



Current Color Trends

From fashion to home decorating and everything in between, the single most important determiner of what's in, what's out, what's hot, and what's not is...color.

Color attracts, arouses, and distracts. Color changes with the season and may even at times be whimsical. Its effect can be subtle or dramatic, warming or chilling, soothing or alarming, whether accidental or planned. Color, in fact, is the fastest and most direct way to evoke emotion.

Designers recognize the power of color and use it to their advantage. They consistently align themselves with the latest, newest, freshest, and most exciting palettes, causing their competitors' efforts to pale. In fact, they are on top of seasonal color direction, sometimes as far as 24 months in advance.

If you're not yet a color maven, perhaps some color thinking is in order.

Try this quiz to test your current color savvy:

1. Where can you turn for reliable color trend predictions?
 - a. Pantone®
 - b. Fashion trends
 - c. Paint companies
 - d. All of the above
2. Which of these tones are in vogue for 2005?
 - a. Chocolate brown and robin's egg blue
 - b. Blacks and grays
 - c. All tan or white
 - d. All of the above
3. Which of these combinations works well now?
 - a. Chocolate and aqua
 - b. Red-red, citrus orange, and tangerine
 - c. Botanical greens and subtle pinks
 - d. All of the above

4. Which of the following "retro" colors from the 1950s are still in vogue, with modern twists?
 - a. Gold and avocado
 - b. Yellows and pinks
 - c. Khaki and olive green
 - d. All of the above

If you answered d, a, d, and b, you're on the right track. But before you pat yourself on the proverbial back, consider these basics:

Warm Colors

Reds, oranges, and yellows are called "warm" colors, because they evoke thoughts of heat sources, like sunshine and fire. As a result, they make us feel warm. Red, for example, produces feelings of energy, passion, and intimacy; it stimulates the appetite and even increases blood pressure and heart rate.

Orange also warms, but less dramatically. It is a friendlier and welcoming color than red, and works well when certain "coziness" is desired. Yellow, of course, is the most dramatic eye-catcher, and works well as an accent color. It elevates moods, but not if too bright...too much of a good thing can create anxiety.

Cool Colors

The equally friendly blues, greens, and violets are called "cool" colors, because they remind us of oceans and skies; they elicit feelings of peace, tranquility, and relaxation.

Blue works well as a soothing color, but it also suppresses the appetite. Green works well for nearly every application; its softer tones mimic the calming effect of nature.

Violets get mixed reviews. Whereas their softer lavender tones can offer a more appealing "neutral" than gray, brighter purples can push people away.

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Lazer Pointers

For years, graphic designers and printers have used Pantone® Matching System (PMS) colors to understand exactly what a color will look like upon final printing. Each color is assigned a name or number. Since the same color can appear differently on different paper stocks, Pantone's color guides reproduce spot colors on various substrates – for example, Pantone 3258 C (coated), 3258 U (uncoated), and 3258 M (matte). While the ink formula is the same, the letters that follow it represent the apparent color of that ink mix when printed on different types of paper.

When selecting PMS colors for a four-color print job, take these extra steps to prevent color headaches:

1. Select colors from Pantone's Color Process System® book, which provides tear-out chips for each of 3,000 colors and shows the difference between a PMS color and its CMYK, or "derived," four-color process color.
2. Make sure all colors in the job file are CMYK (not "spot" or "global") colors.
3. Make sure the file's color palette contains only the colors used within that file. To clean out the color palette, choose "Select All Unused" from the "Swatches Palette" pop-up menu, and delete the colors in your selected palette.
4. When possible, run the file(s) through a preflight/postflight program, such as Markzware FlightCheck®, to ensure colors are correctly assigned, including embedded and/or attached artwork and images.

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Obviously, color is more than ink on paper; it is a non-verbal communication and critically important to your marketing success. As you design brochures, annual reports, logos, advertisements, and Web sites, keep your objectives in mind.

Once you've identified the emotion you'd like to evoke, the strength of emotion that will serve your purpose, and the length of time your visual communication will be seen by prospective customers, it's time to get creative.

Regardless of your color trend information source – Pantone and established paint companies can be reliable sources – follow fashion.

For 2005, Pantone's Top 10 hot colors are Moroccan Blue, Glazed Ginger, American Beauty, Ruby Wine, Atmosphere, Burnt Olive, Gloxinia, Rattan, Moss, and Burnt Orange. To see these colors, visit www.pantone.com. Keep in mind, however, the colors that appear on your monitor may differ from the true colors, depending on your monitor's calibration.

Better Homes and Gardens® Top 10 decorator colors include Citrus Splash (red-red, citrus orange, bold tangerine, and lively pink), Chocolate, Really Red (barn red, Chinese red, or watermelon red), Harvest Hues (pumpkin, golden wheat, and deep gold, with black, cream, or sage greens), Think Pink (pale bubblegum pastels, watermelon brights, and sun-washed coral), The New Blue (any tint of blue with tan, camel, white, yellow, pale green, chocolate brown, or charcoal gray), Warmed Silver (brushed or distressed), Soft Greens (bright greens with white, yellows, golds, brushed silver, tan, cream, brown, and black), Black and White (add red, gold, yellow, orange, and fresh green), and Your Favorite Color (with current accent colors).

Leading fashion designers suggest a divergent mix of prominent colors, based on their preference. They include Pantone shades in the themes of Mediterranean (Michael Kors), Southwest (Douglas Hannant), Beach Blues (Narciso Rodriguez and Peter Som), Costa Brava (Alvin Valley), Amalfi Coast (David Rodriguez), Celtic (Nicole Miller), Vivid Brights (Nanette Lepore and Sandi Davidson for Lilly Pulitzer), and even Insects (Bradley Bayou for Halston).

Obviously, color can be highly personal, which allows freedom of expression. One need only consult the experts to come away with a forward-thinking direction.

When used in the right way, color is a powerful form of communication and evokes powerful reactions. Why not make it work for you?

Check out these helpful Web sites:

Pantone COLORTEAMSM

"A Great Hands-On Color Resource"
www.pantone.com

CMG's' color projections for 2006

www.colormarketing.org/media/news/2006_contract_directions.htm

Understanding Spot, RGB, and CMYK

www.cecs.csulb.edu/~jewett/colors/cmyk.html

Pantone PMS Colors Used for Printing

www.flagdist.com/PMS%20Color%20Chart.htm

Choosing Colors for Meaning and Impact

<http://desktoppub.about.com/od/choosingcolors/>



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