CopicMarkerTutorials.com



No matter what media you are using

In early 2016 I attended the Starfest Convention in Denver, Colorado. The promoters had flown me in and put me up specifically to give a live "Coloring with Copics" demonstration, and it had gone really well. After I had completed my demo, the moderator asked the room for questions, and a young lady in the middle of the room raised her hand.

### "How do you get good blends?" she asked...

On another day, my answer might have been different. But because I had just given a long talk, my brain was answering on autopilot. So on this day, the answer to her question came out just right.

### "The secret to getting good blends is to use your mind, not your media."

It doesn't matter if you're using markers, colored pencils, paint, or tattoo ink. The magic is not in the materials you use – the magic is in your mind.

## Understanding color and how colors work together is the key to getting the blends you want.

I know, I know, color theory is boring and complicated. But fortunately, it doesn't have to be. The truth is, you don't have to know a lot of fancy art words or terms to get the most out of your colors. You really only need to understand one thing: how each color connects to every other color. To do that, all you need is a color wheel.



The modern color wheel is divided into twelve sections, with each section containing either a primary, secondary, or tertiary color.

Primary colors: Cannot be created by mixing any other colors.

- Red
- Yellow
- Blue

Secondary colors: Made by mixing two primary colors.

- Orange
- Green
- Purple

**Tertiary color:** Made by mixing equal parts of a primary color with its adjacent secondary color.

- Blue-purple
- Blue-green
- Yellow-green
- Yellow-orange
- Red-orange
- Red-purple

# With a color wheel in hand, blending colors is easy.

### There's only one rule you need to remember:

You can perfectly blend any two colors together by connecting them through the color wheel, so long as the lightness or darkness (value) of each color is the same.

Let's take a look at how this works.

For our first example, let's take a look at two colors that are about as different from one another as we can get – blue and orange.

These two colors are polar opposites and therefore extremely difficult to blend together. If you just take the two colors and smash them together, they cancel each other out and turn a neutral brown-gray.

A prettier way to blend these two colors together is to join them through their adjacent colors.

For example, if we take a look at the color wheel, we can get from blue to orange by starting with blue, and moving through purple, to red, then orange. If we break it down it looks like this:



I'll grant you, it doesn't look like much when they are stacked side by side like that, but when we smash these four colors together, softening them into one another at their borders, we get a much more vibrant transition from blue to orange than if we simply blend the two colors together and let them mix on their own.



Remember, the trick to making this kind of color blending work is to keep the colors you are using very close in value. What that means in normal words is that each color you use should be the same or close to the same degree of light or dark. As long as we keep the lightness or darkness of the colors we are using the same, we can blend any two colors together perfectly.

Let's take a look at some real world examples using Copic markers as the medium. It's important to realize that I didn't use any special blending techniques like "flicking" or "flooding", and I didn't use a colorless blender. I simply chose colors that would naturally blend well together based on their value.



In this example, I've used:

B26
V16
R27
Y08
YR68

Notice how the last numbers move smoothly from 6 to 8? The last number represents the specific value of each color I used. We can also go around the color wheel in the opposite direction.

Here, I'm moving from red to green, through orange and yellow.

In this example I've used:

YR68 Y36 Y08 YG07

Again, notice how close the last numbers are. Keeping them similar is the key to this kind of blending.

The cool thing is that this type of blending works awesome on all types of objects, including skin.



Believe it or not, the colors I used for this drawing are these:



I've simply lightened them up and blended them out...

In this example I've used:

YR00
E11
E53
E81
B00

Using this blending technique and these colors for skin is the best way to get natural looking light skin tones. Let me show you what I mean...

The gradient below is the way most people color skin:



In this example I've used:

E00
E11
E59
E13

That's a lot of earth tones, seems only natural, right?

Now do me a favor. Take a look at your arm. Come on now, really look at it. How many of the colors from the image above do you actually see in your own skin? Not many I'll bet.

Now take a look at the orange to blue light value gradation we did earlier and compare that to your arm. Can you see how those colors, especially the ones in the middle, more closely match the actual skin color of a light-skinned person?

If you want to know what colors are best for *darker* skin tones, you can find out here: How to Color Dark Skin Tones With Copic Markers

So there you have it. The secret to getting good blends is less about the specific media you use and more about the colors you choose to blend. Planning ahead before you color or doing small color studies to work out your color combinations in advance will automatically result in better blends.

The techniques we've used above work with any medium, from colored pencil on paper, to ink on skin. Give it a try and see what you think. Just remember to keep the values similar. Honestly, the only reason you have trouble with blending is because the values of the colors you are using are too far apart.

Happy coloring :)

Christopher Kerry, Certified Copic Instructor CopicMarkerTutorials.com