

COLOR *on the* WEB

Life was flat when Macs first came out, there was no bit depth whatsoever. Pixel on, pixel off, black, white, and nothing in between. Bit by bit, the Mac worked its way up to millions of colors. But then the web came along and now we're stuck working it back down to a shallow 8-bit depth, a measly 216 colors! (Or is the browser-safe palette finally a thing of the past?)

98% of web surfers are using PCs and IE

Mac PC Color Brightness Issue

Aack: beautiful forest green on a Mac looks black on a PC.

Mac: if you have a "Gamma" control, you can set it to its darkest setting 2.2 to simulate PC on a Mac. Gamma alters overall brightness of the monitor. Switch back to 1.4 for a quick check of how Mac users will see images.

Color Criteria

1. Visual appeal
2. Appropriate to topic, content and audience
3. Enhances content
4. Enhances site structure and design

Color Wheel and Harmonies

- Primary additive colors: red, green, blue, form a triangle on the wheel (RGB)
- Secondary: cyan, magenta, yellow, located midway between primaries.
- Tertiary: formed by mixing adjacent primary and secondary colors.
- Analogous (adjacent): next to each other on the color wheel.
Analogous colors harmonize with each other but can be boring.
- Complementary: opposite each other on the color wheel.
Complementary colors create maximum contrast but can clash.
- Split-complementary: one color and the two colors on either side of its complement. Can create dynamic color combinations.
- Triadic: colors separated equidistantly on the color wheel.

Color Lingo

- Hue: refers to the subjective name we give colors, the pure color itself
- Saturation: refers to the intensity or brightness of the color
- Value: the relative brightness of a color
- Tint/shade: the varying degrees of lightness or darkness of a particular hue.

Adjust hue, saturation and/or tint /shade to achieve better color combinations or contrasts

Color Tips

- Use tints, shades, black and grays. Shades of gray help to set off other colors.
- Colors gain or lose impact depending on surrounding colors.
- Muted colors become stronger against a black or gray background.
- Similar colors look the same when far apart and different than each other when close together.
- Light colors "advance", dark colors recede.
- Complementary colors can create a dazzling effect that hurts the viewer's eye. Sometimes a black or white line between the colors will soften the effect.

Some awful stereotypes:
pale colors for women,
blue for boys,
pink for girls, etc.
Can you think of other
color stereotypes?

The Art of Color

- Always keep in mind: Topic, Audience, Purpose of web site.
- Color conveys mood, for example, an emotional tone, or chronological age. Pick colors to match mood/intent of client.
- Color has symbolic and cultural associations.
- Certain colors appeal to specific age and ethnic groups.
- Color trends: fashion industry predicts color for coming year. Some colors are in fashion, others are not. Some colors are dated. Which colors are currently in fashion?
- Color is subjective and has subliminal connotations. How might subliminal messages work for or against a web designer/client?
- Corporate colors: you may have to use the colors the company uses in logo, signage, etc. Look on the color wheel for colors that harmonize with the corporate color scheme.
- Best colors: success is based on choosing colors that are compatible with the image you want to communicate. For example, red = danger, bright greens and yellows = youthful, summer. What other examples can you think of?

Color to Enhance Understanding

- Readability: keep contrast high between text colors and background colors.
- Bright and light colored type is often hard to read.

Color as a Tool

- Use color as a navigation aid: for example, color-coded sections. Six colors or less is best. Make sure the text is readable on all colors.
- Use color to help organize the content (headings, subheadings), use colored boxes, or alternating tints/colors in charts or tables.
- Use color to guide the viewer's eye.
- Repeat color in type, images, buttons and navigation to achieve a sense of unity.

Color Guidelines

- KISS: Keep it simple sweetie! Use a Limited palette: emphasize a few key colors. The more colors you add, the less important each becomes, and the less visual impact the palette has.
- Consistency: use of color should remain consistent throughout the site.
- Color and readability: never neglect the readability of type on colored backgrounds! You need high contrast (black on white). Some contrasts, for example, yellow on black, may be high contrast but are still hard to read (because yellow is too bright).
- Use strong color in small quantities for emphasis. For example, small amounts of red in a red, black and white color scheme can be very effective.

Guided by looks

Ask yourself: Do the colors look good together? How do the colors feel? What personality do the colors present? Do the colors harmonize, antagonize. Look at other web sites and notice which colors harmonize and which don't.

Give examples of colors that harmonize and colors that antagonize.