

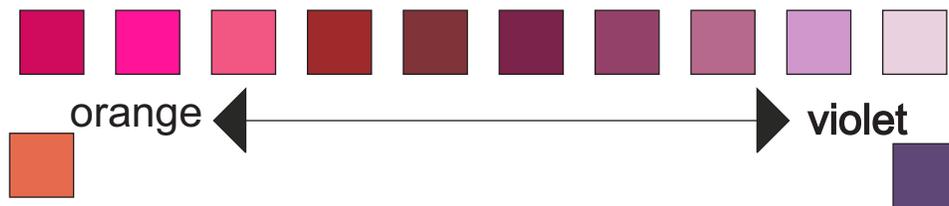
Choosing Fabrics for a Quilt

I urge you to wash your fabric first - especially if you're using fabrics from different Fabric companies - which is something we all do. Fabrics are not all printed on the same base fabric (even if they're all cotton fabrics), and as a result will shrink differently when washed. This can cause puckers in your finished piece once it is washed. You don't have to boil the fabric, or do any drastic washing techniques. Just wash it like you would your regular laundry. Believe me: this makes a difference.

I usually start by separating my fabrics into two groups: plain and patterned. Then I separate the fabrics into color groups. Once this is done, I start picking out colors that I would like to be in my quilt. I have a couple of choices when choosing colors: I can choose a specific color harmony, or just choose colors that I feel work well together. When choosing a color harmony, it is important to be aware that color harmonies are based on a color wheel. And there are many different color wheels. The colors that are used and the way that they interact depends on the type of Color Wheel that is used.

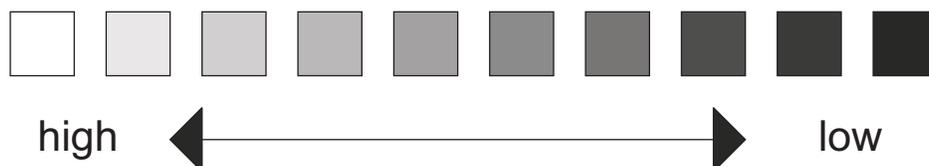
If you are interested in pursuing this aspect of choosing colors, you and your group might like to consider my "Color Interactions" Hands-on lecture. You will learn about different colors wheels: 12-Hue, Prang, RGB vs. CMYK, and Newton's color wheel.

Don't think of choosing fabrics that are all exactly the same color for each color group. Instead, think of choosing a range of colors that center around your specific color. For example, this is a red color group:



Notice that the above example doesn't actually contain a "true" red. Instead it is a range of reds, which is more like what you will find in your fabric stash. Notice that some lean toward orange, and some lean toward violet. Using a range of reds (or blues or greens, etc.) will make your quilt more interesting.

Next, sort your fabrics according to **Value**. Value is the lightness or darkness of a color. Within each color group, you will want a pile of High, Medium, and Low value Fabrics.



You should also consider the **Intensity** of the color. Intensity is the degree of purity of a color. Another way to think of it is whether the color appears to be **Bright**, or **Dull**. If the fabrics that you've chosen are mostly bright, a dull colored fabric probably won't work as well with the other fabrics. Conversely, if the fabrics that you've chosen are more subdued, a bright color will not fit well with the group: *you want the fabrics that you choose to enhance each other, not fight with each other.*

Now, look at your fabric piles. You will want to eliminate the fabrics that don't look right when combined with its friends and neighbors. I am not a fan of "make it work": I have seen many mediocre quilts that are a result of trying to use a fabric that just doesn't fit in. You may love the fabric, just not in this particular quilt.

You'll find that a little time spent in preparation is well worth it - your quilt will be lovely!

Have a great time making your quilt!