

Colors (ggplot2)

Problem

You want to use colors in a graph with ggplot2.

Solution

The default colors in ggplot2 can be difficult to distinguish from one another because they have equal luminance. They are also not friendly for colorblind viewers.

A good general-purpose solution is to just use the [colorblind-friendly palette](#) below.

Sample data

These two data sets will be used to generate the graphs below.

```
# Two variables
df <- read.table(header=TRUE, text='
  cond yval
  A 2
  B 2.5
  C 1.6
')

# Three variables
df2 <- read.table(header=TRUE, text='
  cond1 cond2 yval
  A      I 2
  A      J 2.5
  A      K 1.6
  B      I 2.2
```

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```

B      J 2.4
B      K 1.2
C      I 1.7
C      J 2.3
C      K 1.9
')

```

Simple color assignment

The colors of lines and points can be set directly using `colour="red"`, replacing “red” with a color name. The colors of filled objects, like bars, can be set using `fill="red"`.

If you want to use anything other than very basic colors, it may be easier to use hexadecimal codes for colors, like `"#FF6699"`. (See the hexadecimal color chart below.)

```

library(ggplot2)
# Default: dark bars
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval)) + geom_bar(stat="identity")
# Bars with red outlines
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval)) + geom_bar(stat="identity", colour="#FF9999")
# Red fill, black outlines
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval)) + geom_bar(stat="identity", fill="#FF9999", colour="black")

# Standard black lines and points
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval)) +
  geom_line(aes(group=1)) +      # Group all points; otherwise no line will show
  geom_point(size=3)
# Dark blue lines, red dots
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval)) +
  geom_line(aes(group=1), colour="#000099") + # Blue lines
  geom_point(size=3, colour="#CC0000")      # Red dots

```

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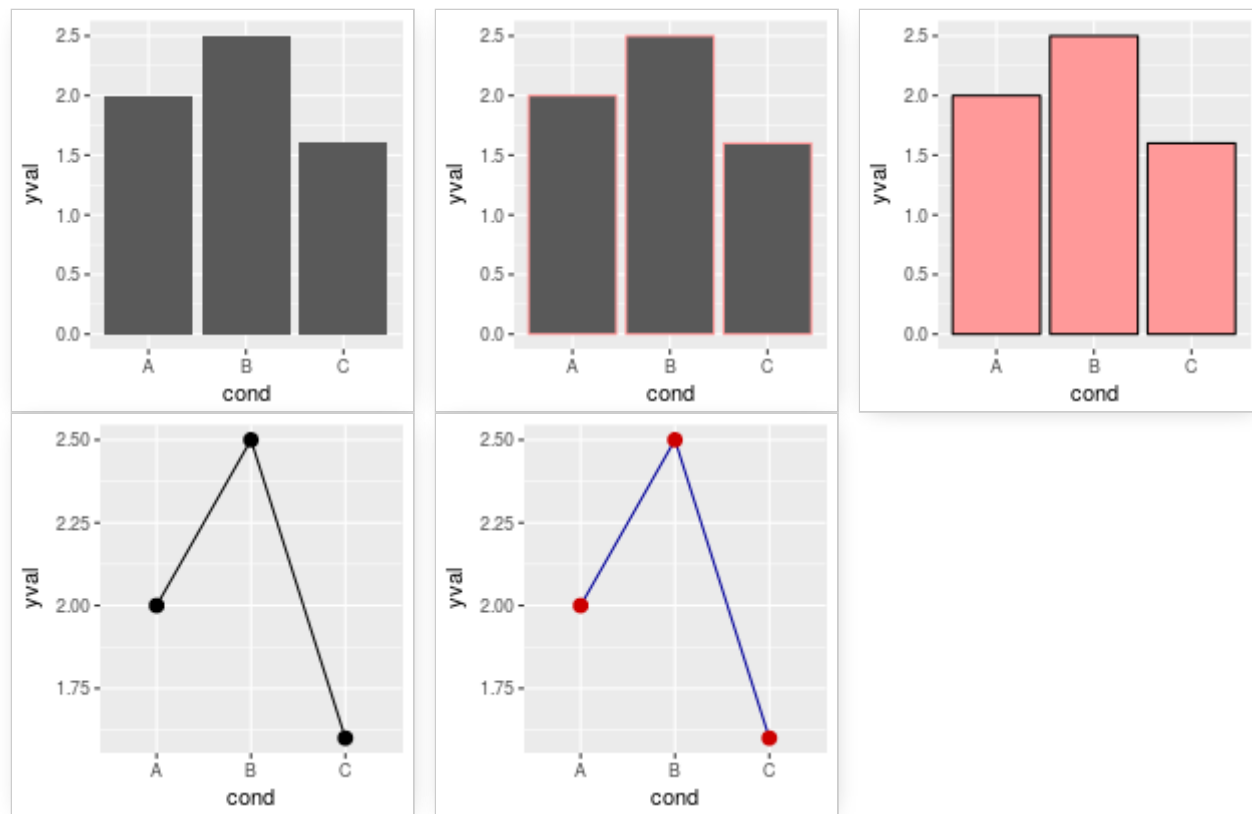
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Mapping variable values to colors

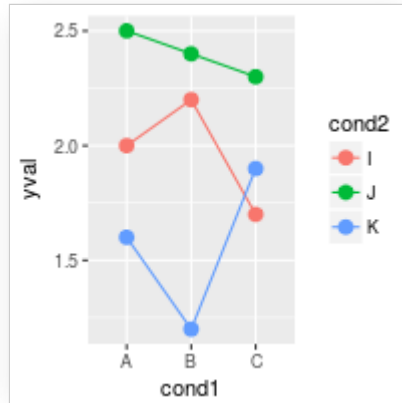
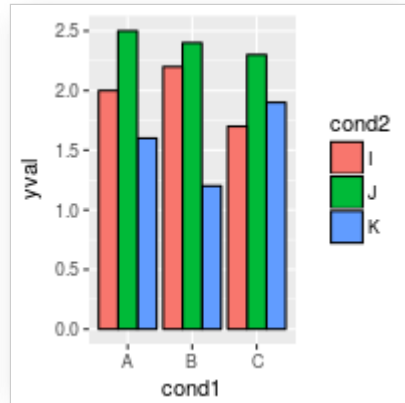
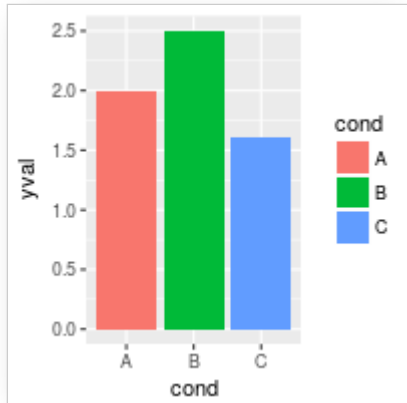
Instead of changing colors globally, you can map variables to colors – in other words, make the color conditional on a variable, by putting it inside an `aes()` statement.

```
# Bars: x and fill both depend on cond2
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity")

# Bars with other dataset; fill depends on cond2
ggplot(df2, aes(x=cond1, y=yval)) +
  geom_bar(aes(fill=cond2), # fill depends on cond2
    stat="identity",
    colour="black", # Black outline for all
    position=position_dodge()) # Put bars side-by-side instead of stacked

# Lines and points; colour depends on cond2
ggplot(df2, aes(x=cond1, y=yval)) +
```

```
geom_line(aes(colour=cond2, group=cond2)) + # colour, group both depend on cond2
geom_point(aes(colour=cond2,
               size=3))                    # colour depends on cond2
                                           # larger points, different shape
## Equivalent to above; but move "colour=cond2" into the global aes() mapping
# ggplot(df2, aes(x=cond1, y=yval, colour=cond2)) +
#   geom_line(aes(group=cond2)) +
#   geom_point(size=3)
```



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A colorblind-friendly palette

These are color-blind-friendly palettes, one with gray, and one with black.



To use with ggplot2, it is possible to store the palette in a variable, then use it later.

































```
# The palette with grey:
cbPalette <- c("#999999", "#E69F00", "#56B4E9", "#009E73", "#F0E442", "#0072B2", "#D55E00", "#CC79A7")

# The palette with black:
cbbPalette <- c("#000000", "#E69F00", "#56B4E9", "#009E73", "#F0E442", "#0072B2", "#D55E00", "#CC79A7")

# To use for fills, add
scale_fill_manual(values=cbPalette)
```

```
# To use for line and point colors, add
scale_colour_manual(values=cbPalette)
```

This palette is from <http://jfly.iam.u-tokyo.ac.jp/color/>:

	Original	Simulation				Hue	for Photoshop, Illustrator, Freehand, etc.		for Word, Power Point, Canvas, etc.
		Protan	Deutan	Tritan			C,M,Y,K (%)	R,G,B (0-255)	R,G,B (%)
1					Black	0°	(0,0,0,100)	(0,0,0)	(0,0,0)
2					Orange	41°	(0,50,100,0)	(230,159,0)	(90,60,0)
3					Sky Blue	202°	(80,0,0,0)	(86,180,233)	(35,70,90)
4					bluish Green	164°	(97,0,75,0)	(0,158,115)	(0,60,50)
5					Yellow	56°	(10,5,90,0)	(240,228,66)	(95,90,25)
6					Blue	202°	(100,50,0,0)	(0,114,178)	(0,45,70)
7					Vermillion	27°	(0,80,100,0)	(213,94,0)	(80,40,0)
8					reddish Purple	326°	(10,70,0,0)	(204,121,167)	(80,60,70)

Color selection

By default, the colors for discrete scales are evenly spaced around a HSL color circle. For example, if there are two colors, then they will be selected from opposite points on the circle; if there are three colors, they will be 120° apart on the color circle; and so on. The colors used for different numbers of levels are shown here:

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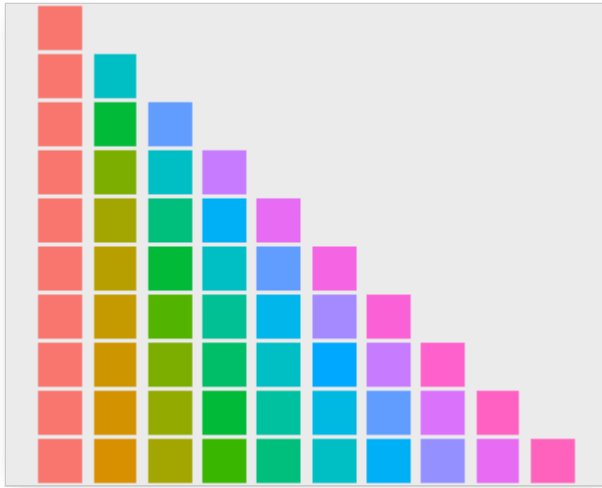
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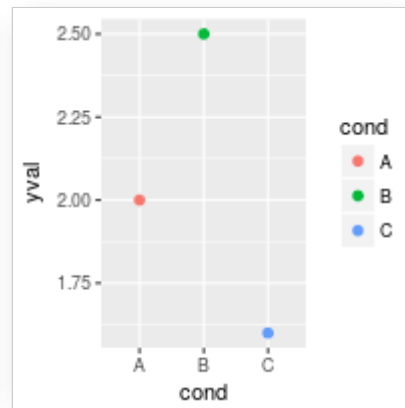
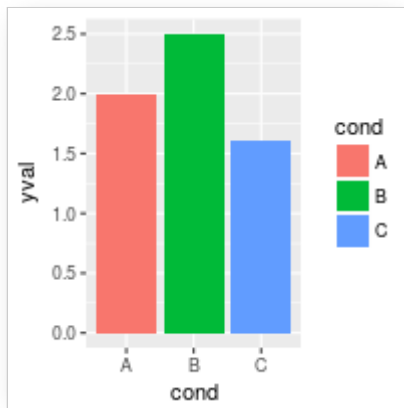
RColorBrewer palette chart



The default color selection uses `scale_fill_hue()` and `scale_colour_hue()`. For example, adding those commands is redundant in these cases:

```
# These two are equivalent; by default scale_fill_hue() is used
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity")
# ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") + scale_fill_hue()

# These two are equivalent; by default scale_colour_hue() is used
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, colour=cond)) + geom_point(size=2)
# ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, colour=cond)) + geom_point(size=2) + scale_colour_hue()
```



Setting luminance and saturation (chromaticity)

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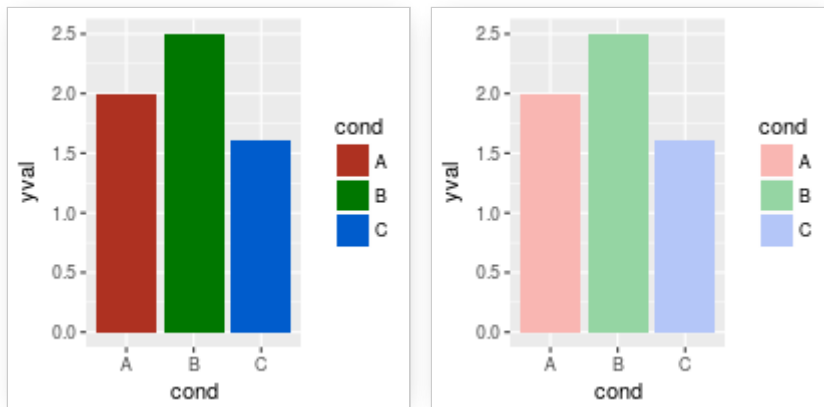
RColorBrewer palette chart

Although `scale_fill_hue()` and `scale_colour_hue()` were redundant above, they can be used when you want to make changes from the default, like changing the luminance or chromaticity.

```
# Use luminance=45, instead of default 65
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") +
  scale_fill_hue(l=40)

# Reduce saturation (chromaticity) from 100 to 50, and increase luminance
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") +
  scale_fill_hue(c=45, l=80)

# Note: use scale_colour_hue() for lines and points
```



This is a chart of colors with luminance=45:

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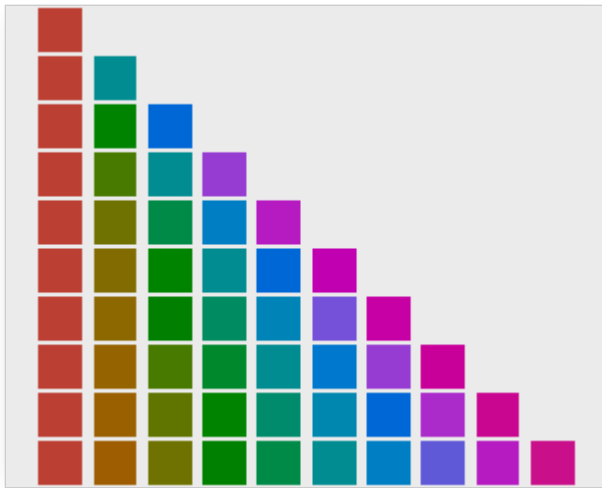
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Palettes: Color Brewer

You can also use other color scales, such as ones taken from the RColorBrewer package. See the chart of RColorBrewer palettes below. See the scale section [here](#) for more information.

```
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") +  
  scale_fill_brewer()
```

```
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") +  
  scale_fill_brewer(palette="Set1")
```

```
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") +  
  scale_fill_brewer(palette="Spectral")
```

Note: use scale_colour_brewer() for lines and points

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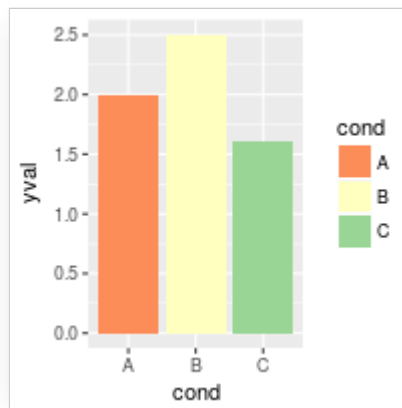
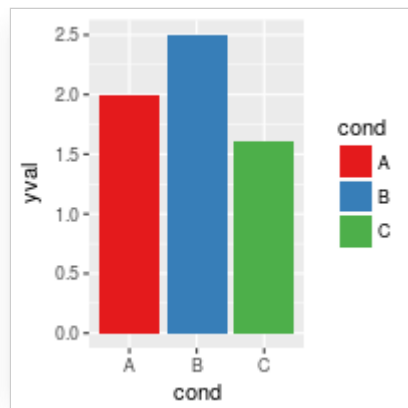
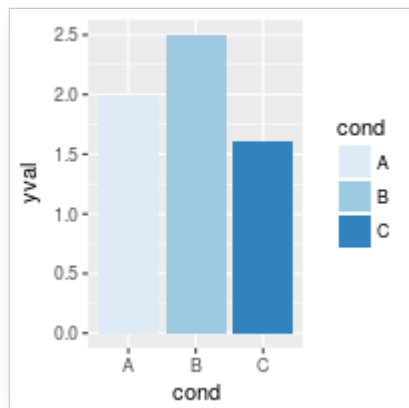
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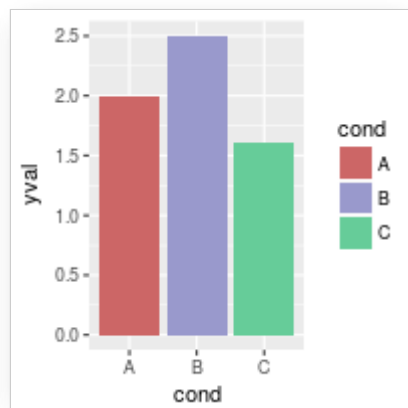
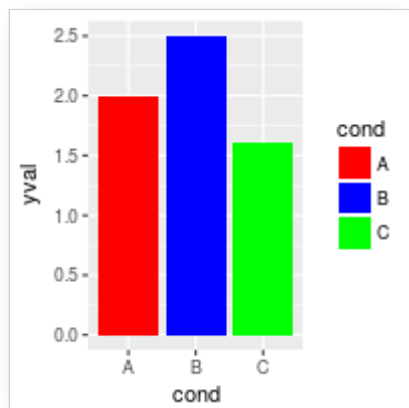
Palettes: manually-defined

Finally, you can define your own set of colors with `scale_fill_manual()`. See the hexadecimal code chart below for help choosing specific colors.

```
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") +
  scale_fill_manual(values=c("red", "blue", "green"))
```

```
ggplot(df, aes(x=cond, y=yval, fill=cond)) + geom_bar(stat="identity") +
  scale_fill_manual(values=c("#CC6666", "#9999CC", "#66CC99"))
```

Note: use `scale_colour_manual()` for lines and points



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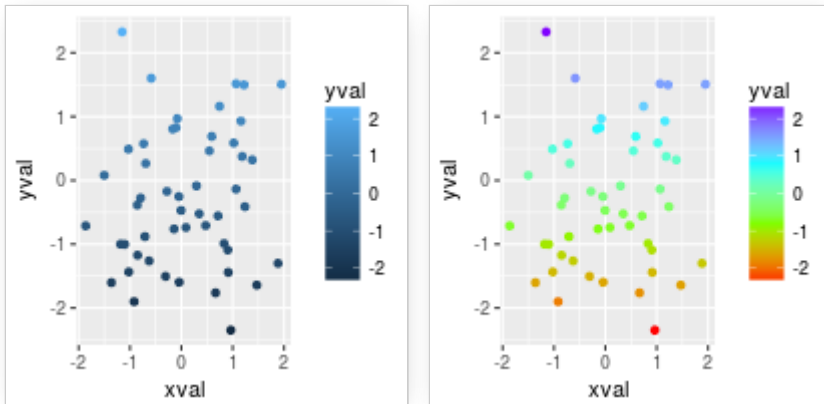
[Not complete]

See the scale section [here](#) for more information.

```
# Generate some data
set.seed(133)
df <- data.frame(xval=rnorm(50), yval=rnorm(50))

# Make color depend on yval
ggplot(df, aes(x=xval, y=yval, colour=yval)) + geom_point()

# Use a different gradient
ggplot(df, aes(x=xval, y=yval, colour=yval)) + geom_point() +
  scale_colour_gradientn(colours=rainbow(4))
```



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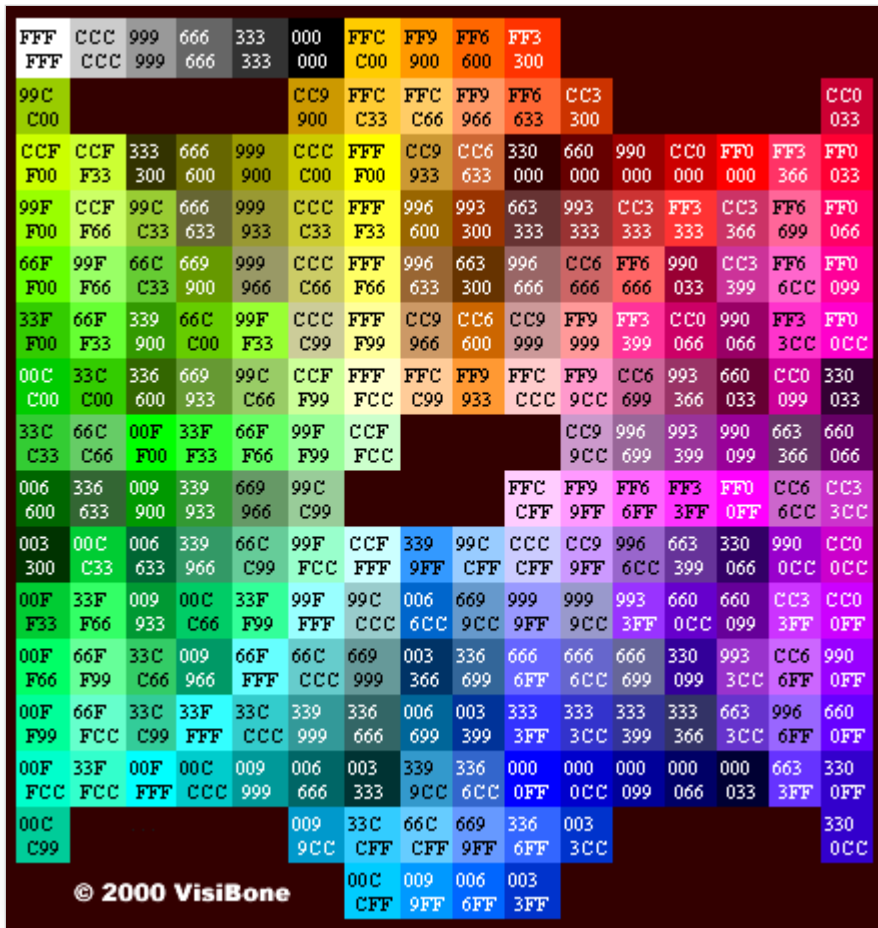
Hexadecimal color code chart

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Hexadecimal color code chart

Colors can be specified as a hexadecimal RGB triplet, such as "#0066CC". The first two digits are the level of red, the next two green, and the last two blue. The value for each ranges from 00 to FF in hexadecimal (base-16) notation, which is equivalent to 0 and 255 in base-10. For example, in the table below, "#FFFFFF" is white and "#990000" is a deep red.



(Color chart is from <http://www.visibone.com>)

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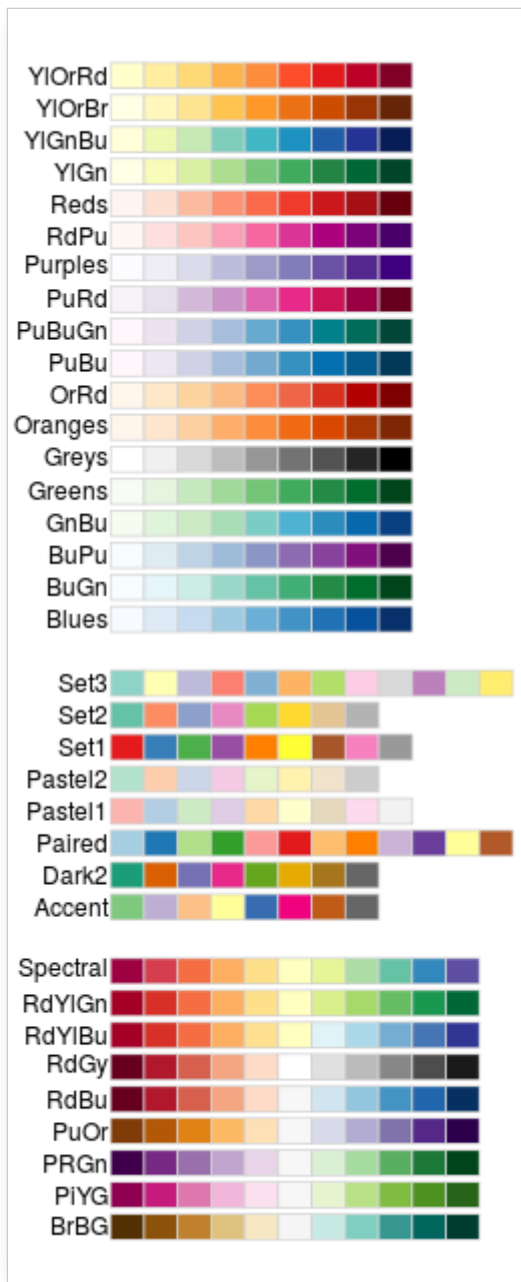
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Cookbook for R

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