive, but they won't be your best colors. Taking the time to determine your best colors is important if you want to:

- Emphasize the highlights in your hair
- Accentuate your eye color
- Plan an attractive wardrobe
- Avoid wasting money on unflattering clothing



Your personal coloring can indicate the color family, brightness, and intensity you will want to use for colors in your wardrobe. If you are not pleased with your coloring, work to offset it by selecting wardrobe colors that will de-emphasize it.

There are no set rules for color use, but there are some principles that can be used to achieve a desirable wardrobe color scheme. Skin color is the most important consideration. However, when either your hair or eye color is outstanding, it should be emphasized over your skin color.

¹Respectively, County Program Director/Home Economist/4-H Agent, Cibola County Extension Office; and Student Editing Assistant, University Communications and Marketing Services, New Mexico State University.

What is the underlying color in your complexion?



Figure 1. Examples of warm and cool complexion undertones.

As you begin the search for your most flattering colors, you must determine the underlying color in your complexion. Is it warm or cool? Warm complexions have yellow, peach, or red undertones, while cool complexions have pink, violet, or blue undertones (Figure 1).

To determine your basic coloring, analyze your skin without makeup. Be sure to use natural or incandescent lighting; fluorescent lighting can alter the appearance of colors. Wear a light, neutral color or place a white towel around your shoulders so no external colors interfere.

Now, look at your face in a mirror. What are the prominent colors that you see? Do not be misled by a suntan. Most skin, regardless of race or tan, will have undertones of yellow, red, pink, or blue. If you have trouble determining the color on your face, look at the inside of your wrist or your stomach.

After determining your basic skin tone (warm or cool), consider the color of your hair and eyes. These three colors—skin, hair, and eyes—make up your personal coloring and should be considered when selecting clothing and cosmetics. Colors that flatter your skin usually look good with your hair and eye coloring, but not always. In such cases, select the color that looks best with your skin.

If you are unsure of your basic coloring, try on a few colors to determine how they affect your appearance.

Warm	Cool
Ivory	Pure white
Yellow-green	Blue-green
Bright orange	Bright pink
Red-orange	Burgundy
Dark brown	Black

Ask yourself the following questions about each color:

1. How does my complexion appear—sallow, vibrant, etc.?
2. Does this color cause skin imperfections or wrinkles to be less noticeable?
3. Does the color bring out the highlights in my hair?
4. Are my eyes accentuated with this color?

Generally, the colors from one group—warm or cool—will be more flattering. This indicates that your complexion is warmer or cooler in nature. If a color causes your face to have shadows or if your face reflects the color, avoid that color in your wardrobe and beauty products.

If your complexion has undertones of pink, violet, or blue, you have a cool complexion, and your clothing and cosmetic selections should have similar undertones. Colors with undertones that are warm (yellow, peach, or red) will be less attractive for your complexion.

People with warm skin tones and complexion will look best in colors with the same undertones. If you have a warm complexion, avoid colors in your clothing and cosmetics that have cool (blue) undertones.

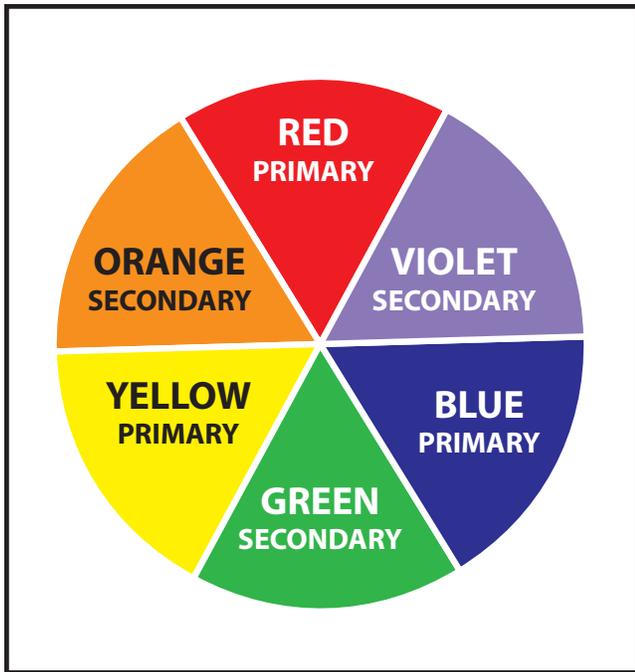


Figure 2. Color wheel showing primary (red, blue, and yellow) and secondary (violet, green, and orange) colors. Complimentary colors are directly opposite each other on the wheel; for example, green is the complement of red.

Try these methods to enhance your complexion colors:

- Place the color's complement next to it (Figure 2). Example: Green with red hair, purple with blonde hair.
- Combine the color with a neutral color. Example: Cream with dark brown hair.
- Repeat a large amount of the same color in a lower intensity near it. Example: Sky blue with clear blue eyes.
- Repeat the same color in a brighter intensity, but in a small amount. Example: Emerald green scarf with green eyes.

To de-emphasize a personal color:

- Avoid complementary colors (Figure 2). Example: Sallow skin looks more yellow when its complement purple is worn.

- Use color of brighter intensity in large amounts. Example: Bright rust with auburn hair, bright yellow with blonde hair.

Review:

- Flattering colors illuminate the skin and bring out the highlights of the hair. Unflattering colors drain color from the skin, leaving it sallow and unhealthy in appearance, or emphasize unpleasant shadows or red undertones.
- The wearer should be the center of interest, not the color or colors being worn. Natural blondes should avoid intense colors because of their delicate coloring. Those with a neutral complexion should avoid intense or bright hues.
- Avoid bright intensities of the colors present in your complexion.
- People with cool coloring appear more attractive when wearing cool colors, while people with warm coloring find warm colors aesthetically enhancing.
- People with strong contrasts in personal coloring can wear strong contrasts such as black with white.
- People with little contrast in personal coloring should avoid vivid intensities, strong contrasts in color, monotonous, and beiges or grays that closely match in value.
- Colors may be more flattering in fabrics with uneven, dull textures than in shiny, smooth textures.
- With neutrals, white adds color, black de-emphasizes color, and gray neutralizes color.
- An unflattering color can be wearable with careful selection of the amount of color and correct placement. Use it in combination with a dark accent, add a complementary color, or use a lighter color near the face.

Once you have determined your skin coloring, you can select clothing and cosmetics that are best-suited to you. The goal is to look as healthy and attractive as possible. Wearing the right colors can help you achieve this.

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