GRUMBACHER®

Skin Tone Mixing Guide

color anatomy of a portrait

overall skin temperature: cool

base tone: medium

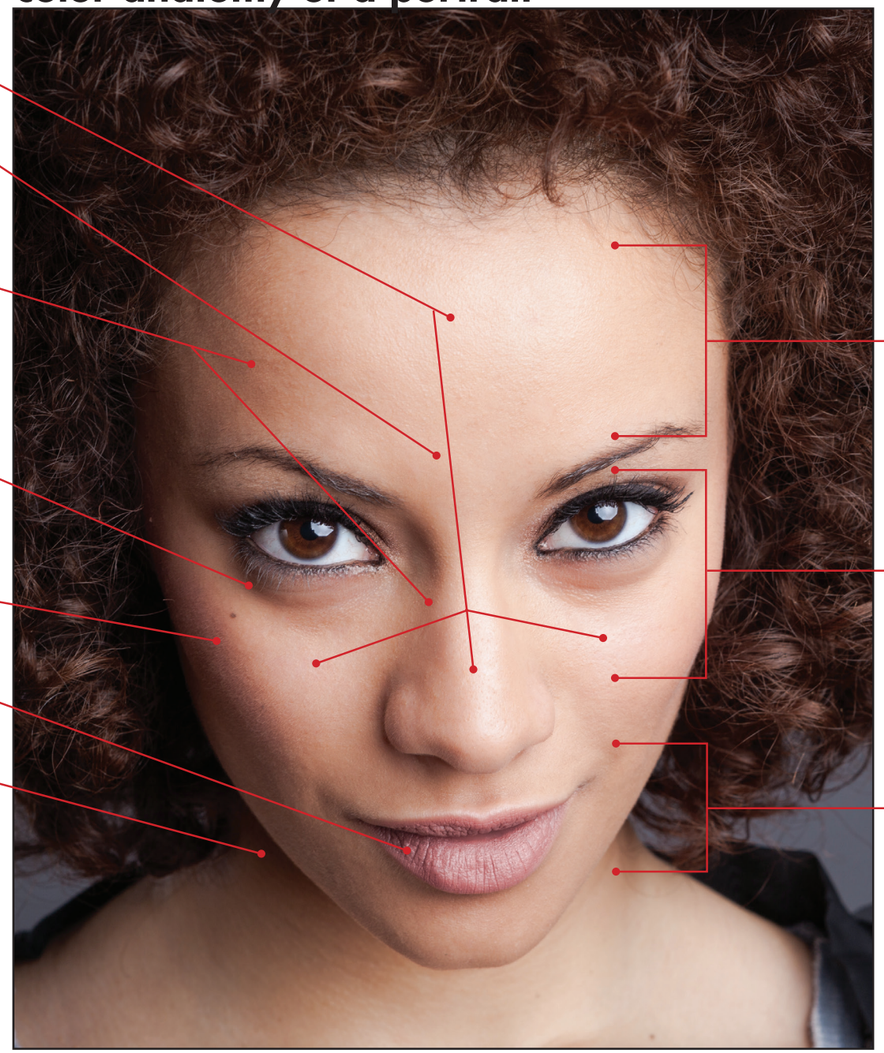
skin temperature:

cool

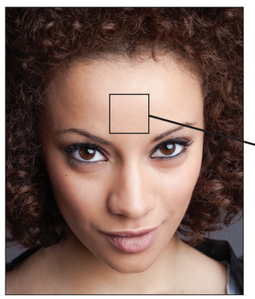
forehead

warm

chin



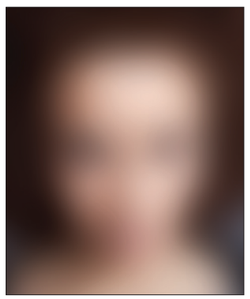
Paint what your EYES see, not what your BRAIN sees! Your eyes take in raw data, while your brain anaylizes it so that it makes sense. Select out certain areas so that you can get a true sense of what you are really seeing.



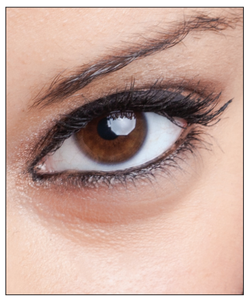
Base skin tone as seen with the brain

Base skin tone as seen with the eye

Blurring a reference photo can help distinguish light and color temperature regions. Standing back and squinting acheives similar effects.



Glazing is ideal for sublte shifts in coloration especially around the eye area, mouth and nose. More opaque mixes in these areas can make the subject appear tired or ill.



Color, tone and temperature vary with portraiture lighting, your model, and reflective colors on the skin such as clothing and background. Here is a basic primer for determining key areas of temperature and tone for portraiture.

Base tones for skin generally follow a warm or cool temperature, with subtle variations from warm to cool in different regions of the face. Typically, yellow undertones in the skin create a cool skin tone, while red undertones create a warmer skin tone. However, there are exceptions to this rule and skin tones should be evaluated with a critical eye. Many natural and studio lit subjects follow subtle shifts in skin temperature with warmer regions of the skin in the top half of the face and cooler areas of the skin towards the bottom half of the face.

The face can also be broken up into three light regions. The top third is usually the lightest area. The darkest area can be in the middle or the bottom third depending on the lighting and positioning of the head, with the mid-tone region taking the opposing middle or bottom third of the shadow region. Guidelines for these regions may change with dramatic lighting effects, head positioning, and atmospheric factors.

Building up glazes make for better transitions between light and shadow, as skin has a naturally translucent quality. Fewer, delicate layers are used for contouring, subtle highlights, and areas of flushed skin. Multiple layers of glaze colors build up to create deeper shadows and tonal changes around the lips and eyes. Painting mediums can help make glazes with different properties.

Grumbacher Alkyd Medium - a ready-to-use medium that speeds drying, lubricates paint, and adds gloss. In large proportions, glazes are more transparent.

Grumbacher Quick Dry (Painting Medium III) - a thin, ready-to-use medium that speeds drying time and imparts a high gloss to glazes.

Grumbacher GEL - a ready-to-use medium that makes colors transparent without changing consistency. Very slow drying, mix with Grumbacher ZEC to speed drying time.

Grumbacher Sun-thickened Linseed Oil - a heavy bodied oil that is mixed with glaze mediums to increase flow and impart a glossy, flexible finish.

Stand Oil - a heavy bodied oil that is mixed with glaze mediums to impart gloss and flexibility, creates an enamel-like finish, levels brush strokes.

Learn more online at www.grumbacher.com

Create a portrait with this set?
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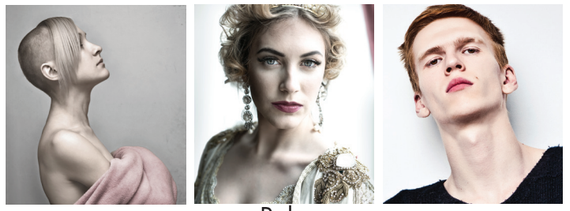
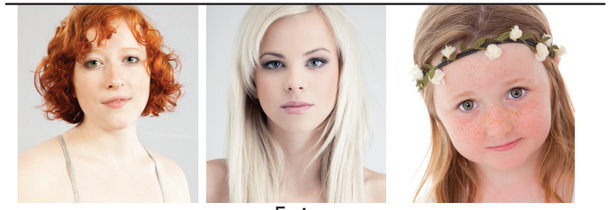
Basic Tonal Range

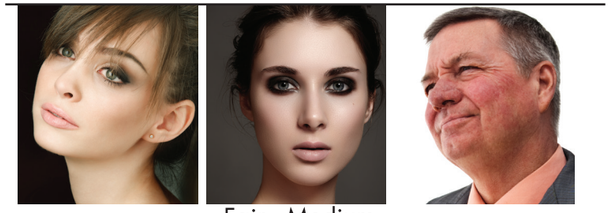
Yellow	Neutral	Red



Pale



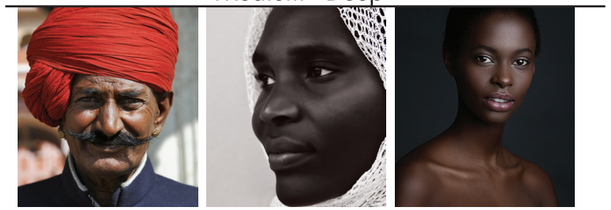
Fair



Fair - Medium

Medium

Medium - Deep



Deep

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Tutorial Designed LCB 2014

base tones • highlights • shadows

cool

.25 B 20 S	.25 B 16 S	.25 B 8 S	1 B .25 F 16 S .5 Y	1.25 B .25 F 8 S .5 Y	.25B .5 F 8 S .25Y	1.5 B .5 R 8 S	4 B 2 R 2 S	1 B 1 R .5 S	.5 A 4 B 1 R 1 Y	.5 A 4 B 1 R
.25 R 16 S	.25 R 10 S	.25 B .25 R .25 Y 10 S	.25 B 8 S 2 Y	.25 B 8 S 4 Y	.25B .25F 8 S .5 Y	1 B 2 R 1 S	.5A 3 B 2 R 2 S 3 Y	1 B 2 Y	2 B 1 R 1 Y	1.5 B 1 Y
.25 Y 12 S	.25 Y 8 S	.25 Y 2 S	.5 A 1 R 4 Y	1 A 2 R 10 S 8 Y	1 A 1 R 5 S 4 Y	1 A 1 B 1 R 5 S 4 Y	1 B 2 R 2 S 4 Y	3 B 4 R 2 S 4 Y	1 B 2 R	2 B 1 Y
.25 R 16 S	.25 B .25 R 16 S	.5 A 1 R 16 S 4 Y	.25 A 2 R 8 S 1 Y	.25 A 2 R 6 S 1 Y	.25 A .25 B 2 R 4 S 2 Y	1 R 1 Y	.25 A 1 R 1 Y	.25 A .25 B 1 R 1 Y	.5 A .5 B 1 R 1 Y	1 A 2 B 1 R
.5 A 1 R 80 S	.5 A 1 R 40 S	.25 A 1 R 24 S	.25 A 1 R 12 S	.25 A 1 R 8 S	.25 A .5 Y 1 S	2 A 1 B 2 R 1.5 Y 12 S	1.5 A 1 B 2 R 1 Y 8 S	1 A 1 B 2 R 1 Y 4 S	1 A 1 B 2 R	1 A 1 B

warm

fair — deep

Color Symbols (Pre-tested Oil Colors)

Alizarin Crimson Golden P002G — Burnt Umber P024G — French Ultramarine P076G

Raw Sienna P171G — Superba White P200G — Yellow Ochre P244G

Swatch Ratios (Increase for larger batches)

lip & cheek glazes

Full Color / Glaze	Full Color / Glaze
1 A .25 F	1 A 1 S .25 Y
Full Color / Glaze	Full Color / Glaze
2 A 1 S 1 Y	1 A 1 R

deep shadow glazes

Full Color / Glaze	Full Color / Glaze
2 A 1 B	1 A 1 F
Full Color / Glaze	Full Color / Glaze
.5 A .5 B 1 F	.5 B 1 F
Full Color / Glaze	Full Color / Glaze
1 B 1 F	1 B 1 F 1 Y

Opaque colors can be transitioned to glazes by adding painting medium, such as an alkyd medium. Remember to adhere to the fat over lean rule of painting. Layering glazes creates richer, more life like shadowing, contouring and highlights to skin tones.

There are many methods to portrait painting and color mixing. This guide uses a limited palette to create a basic range. It's recommended to make your own swatch matrix with the mixing ratios listed to get a good sense of how these 6 colors interact. It should be noted that color swatches lose accuracy once photographed and printed.

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