



Yarn Alchemy

UNLEASHING YOUR STASH'S POTENTIAL

A workshop with Joji Locatelli

Hello!

Join me in a delightful exploration of multicolored projects and discover the art of transforming your beloved yarn stash into captivating and stylish creations. This workshop celebrates the joy of combining two or more colors, breathing new life into forgotten skeins and unlocking endless creative possibilities.

During this engaging session, we will delve into the following topics:

Understanding yarn textures: Unveiling the various textural qualities of yarn, such as fuzzy, draped, textured, and plied. Learn how to identify yarns with similar textures and the impact of texture matching or mismatching.

Decoding yarn weight: Master the art of identifying the thickness of yarn and gain confidence in determining the amount of yarn you have left and its sufficiency for projects.

Navigating Ravelry's database: Discover how to harness the power of Ravelry's expansive project database to find inspiring projects that align with your available yardage.

Harmonizing colors: Explore the secrets of color combination, from toning down overly vibrant hues to enlivening dull shades. Learn techniques to achieve balanced and visually appealing color palettes.

This hands-on workshop promises to be a delightful journey into the world of multicolored projects, where you'll discover how to make the most of your yarn stash while creating fun and fashionable pieces.

Get familiar with your Stash

Most knitters share a common trait: We love to buy new yarn just as much as we love to knit. Many times we just impulse-buy: there's that skein that is just too good to leave behind!

Of course, our yarn stash starts growing and growing. We find ourselves with buckets and bags of yarn that hide under the couch, pile up in corners, take over bookshelves, crawl under the bed, or they simply lie out in the open. And then, although we lovingly acquired each skein with a lot of excitement, our stash might inspire feelings of guilt.

But why do we feel guilty (if we do)?

Perhaps it has to do with how non-knitters see the knitting process: you would choose a project, then purchase the required yarn, then knit with it. Project and yarn are finished, with no leftovers, no unfinished works. Now it is time to choose a new project.

Why would someone need to keep a yarn stash? Non knitters think that all you'd need to do is run to the store to get the materials for your next project once you finish the last.

But art and creativity in knitting don't work that way. We need to be inspired by our materials, and for this purpose, we have to keep them around.

And also, what if we can't get this yarn/color/fiber/lot/stripe/dyer any more? What if the store is closed and I need to start this other project RIGHT NOW? What if I run out of yarn? What if? What if?

Maybe the word *stash* itself generates some guilt... Something that's associated with a secret hiding place. Why keep it a secret? Maybe we should call our stash our *yarn bouquet* instead.

We stash to prevent ourselves from the stress of being out of the materials we need whenever we might need them. That's why we all need a big and healthy stash!

However, sometimes our stash gets out of control and it doesn't fulfill its purpose, which is to supply us with what we might need for a new project idea. We might start to forget all those single skeins at the bottom of a bin, or it might get overloaded with leftover bits.

This class is about re-connecting with your stash, organizing it and finding new ideas to use it up in stylish projects.

Take it all out

Be brave! It will be worth it. Organizing your stash is an intense task, and it might take a long while, so make sure you do it on a day when you can take several hours to work on this, or in a room/place where you can leave your stash out without bothering.

Take all your yarn out of every hiding spot: plastic bins, totes, baskets. Make sure you find it all, so that you don't have skeins of the same type in different locations without knowing.

Once everything is out, you'll notice your stash has:

1: Full skeins of yarn that are properly labeled.

The easy ones. All the information you need is in the tag.

2: Unlabeled (Mystery) Yarns

These are a bit harder to sort. Make an effort to find out what these yarns are, and add a tag to them. This will make the sorting so much easier, even though tagging everything might be intimidating.

3: Leftovers

These might be labeled or not. It is truly useful to know how much weight you have of each ball, so make sure you keep a kitchen scale on hand when sorting out your leftovers. You can add a little tag with this information.

4: Yarn from WIPs we've fallen out of love with.

The day that you are sorting out your stash is an excellent day to go through your WIPs and decide which ones you just won't finish. That yarn can be put in good shape and returned to your stash to be used in future projects. Make sure you de-kink it properly by winding it up into a skein, washing it and letting it dry on a sweater rack (it is not advisable to wet your yarn and let it dry hanging since it will stretch and might look different from the rest of the yarn you have leftover).

Once you have re-claimed all the yarn from your unraveled project, you can tag it properly if you remember what it is and how much you had (you might have made a project page on Ravelry that might help you).

Skeins or Balls?

Many knitters feel tempted to wind their skeins into balls as soon as they get home from the yarn store. This makes yarn 100% ready to work with whenever inspiration strikes! However I would advise you to only wind up your yarns when you are ready to work with them because:

1- Yarn gets stretched when wound into a ball. The inside of the ball is more compressed and gets kinky, and the outside of the ball gets looser and less bouncy.

2- It is easier to feel the texture and the nature of your yarns by touching them in a skein. You can get a better feel of what the finished item will feel like by squishing a skein. The purpose of this workshop is to encourage you to mix and match different yarns, so skeins are the best state to do this.

3- You might change your mind about some yarn and might want to return it to the store or sell it on Ravelry or swap it with a knitting friend. The original unwound skein is the ideal for this.

Unlabeled: What is this yarn?

Yarn labels tell us everything we need to know about yarn: what kind of fiber it is made of, what weight (thickness) it is, what company made it and what the color (colorway) is called in case we want to buy more of it.

But what happens if we have leftovers or even whole skeins that have lost their labels?

There are some things we can do to try to remember/identify what it is:

- Get your friends' help. You'd be surprised about how many times I've been asked to identify mystery yarn, and to my surprise, many times I could actually tell what it was and even what the colorway was! Your friends might also spend a long time looking at yarn like every knitter, so ask them for help.
- Check your Ravelry yarn log. It is not easy to keep the *stash* section in Ravelry updated. We don't always remember to upload a photo of our new yarn and record its information. But maybe you did enter this mystery yarn long ago and you might find a photo of it in your log that will tell you what it is.
- Does it look like anything else in your stash? Maybe you have more of this yarn in a different color? Comparing the mystery yarn to other items in your stash might help you remember what it is.

If you are still at loss, then we can follow these steps to find out what type of yarn it is.

What's the fiber content?

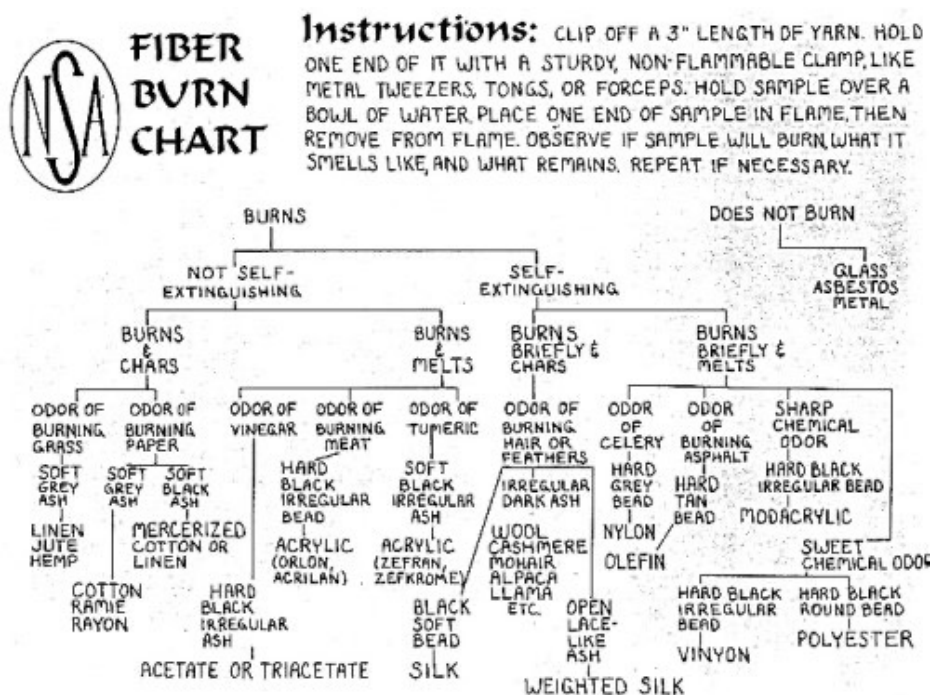
There are some fibers that have a very particular behavior or look. This can lead you into finding what the fiber content is, and will also help you prevent undesired surprises when using (and washing or blocking) this yarn and when mixing different yarns.

Yarns can be made of man-made fibers or natural fibers (which can be animal or plant sourced). To get an initial idea of what kind of fibers your yarn has, you can run a burn test.

If it burns continues to burn and melt, then it is probably a man-made fiber, like acrylic.

If it burns and continues to burn rapidly but it doesn't melt (it creates ash instead), then it is possibly a plant fiber like cotton or linen.

If it burns briefly and ceases, curling its fibers away from the fire, creating a bit of ash, then it is possibly an animal fiber like wool, alpaca, silk or cashmere.



COTTON has a smooth and cool feel. When you are knitting with it, it has no stretch at all. It washes very well, but knits made out of cotton tend to loose shape and stretch with time (same as jeans).

ACRYLIC can be difficult to identify, since higher quality acrylics are soft and fluffy and they might look and feel like wool. In general, acrylic is more shiny when you look at it into the light. However, even if it feels like wool, it behaves very differently: it won't felt when washed (in fact, it will remain almost intact) and it won't block. This means that even if you pin out a lace shawl made out of acrylic and let it dry for ages, when you unpin it, it will bounce back to its original shape. You must be careful when mixing wool and acrylics since they'll behave very differently.

WOOL has many different types, depending on the breed of the sheep. It can be soft as cashmere or extremely scratchy.

If you soak a finished project, pin it out and let it dry, it will hold that shape. It blocks well because it has memory. Garments made of wool will hold their shape better due to this fiber's natural elasticity, so when mixing yarns for a garment, make sure that you mix wool with fibers that will also hold their shape and not stretch.

Besides the breed, another important thing to consider about wool yarns is whether they are superwash (machine-washable) or not. To find out, you can take a couple of yards from your mystery yarn and stick them into a pocket of your laundry. If when you take it out it still looks like a thread of yarn, then it is superwash. If it looks like a funny shaped felted object, then you've got your answer.

ALPACA/LLAMA are very similar fibers as they come from very similar animals. Alpaca is softer, though.

When used for a garment it is VERY warm, and it stretches. You need to take this into consideration because the garment will grow with washing, blocking and wearing, especially lengthwise. Blends with wool will hold shape better, but still will stretch a bit. Other similar fibers are vicuña, guanaco and camel. These fibers will felt when washed, but not as strongly as wool.

CASHMERE is a luxury fiber from the cashmere goat. It is insulating and very, very soft. Even worked at a normal gauge it has a lightweight and silky drape. The fabric created is perfect for scarves, shawls or even sweaters, but you must take into consideration that cashmere fibers are very short and therefor these yarns will have a greater tendency to pill.

SILK comes from the fiber produced by silk worms inside the silk cocoons. It is incredibly soft, and because it is made of protein, it is very strong and shiny. It can also keep you cool when you are hot and warm when you are cold. But silk lacks elasticity almost completely. Any project made with pure silk will stretch A LOT. You must take this into consideration when choosing a project for your silk stash, and be careful when mixing it with more elastic yarns! They will behave very differently.

What's the yarn thickness?

Take your mystery yarn and a ruler or a tool like the one pictured below. Hold the yarn at a 90 degree angle to the tool, and then rotate the tool to wind the yarn on. This will prevent you from changing the twist of the yarn and thus getting different results. Don't pull the yarn tight but don't leave it loose either. Just wrap it with the same tension as you would wrap the yarn around the needle when knitting a stitch. Make sure you cover at least 2 inches of your tool, to get more accurate results.

Now count how many wraps you can fit per inch of your ruler (if you wrapped 2 inches, divide the total number of wraps by two). This will determine your yarn thickness. Compare your results to this chart.



Weight	Wraps per inch (WPI)
Bulky	6 or less
Aran	7-9
Worsted	10-12
DK	13 -15
Sport	16-18
Fingering	19-25
Lace	25 or more

How much do I have?

Weigh your yarn. If you know what brand and base it is, you can look it up on Ravelry's database.

So, for example, if you have 50 grams of Malabrigo Rios, I can look up this yarn on Ravelry and find that each 100g skein has 210 yards. Then I know I have 105 yards of mystery yarn.

If you don't know what your yarn is, but you properly identified the thickness by measuring the wraps per inch, you can get an approximate idea of the yardage by referencing to the chart below. Let's suppose your yarn has 11 wpi, and you have 50g. You can identify your yarn as a WORSTED WEIGHT and you have approximate 100 yards.

Now you are ready to find a lovely project for it!

While these steps may not get you the same precise information that you would find on a label, it can still be very useful in determining the type and size of project appropriate for those mystery yarn balls.

Weight	Wraps per inch (WPI)	Yards per 100g - APPROX.	Yards per pound	Yards per ounce	Examples
Bulky	6 or less	100 or less	453	28	Cascade 128
Aran	7-9	160	724	45	Manos Del Uruguay Clasica
Worsted	10-12	200	906	57	Malabrigo Rios
DK	13 -15	250	1132	71	Tosh DK
Sport	16-18	300	1359	85	Malabrigo Arroyo
Fingering	19-25	400	1812	113	Tosh Merino Light
Lace	25 or more	800	3624	226	Malabrigo Lace

What's the yarn texture?

One of the easiest things to determine regarding a yarn's texture is the number of plies that make it. Yarns can be made of a single ply or multiple plies. You can un-twist this yarn to see how many it's made up of and how tightly plied together they are. Single ply yarns don't bounce as much as plied ones. They have a silkier look when knitted up and they drape more. Plied yarns, on the contrary, can be very elastic, which makes them a perfect when you need good stitch definition.

Take a good look at your yarns, are they fuzzy? It could be nice to put all fuzzy yarns together or not! Play with this difference in texture! Your fuzzy yarns might be mohair, angora or cashmere. As long as they have a similar thickness, they will probably behave very similarly when knitted into the same project.

But don't limit yourself to only pair yarns with the same texture. Different textures might even act like different colors into the same project.

Give your yarns some tags

Once you have properly identified your mystery yarn, why not give it a label so that you can remember next time you see it? You can write all the information you found about it and leave blank that information that you didn't find yet, but might find out some day: Yarn company, base, colorway name, thickness (determined by wpi), weight of your leftovers or yarn lot, approx. yardage, project ideas...

Sort your stash

Whether you keep it in plastic bins, in ziplock bags, or in storage baskets around the house, the ideal way to get the most out of your stash is to keep it organized, or arranged following some kind of logic. Entering your stash into some sort of database is what will help you get the most out of it, in any case. You can sort your yarn:

By Yarn Weight

This is arguably the most sensible way to organize your stash. If you usually pick out a pattern first and then you go to your stash to look for appropriate materials, this might be the most practical approach.

Use one or more container/shelf for each weight. If your stash is not too large, you can mix lace and fingering weights, DK and worsted weights, etc. If you have a very large stash and you find that you need more than one container for each yarn thickness, you might want to store sweater/larger project quantities into one and single skeins/smaller project quantities in another. This will help you reach for the appropriate container depending on what you are planning to knit.

By similarity in Texture

If you have a larger stash of, for example, fingering weight yarn, it is really useful to pair yarns that are similar in brand and model, but also store them with products from other companies that look similar (in texture, plies, fuzzyness). This makes combining single skeins of similar look really easy to make larger projects.

By Type of Project

Usually yarns are good for various type of projects and not just for one, but there are some yarns that are especially good for a certain type. This is the case, for example, of self-striping sock yarns. You might also have a particular taste for delicate yarns that are only suitable for lace shawl, or you might have a lot of sweater quantities. Organizing your stash by project type (independently of its weight) can then make it really fast for you to find appropriate materials, but you might not see some alternative uses for these yarns.

By Color

I love this method, even though I have to admit that it can be tricky to remember what you have and pair yarns if you have a large stash.

One of its benefits is that it breaks up *yarn collections* and gives you more freedom to combine different yarn companies and yarn textures, this method forces you to focus in color and what combinations look better, and not limit yourself to just combining the colors that one company supplies.

It will also help you see what colors are missing in your stash (if you like them, and you'd like to keep them on hand) and which colors you already have enough of. I am always very drawn towards grays and golds, and I tend to buy many times the same shade from different companies. Organizing stash by color has helped me visualize my golds better and get different variations next time I go shopping.

Also, it looks nice! If you store your yarn in open shelves, organizing your stash by color or color families transforms your stash into a decor piece.

How to combine the yarns in your stash

Now that you've familiarized yourself with your stash again, what is the best way to use it, and not buy new yarn every time you see a project that you like?

I challenge you to use a certain yarn for a project you thought it was not good for, or that you didn't have enough for. For example, try to find a creative way to use that super special skein of fingering weight into a whole garment project.

Stripes

Stripes are one of the most popular features in knitting patterns. The ability to play with color and choose different combinations is so exciting for any knitter. And for some reason, knitting in a progression of stripes seems to go much faster than knitting with a plain color. You always want to complete that new stripe and see the effect it creates in your knitting. You want to make sure that you have put your colors together nicely, and you want to see the color scheme they create as a whole.

Adding stripes is also a good way to use your leftovers or single skeins into a larger project. Stripes can be added to almost any pattern. For example, let's take that odd skein of neon yellow in your stash. Maybe it was too bright for a whole project, but how about adding some stripes or details to an otherwise neutral project?

The shawl in this photo was created entirely with leftovers. I had 1+ skeins of the pale blue/gray in my stash that I wanted to make a shawl with, but it was not enough to make it large. So I went to my bin of leftovers and picked out two yarns with a similar thickness and texture. I added stripes randomly to my original idea, and it made the design more interesting while helping me achieve the size I needed.

I challenge you to find a project that you like and pick a yarn that you don't have enough of to make it. Then go to your leftover bin and plan a way to use leftovers to complete the project. We will see later how to pick colors that will make good color combinations.

Here's another good example of how to use leftovers on a sweater. Just imagine you only have HALF of the required yardage for a design. Then pick enough leftovers to complete the other HALF of the required yardage, and add stripes throughout.

Just remember that usually, thinner stripes are classier and more elegant than wider stripes.



Colorblocking

Using multiple solid colors in a project or outfit that revolves around a palette of two or more colors, usually in bold and bright shades. The result is a simple yet very chic look. Stripes and patterns are typically not used in colorblocking, as such designs would take away from the "blocked" visual. For visually striking results, the colors used are usually found on opposite sides of the color wheel.

In addition to being on trend, colorblocking can have body slimming benefits, especially when the colors are paired with black and the darker blocks are positioned in places that can optically make the body look slimmer (like the bust area or hips).

For successful color blocking, keep your colors in the same family such as all pastels or all neon colors. Another key to successfully using color blocking in knitting is (again) to mix in neutral colors. If you are new at color blocking, limit your color blocks to two colors first. Then add neutrals such as charcoal gray or off white. Once you get the hang of it, you can mix more colors and try pairing opposite colors together.

How can you estimate yardage for color-blocking?

In general, the body of a sweater will take about 65% of the total yarn requirement and each sleeve will take about 17.5%. If the pattern that you want to use calls for 1000 yards of worsted weight, then you'll need about 650 y for the body and 350 y for the sleeves. If you want to use two colors for the body, then get 300 y in one color and 350 y in another one. Find a third color for the sleeves, and you are ready to colorblock!



Work bands and other details using a different yarn

If you are a bit short on yardage and want to include some leftovers in your project, you could do some of the details of a sweater in a different color (like cuffs and button-bands).

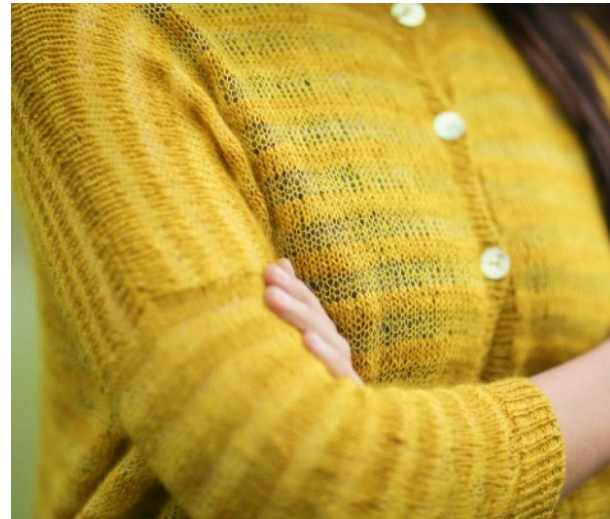
This reminds me a bit of how my Mom used her leftovers in projects... So to me it is a more 'obvious way'... Or maybe an afterthought solution when you ran out of yarn while already working on the project.



Use different yarn weights as stripes

You can achieve a striped effect by using two yarns of very different weights in the same project, and always using the same needle size. The lighter weight yarn will create a lighter, see through fabric that will result in a visually different color.

In this example, the knitter mixed used a worsted weight for the thicker bands and a lace weight for the thinner bands.



Marling

A marled effect is created when you have two different colors or textures. You can achieve this by using a marled yarn, or holding multiple yarns together. Marling allows us to use yarns that would normally be too thin for a specific project by holding them together with another strand.

It is also a great way to use up a lot of leftovers, especially if you arrange them in a color sequence, moving from one color to another.

Sometimes solid color yarns are just boring on their own. Marling might create a more interesting fabric. It will also help you tone down colors that are too loud or bright on their own. You can marl them with a neutral.

You're not limited to mixing yarn colors. You can also mix different fibers together to create your own special blends, like wool + mohair or alpaca + silk. And it would be a great idea if you don't really like a specific fiber on its own. For example, if you don't like knitting with cotton because it's so inelastic when you knit it, and it stretches when you wear it... Then you can mix your cotton yarn with some bouncy wool and the resulting blend will be much more appealing.

Marled knitting is never boring. It's a fun way to make graduated yarn color changes, unique tonal yarns, or even ombre effects.



Marling Cheat Sheet

2 strands of	=	1 strand of
Lace		Fingering
Fingering		DK
Sport		Worsted
DL		Aran
Worsted		Bulky
Aran		Chunky
Bulky		Superbulky

Fading

Fading a project means basically 'melting' one color into another in a way that looks seamless. We do it by using a sequence of stripes that helps these two or more colors blend together while we transition.

If my project is big enough, I like to start the transition with more rows of the original colors and fewer of the new one, and gradually change to the opposite situation. For example:

4 rows of color 1 · 2 rows of color 2 for 1"

2 rows of color 1 · 2 rows of color 2 for 1"

2 rows of color 1 · 4 rows of color 2 for 1"

This creates a slow, magical color change. Speckled or variegated colorways melt the best, especially if you can find some bits of color 1 in color 2 and viceversa.

Fading tips:

- 1) Fade with your your favorite colorway. What's your favorite colorway? Start building a fade with it and pick skeins that have a bit of your favorite color in them.
- 2) Pick skeins with a common color. Look for yarns, with a common dark purple or gold in speckles. Like a common vein that can run through this project. For example, for Spector sweater, I started fading based on the second color I used (from the top). I looked for a lighter skein that had some of the same colors found in the speckles of my favorite skein, and then I did the same towards the other end. I always looked for new colors that had a bit of the old in them.
- 3) Speckled, variegated and kettled dyed yarns, melt into one another more than semisolids or solids. For example, with Malabrigo skeins that are so variable, I often had to arrange them in a fade progression in order for the skein variation not to show, but the colors always blend up nicely. However, solid color yarns will tend to show the trick you are using, meaning that the stripes will more likely visible as such.
- 4) Play with the VALUE of the yarn. We'll see more in depth later, but try to use colors that have a similar value, or arrange them in an increasing or decreasing order according to their value.
- 5) I know that it can be hard to envision different colors together in a progression, so a way to find guidance is to pick a color palette, a moodboard or a photo that you like and see if you have skeins in your stash that follow this image's hues.
- 6) Mix bases and textures! Especially if you are fading and marling!
- 7) Fading works even better when you look at it from the WS, or from the purl side of the fabric. This is because of how the rows of stitches interlock among them. Half of one row will become intertwined with the row below making the stripes look even skinnier. That's why I love to design faded sweaters that have purl stitches as the most prominent... If I fade using garter stitch and if it's possible, I try to switch colors on the WS of the knitting so I can take advantage of this effect on the RS.



How to combine colors?

It's easy to see how color is possibly the most important decision you'll make when starting a new knitting project. We might throw all our yarn on the floor looking for the perfect color, or we'll simply decide we don't have anything to do this project justice and run to the yarn store, only to realize that we still have to make a decision there (with possibly many more options to choose from).

Picking a color is hard, and when we find those colors that suit us and we feel comfortable in, it is easy to stay in that comfort zone often going for monochromatic choices.

By understanding how color works, and what combinations we can choose to use more than one color in a project and achieve balanced and stylish combinations, we can switch things up to keep our needles happy and interesting.

Have you asked yourself why do some color combinations work and others don't?

It may depend on 3 things:

- 1) The place the colors take in the **color wheel**
- 2) The **contrast** among the colors
- 3) How do colors react when **put next to each other**

A bit of color theory

Color is made of three parts: HUE, VALUE and SATURATION.

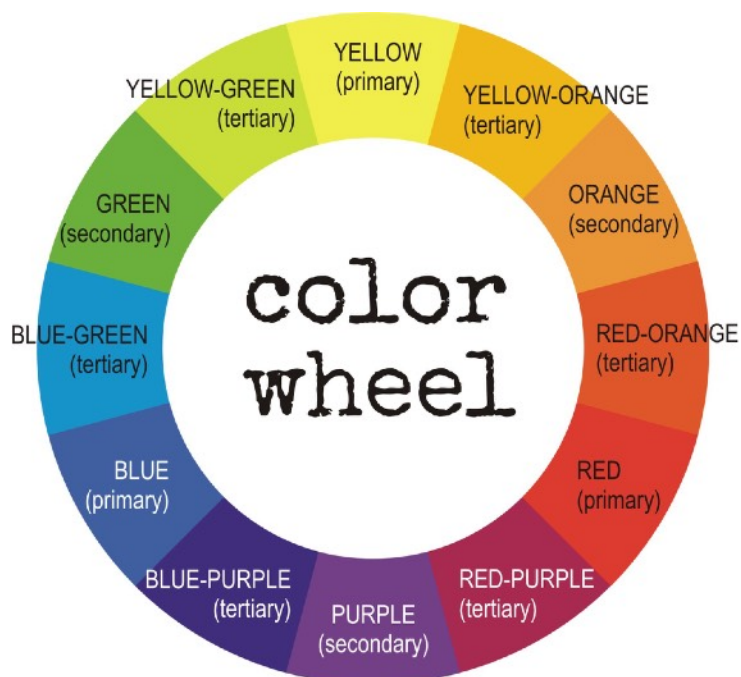
HUE: the purest form of a color. What this color looks like in its most basic form. For example, the hue in Navy Blue is BLUE.

Here you can see a **color wheel**. It is represented by HUES, because that's the most important indicator of a color, and thus, it's the starting point when deciding how to create a combination of different colors of yarn that works for our project.

Most color wheels have 12 hues: 3 primary colors (blue, red and yellow), 3 secondary colors (green, purple and orange) and 6 tertiary colors. Primary and secondary colors are easy to know and recognize their name.

But tertiary colors are not so easy. They are usually given fancier names, like 'lime green' or 'teal', but in *color theory*, they receive name of the two colors that make them up, with the primary color going first. They are *red-orange*, *yellow-orange*, *yellow-green*, *blue-green*, *blue-purple*, and *red-purple*.

All these colors are arranged in a circle, to show color progression and how colors are made. For example, if we wanted to dye some yarn in a yellow-green shade, by looking at the color wheel we can see that we would need to mix yellow and green dyes.



VALUE: refers to how *light* or *dark* a color is. When two colors have a very different value, we say there is a lot of contrast between them.

Value is also determined by the amount of black or white present in a color. Black and white are neutral colors because they have no HUE.

Take the photo-test!

Just because two yarns are from two different color families or hues does not mean they will normally have a high contrast. To make sure that the yarns you are choosing have enough contrast, set the camera of your phone in black and white mode and take a photo.

This will eliminate the hues and saturation and will only leave the VALUE for you to see how different they are.

If you are planning to work with stripes: The more contrast, the better!

value scales



SATURATION: refers to how *vivid* or *dull* a color is,

and this is affected by the amount of *gray* present in a color. For example, if we take a skein of yarn of a very vivid hot pink and over-dye it with gray, we would get a skein of yarn with the same HUE, but with different saturation.

Because we can play with Value and Saturation, we can turn that color wheel of 12 hues into an infinite palette of colors.

saturation scales



What are Neutral colors?

Neutral colors as black and white are not really colors. They are just values, actually. But we can definitely consider colors since we are talking about yarn, and we can certainly get yarns black and white and all the grays in the world.

Beiges and browns, however, are real colors since they always have a certain hue, maybe hidden to our eyes. They are less saturated forms of the yellows and oranges, with higher or lower values.

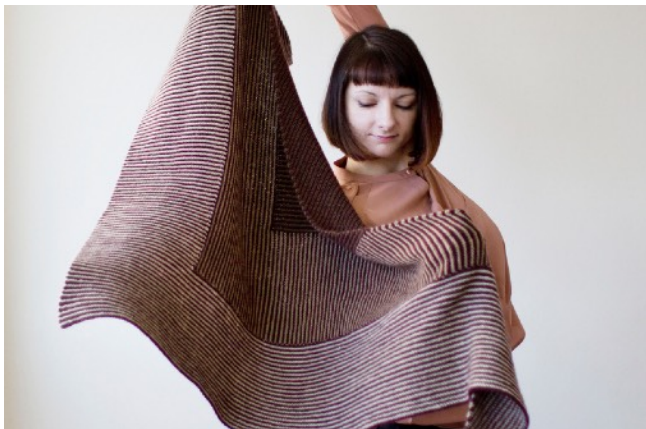
They can be considered neutrals sometimes because they can calm down a brighter hue.

Color combinations

We usually can tell what combinations we like or *work* to our eyes, and which ones are simply unpleasant. But many times we like a certain combination and we want to replicate its effect without copying each of the colors that compose it. That's when it's useful to understand what are some '*tried and true*' formulas for mixing colors and why they work.

Monochrome

It is the simplest color scheme, and one of the easiest to achieve. It uses only one color (hue), but different variations and shades of it.



This is the Shima Shima shawl by Olga Buraya-Kefelian.



The designer used 4 colorways, all with a similar hue, but with different value and saturation.

It is a successful combination because it's clean and simple. One color automatically creates a sense of unity and harmony.

How to use it: The main thing you have to pay attention to when choosing this kind of palette is *contrast*. There has to be enough contrast between the colorways so

that the elements stand out in the design.

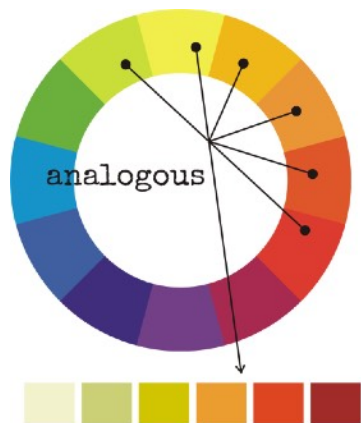
When to use it: when you want your piece to feel cohesive. Also, a monochrome scheme sets the scene for a minimal style that gives any detailed work in your knitting room to shine. In the above design, we are more aware of the ingenious stripe work because we are not paying attention to the different colors. We can now focus on the details of the design. If you have a lot of details that compete with each other, focusing on just one color will help unite all of the parts of your piece.



Analogous

Let's go back to our color wheel.

Analogous combinations use two or more colors that sit next to each other on the color wheel.



This is the On the Spice Market Shawl by Melanie Berg.

The designer used *variations* of Yellow-green, Yellow, Yellow-orange, Orange, Red-orange and Red.

It is a successful combination because the colors transition into one another in a way that makes sense to our brains. They create serene and comfortable designs. You can often find analogous designs in nature, and that's why this progression always look familiar, harmonious and pleasing to the eye. It brings us back to when we learned the progression of the colors in the rainbow.

How to use it: With this scheme also, make sure you have enough contrast when choosing your colorways (remember the photo trick)

If you feel intimidated by many colors, you can choose one color to dominate, and a second to support. A third color can be added as an accent and used with black and white (or other neutrals to tone them down).

When to use it: When you want more than one color, but still want a sense of unity. It will help your piece feel blended together and with a common meaning. Using a brighter, more vibrant shade of a color can help direct attention to a specific part of your piece, while still working with that natural flow of colors.

Variation: Split-analogous

This combination would still use two or more colors, but you would choose every other color on the color wheel. So, an example would be BLUE-GREEN/BLUE-PURPLE/RED-PURPLE.



This is the Building Blocks shawl by Stephen West. In this example, Stephen is only using the 3 HUES mentioned above, but gets a more complex palette with more colors because he is using variations in value and saturation. In some sections, because the striping is so fine, some colors might appear as they are blending creating a whole new color. The split variation adds much more visual interest to the finished piece than the *Analogous* scheme. Notice how

in this design, instead of focusing our interest in the clever lines that compose the shawl, we are immediately trying to figure out what colors those are and how they were put together.

Complementary

This combination is formed by pairs of colors sitting directly opposite each other on the color wheel like *red and green, orange and blue, yellow and purple*.



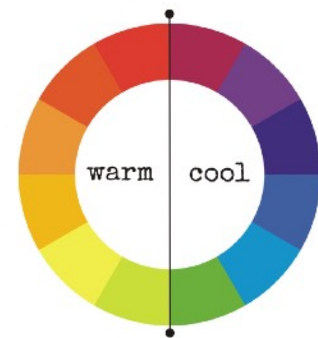
This is the In a Word shawl by Veera Välimäki.

The designer chose a striking complementary color combination of blue and orange, but she used very different values for both colors, to achieve a well contrasted combination.

Complementary colors are **powerful** because they enhance each other. Red looks most red when it's against green and vice versa.

Additionally, complementary colors will naturally have one *warm* color and one *cool* color. There's a natural **tension** in this color combinations that makes us look again, it is intriguing to our brains. Whether we do it consciously or unconsciously, our brains are constantly searching for harmony, so when we see natural tension between complementary pairings, it forces our brain to stop and look.

This combination creates a vivid and energizing effect, especially at maximum saturation, but be careful when using these colors, as they can also be jarring. In the above example, the colors used were not used to its maximum saturation to achieve a more subtle effect without losing the intriguing factor. Changing the value and saturation of at least one of the colors will give you a much more sophisticated look.



Variation: Split-complementary

You take one starting color and then take 1 color at each side of its complementary color. It has the same strong visual contrast as the complementary color scheme, but has less tension. This is a good alternative if don't feel confident about the complementary scheme. It makes the color choices a little less obvious (many people know that yellow and purple are complementary, but if we use the next colors in the color wheel, this becomes less apparent).

And remember, you don't need to stick to the pure hues! You can always play with contrast and saturation to achieve a more complex palette with more colors. In this example I used yellow, red-purple and blue-purple in different shades.



Triad

This scheme uses three colors, chosen by picking every fourth color on the color wheel. It produces a high contrast effect while preserving 'harmony.' Triadic color harmonies tend to be quite vibrant, even if you use pale or unsaturated versions of your hues.



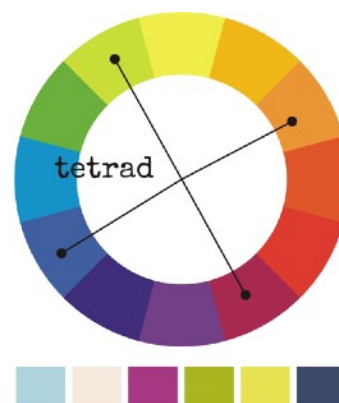
For these 2 projects, the knitter used a triad composed of the 3 primary colors (blue, yellow and red) and paired it with 2 different neutrals. The triad makes *successful color combinations* because there's equal distance between the colors on the color wheel. Even if a viewer isn't familiar with the color wheel or color theory, their brains see the relationship as a balanced and harmonic one.

When you're looking for a more complex color scheme, something that's intriguing without being obvious, a triad will be a good choice.

Tetrad

This scheme uses four colors chosen from every third color on the color wheel. The name also comes from the shape made between the colors.

It works for the same reasons and it can be used for the same situations as the triad.



Accented Neutral

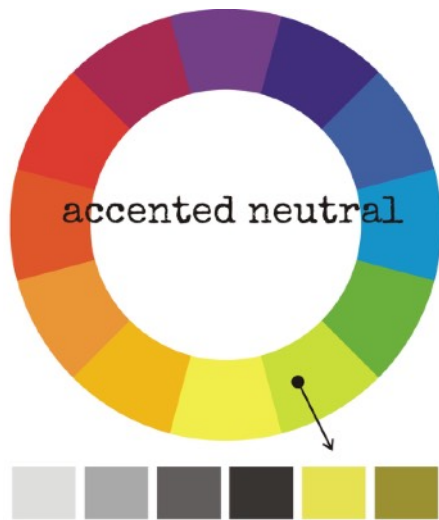
I am always drawn towards neutrals, but when I want to use some color, one of my favorite color schemes is the Accented Neutral. You stay with your comfortable neutrals, but you bring in a couple of shades of a color to create accents and interest.

It is a successful color combination because, same as with a monochrome scheme, you're using just one color, so there's a sense of unity, but you're also using whites, blacks, and grays. These are neutrals that help ground or brighten the color scheme.

This is the 3 Color Cashmere Cowl.

Before creating this project, I had a skein in the bright lime green in my stash that I felt that 1) was too little to make something out of and 2) was too bright (even though I loved the color).

The neutral accented combination is a great option when you love a certain bright color, but feel a bit intimidated to make a whole project out of it. The neutrals can help you tone it down and achieve a more subtle finished project.



You can also use this scheme when you want to draw attention to a specific spot, while making everything else fade back. In this case, it is best to use only 1 or 2 shades of the COLOR, and use more neutrals to give the whole piece more details and depth.

How about variegated yarns?

Variegated yarns are mesmerizing, they can contain a hundred colors in a single skein! Speckled dyed yarns are very popular lately for this same reason. The results when using these yarns into a multicolor project are simply amazing!

Things to consider if you're thinking of using several variegated yarns for your project:

Make sure that there is enough contrast. You can use the black and white photo trick. If there isn't enough contrast, the colors will blend together and if you are using thinner stripes they might simply disappear.

Use complementary colors. Pick the variegated yarn that you want to use, and look for a solid or semisolid yarn that is complementary.

Make sure that the yarns you are using are different enough. Many times when we see a skein of variegated or speckled yarn we focus on the tiny speckles, or on each of the little sections that make them. We might be able to tell 2 skeins apart by the tiniest details. But when knitted up, these 2 yarns might look way too similar. To avoid this, pick 2 yarns with 2 very different hues or values so that the stripes and sections of your project will be differentiated.

Twist the skeins together. This way you can see if there is enough contrast between them, and whether you like the color combination.

Conclusion

I hope this time together inspired you to see your stash in a whole new way... Perhaps you are already dreaming of new possibilities?

Because I am never able to impulse buy yarn and have it delivered at home, I've learned to make do with what I have and I have a great love for my yarn collection. I know that everything I may need for any idea can be found there. Whether I find a sweater lot or I need to put it together myself by blending yarns together... I know I can always find the perfect materials for my dream knitting.

Just remember to study what you have, learn about fibers, yarn behavior and take time to plan how you'll combine your bases and colors in advance.

Don't follow ANY rules, and have fun!

Joji