

Knowing the Color Wheel

Knowing the color wheel and how colors relate to one another is important. Purchase a good color wheel and keep it handy when you are painting. There are several points to consider when selecting colors for your painting.

1. It is important to have color dominance and color variation. Greens seem to create problems for artists, especially students. Don't make all your greens the same. Learn to mix them, using all the blues and yellows; then mix the complements to see the grays you get.
2. Colors opposite each other on the color wheel are complements, and when used together give excitement to your painting by enhancing and brightening each color.
3. Bits of pure color next to neutrals or grayed areas make your painting sing.
4. Using colors adjacent on the color wheel -- analogous colors- will give harmony to your painting.
5. You need to understand color value (lightness or darkness) and intensity (brightness or dullness). Good values make a painting. Think light, medium, and dark. A good rule is to put the darkest dark next to your lightest light at the center of interest. Remember that colors look different depending on the colors around them.
6. Color temperature is important too. A color like red is warm while blue is cool, but there are warm blues and cool reds. Warm colors come forward while cool colors recede.
7. The best way to learn about color is to use it. You can read about color theory all you want, but you need to use, mix and experiment with color.