

Warm & Cool

Art & Design

Warm and cool are relative judgements, not fixed properties of a hue.

Colours are called warm or cool relative to their neighbours. Every hue family contains a warmer version and a cooler version of itself.

ADVANCES
warm

RECEDES
cool

- Warm colours tend to advance; cool ones recede.
- Cadmium red is warm; alizarin crimson is cool.
- Ultramarine is warm for a blue; phthalo is cool.
- Distance cools and greys a colour: aerial perspective.
- A warm light casts a cool shadow, and the reverse.
- Temperature is a comparison, never an absolute.

LOOK FOR IT

A cool grey beside a warm grey reads as blue, though neither is blue on its own.

A split-primary palette carries a warm and a cool of each primary, so any mix can be kept clean rather than muddled.