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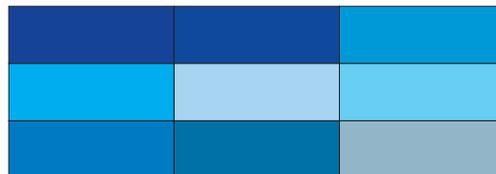
What Are Your Colors Saying?

Colors evoke feelings and represent ideas so the knowledgeable and appropriate use of color is critical when designing software applications and web sites. You want to be sure that you're sending the right message to your users. You also must be sure that the screens are easily readable and that the palette used in background, graphics, links and content work together.

The colors in software applications is something that many take for granted, but they are usually very carefully selected. Did you ever wonder why most software applications are designed using shades of blues? Not only can most color-blind people see black and white accurately, but they can also see all shades of blue and yellow. It is important to keep in mind that about 8% of men and 0.4% of women have some form of color blindness and designing for everyone is critical to the success of a project.

The Meanings of Colors

White is the color of cleanliness, purity, youth, simplicity and innocence. It offers the best readability on screen as a background.



Blue is the most popular color. It conveys peace, tranquility, harmony, trust, and confidence.

Blues are a wonderful compliment to earth tones and neutral colors like gray and beige and work well with pastels and "cool" shades like greens. Lighter shades of blue make very nice backgrounds for casual and positive Web sites. Be careful when using orange with blue because these two colors vibrate against each other and can cause a jarring visual effect.

WARNING: blue is the worst choice when

developing sites for food or cooking because there are no blue foods on earth and it is known to be an appetite suppressant!



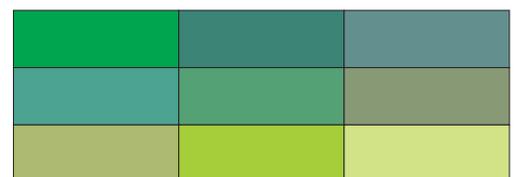
Beige is a neutral color. It suggests practicality and conservatism. It works nicely with graphics that are earthy, like browns and greens, or blue and pink palettes as a background. Beige allows maximum readability as a background.



Black is sophisticated, mysterious, and a classic. Black is the preferred background for an artist's portfolio and works well for technical sites. Online reading can be difficult on a black background, but it can be done successfully using text colors which contrast heavily such as white and neon colors.



Brown depicts stability, simplicity, and comfort. Sepia toned photographs and designs using different shades of brown accented by colors like green and blue or red and orange will make this color work to it's full potential. Brown is an excellent choice for a site featuring ideas of hearth and home or outdoor activities.



Green generates strong feelings. It can represent loyalty, intelligence, fertility, healing, food and ecology or it can create negative images of reptiles, insects, and envy. It is a



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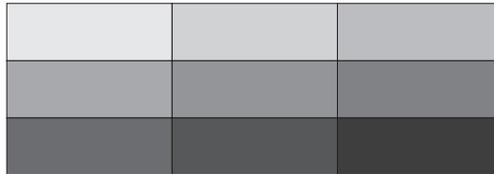
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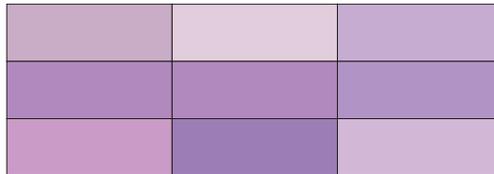
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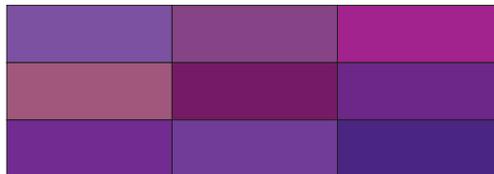
logical choice for financial sites. Avoid using red with green because they vibrate off each other making reading extremely difficult.



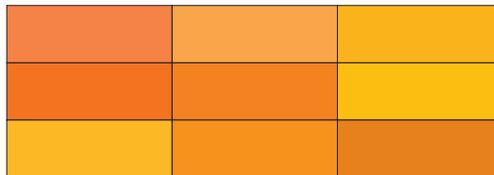
Gray is the most conservative color. It represents practicality, security, reliability, and sadness. Use another neutral tone unless you desire to convey extreme conservatism.



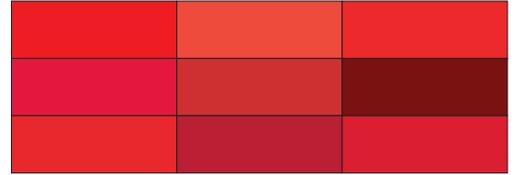
Lavender generates feelings of romance, nostalgia and daintiness. It is a very popular for creative sites. It works well with other pastels, cool tones like blue and green, and as a highlight for a neutral gray.



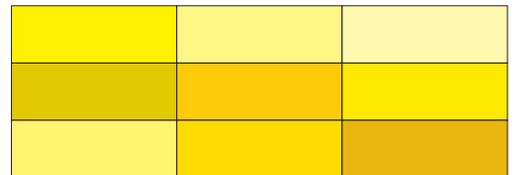
Purple is the color of mystery, royalty and spirituality. It is frequently the only choice for the unconventional and creative. Use a highly contrasting color for content so that your words are readable if you use it as a background.



Orange is an enthused, vibrant, and expansive warm color. It can really grate on your visitors' nerves if you use too much of it. It makes a nice highlight color.



Red is intense and passionate. It's an excellent accent color, especially when used with neutral colors. Combined with other warm tones like oranges, browns, and yellows, it could make your site stand out above others! Be careful when using it with green, blue and purple because they can clash horribly.



Yellow depicts optimism, happiness, idealism, and imagination. Use it only when you want to convey bright, cheery feelings.

Conclusion

While you may initially want to stick to using your corporate colors when designing software and web sites, be sure to test the outcome for usability and accessibility by all of your users. If your colors are limiting usability and accessibility, tweaking your color palette will be essential to your project's success. You can easily limit your use of non-essential elements and utilize other visual clues, such as icons, underlines, and text cues to convey the information that you would have otherwise conveyed through the use of color. Remember: Never sacrifice usability for design!

For more information, please visit http://www.qat.com/ms_webdesign.asp.