

USING COLOR

Color is a very powerful tool. Color draws attention to the information you want to emphasize and helps to engage your audience visually.

GUIDELINES FOR COLOR

1. Try to use only a few colors (3-4 for graphics... for the web, use 3 colors); you want to develop a color scheme.

Note the:
Background Color
Foreground Color
Text Color

EX:

Welcome to Mark's Home Page

Resume

Cover Letter

Projects

This page is owned by Mark Siegel.

For the web, Note the
Background Color
Foreground Color
Text Color
Link Color

Note that images can be multiple colors. In terms of visual design, they are not included in the general color scheme.

Also, more importantly, note that shades of the same color often can count as one color in a color scheme.

Tip: Some designers try to make the colors of their images blend with the color scheme. If they cannot accomplish this technique, they sometimes use grayscale colors or black and white. Other times, a designer may use monotone colors (or one color) in place of a full color picture.

2. Use colors outside of 3-4 color schemes to emphasize a particular item

Note: Consider the links on a webpage which may be different from the foreground, background, and text color.

3. Try to contrast backgrounds and foreground text (different colors help to create distinction). Note the:

Background Color

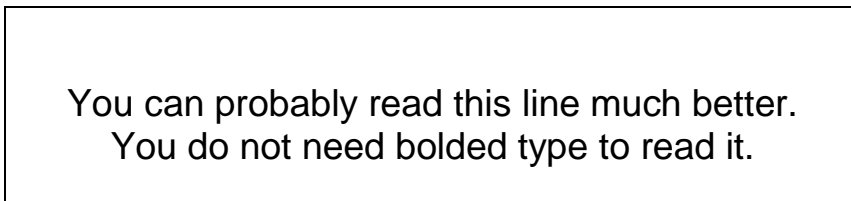
Foreground Color

Text Color

EX: (BAD CONTRAST)



EX: (GOOD CONTRAST)



Note: Be aware that color can obscure text (makes things illegible)

[Yellow text on a white background is not a good distinction/contrast. Also, Black text on a blue background may not be a good distinction/contrast].

4. When possible, take advantage of the symbolic meanings and basic psycho-somatic nature of Colors

Be aware, in our culture, these colors denote the following and have the following physical effects:

Red = refers to Dangers, heat, electricity, love
(stimulates a faster heartbeat/breathing, also makes people hungry).

Yellow = refers to Cautions
(infants tend to cry more, people lose their temper in yellow rooms)

Orange = refers to Warnings and is associated more with Asian-cultural color schemes
(produces playfulness - kids can't concentrate in an orange classroom... strange huh?)

Blue = more relaxing, more productive
(Some studies suggest that weight lifters can lift heavier loads in weight rooms with blue walls; in addition, people in blue work environments actually produce more)

Green - is associated with nature (trees and leaves), the military, wealth, conservation, masculinity (seems to promote relaxation and concentration simultaneously)

Brown = is a strong earth tone (seems to provoke sadness... in one study, men claimed blue and brown as favorite colors)

Black = is generally associated with something evil or sinister, although this color is also associated with power, elegance, and modernity

White = associated with innocence and purity (Think about weddings?), as well as ceremonial rites and peace

Pink = is associated with young female children, feminine culture, and sometimes male homosexuality

Purple = closely associated with bisexuality, male homosexuality, motherhood, maternity, and royalty

Note: When possible, try to educate yourself about international color denotations:

For example, in Japan,
Black is equated with life, modernity
White is equated with death

6. Light colors make objects look bigger. Also, vice-versa dark colors look thinner/smaller

Some important terms when dealing with color:

- Tint (e.g. when a color is made lighter by adding white).
- Shade (e.g. when a color is made darker by adding black).
- Saturation (e.g. the degree of intensity of a color, often refers to its chroma or purity).
- Brightness/Value (lightness or darkness)
- Wavelength/Warm (Red, Orange) and Cool Colors (Blue, Green)
- Hue (e.g. degree in which the color mixes red, orange, and blue)
- Primary Colors are generally Red-Yellow-Blue (RYB), Red-Green-Blue (RGB), Cyan-Magenta-Yellow-black (CMYK)
- Secondary Colors are colors created from primary colors
- Luminance (degree to which a color appears to be lighter or emits light)