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Colour Light

A workflow for gels and LEDs

1 Pick the story

2 Pick the harmony

3 Protect the skin

4 Shoot it right

✓ Before you shoot

1 Pick the story

Colour is read before anything else in the frame

One colour

Red	passion, danger, energy
Orange	warmth, sunset, energy
Yellow	joy, attention, caution
Green	nature, envy, toxic, sick
Cyan and teal	cool, tech, cinematic
Blue	calm, night, cold, trust
Purple	luxury, mystery, nightlife
Magenta and pink	playful, romantic, neon

Two colours, read instantly

Red and blue	police, emergency, tension
Teal and orange	the blockbuster film look
Pink and cyan	80s, synthwave, neon nights
Purple and green	villain, toxic, the Joker
Red and green	Christmas, hard to escape
Yellow and black	warning, hazard tape
Gold and black	luxury, premium, evening

Meanings shift with culture and context. A starting point, not a rule

2 Pick the harmony

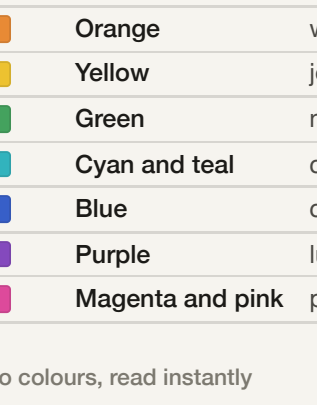
Same studio, five ways to combine colour



Complementary

Opposites on the wheel. The subject pops off the background

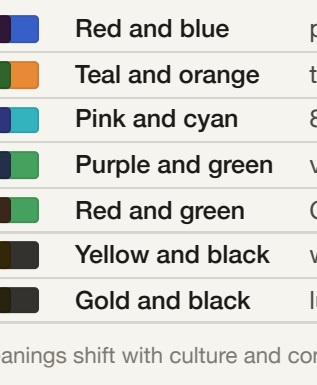
Sarah Salomonsen



Analogous

Neighbours on the wheel. One calm, coherent mood

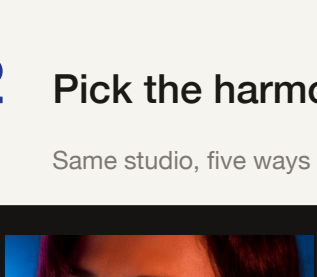
Stine Malmros · @frkmalmros



Monochrome

One hue in different strengths. Shape does the work

Emilija Pozniakaite · @milla_model_photographs



Neon pair

Magenta and cyan. Loud, playful, nightlife

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Red and blue

Read as police and alarm. Use the story on purpose

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3 Protect the skin

Green on skin
Elina · @classymodel_

All skin tones sit close to the same orange hue. They differ mostly in how light or dark they are.

Kind warm, amber, soft pink

Careful green looks sick, blue looks cold

Neutral or warm light on the face. Put the colour on the background and the rim.

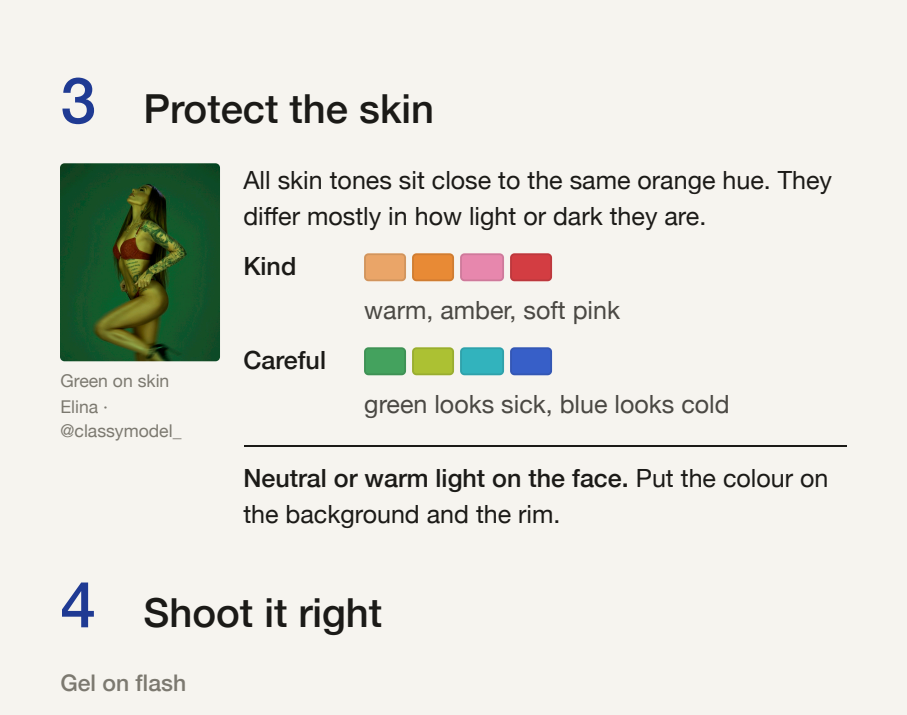
4 Shoot it right

Gel on flash

- Filters full-spectrum light: smooth colour
- Freezes movement
- Deep gels cost 1–3 stops
- You see it when the flash fires

RGB LED

- Mixes narrow red, green and blue
- Saturated colour can clip one channel
- The sensor often sees it stronger than you do
- **Some lamps** flicker at fast shutter speeds



Emilie Kure · @emiliekure_

Before you shoot

Don’t skip these

- [ ] One story and one harmony per look
- [ ] White balance set by hand, around 5600 K
- [ ] RGB histogram: no clipped channel
- [ ] LED: test your shutter speed for flicker
- [ ] Shooting RAW