

## Tradeshow Tips ~ The meaning of colors in your exhibit.

Ever wonder which colors to use to make your exhibit appeal to your target audience at a tradeshow? Of course, your logo can sometimes dictate which colors to compliment your business brand, but what if you want to do something not tied to your grand colors? Check out these various colors and their meanings.

### Red

Red is the color of fire and blood, so it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, determination as well as passion, desire, and love.

Red is a very emotionally intense color. It enhances human metabolism, increases response rate and raises blood pressure. It has very high visibility, which is why stop signs, stoplights, and fire equipment are usually painted red. In heraldry, red is used to indicate courage. It is also found in many national flags.

Red brings text and images to the foreground. Use it as an accent color to stimulate people to make quick decisions; it is a perfect color for 'Buy Now' or "click here" buttons on the Internet and websites. In advertising, red is often used to evoke erotic feelings (red lips, red nails, 'Lady in Red', etc.) Red is widely used to indicate danger (high voltage signs and lights). This color is also commonly associated with energy, so you can use it when promoting energy drinks, games, cars, items related to sports and high physical activity.

**Light Red** represents joy, sexuality, passion, sensitivity, and love.

**Pink** signifies romance, love and friendship. It denotes feminine qualities and passiveness.

**Dark Red** is associated with vigor, willpower, rage, anger, leadership, courage, longing, and wrath.

**Brown** suggests stability and denotes masculine qualities.

**Reddish-Brown** is associated with harvest and fall.

### Orange

Orange combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow. It is associated with sunshine and the tropics. Orange represents enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, determination, attraction, success, encouragement, and stimulation.

To the human eye, orange is a very hot color, so it gives the sensation of heat. Nevertheless, orange is not as aggressive as red. Orange increases oxygen supply to the brain, produces invigorating effect, and stimulates mental activity. It is highly accepted among young people with a citrus color, associated with healthy food and stimulates appetite. Orange is the color used in fall and harvest. In heraldry, orange is symbolic of strength and endurance.

Orange has very high visibility, so you can use it to catch attention and highlight those important elements of your design. Orange is very effective for promoting food products and special services such as events.

**Dark Orange** can mean deceit and distrust.

**Red-orange** corresponds to desire, sexual passion, pleasure, domination, aggression and a call for action.

**Gold** evokes the feeling of prestige. The meaning of gold is illumination, wisdom, and wealth. Gold often symbolizes high quality.

### Yellow

Yellow is the color of sunshine. It's associated with joy, happiness, intellect and energy.

Yellow produces a warming effect, arouses cheerfulness, stimulates mental activity and generates muscle energy. Yellow is often associated with food. Bright, pure yellow is an attention-getter, which is the reason taxicabs are painted this color. When overused, yellow may produce a disturbing effect; it is known that babies cry more in yellow rooms. Yellow is seen before other colors when placed against black; this combination is often used to issue a warning. In heraldry, yellow indicates honor and loyalty. Later the meaning of yellow was connected with cowardice.

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Use yellow to evoke pleasant, cheerful feelings. You can choose yellow to promote cheery products and items related to leisure. Yellow is very effective for attracting attention, so use it to highlight the most important elements of your design. Men usually perceive yellow as a lighthearted, 'childish' color, so it is not recommended to use yellow when selling expensive products to men—nobody will buy a yellow business suit or a yellow Mercedes. It also is an unstable and spontaneous color, so avoid using yellow if you want to suggest stability and safety. Light yellow tends to disappear into white, so it usually needs a dark color to highlight it. Shades of yellow are visually unappealing because they lose cheerfulness and can become dull.

**Dull (dingy) yellow** represents caution, decay, sickness and jealousy.

**Light yellow** is associated with intellect, freshness and joy.

## **Green**

Green is the color of nature. It symbolizes growth, harmony, freshness and fertility. Green has a strong emotional correspondence with safety. Dark green is also commonly associated with money.

Green has great healing power. It is the most restful color for the human eye; it can increase vision. Green suggests stability and endurance. Sometimes green denotes lack of experience, for example, a 'greenhorn' is a novice. In heraldry, green indicates growth and hope. Green is opposed to red, and means safety; it is the color of free passage in road traffic.

Use green to indicate safety when advertising drugs and medical products. Green is also related to nature, so you can use it to promote 'green' products. Dull, darker green is associated with money, the financial world, banking and Wall Street.

**Dark green** is associated with ambition, greed and jealousy.

**Yellow-green** can indicate sickness, cowardice, discord and jealousy.

**Aqua** is associated with emotional healing and protection.

**Olive green** is the traditional color of peace.

## **Blue**

Blue is the color of the sky and sea. It is often associated with depth and stability. It symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth and heaven.

Blue is considered beneficial to the mind and body. It slows human metabolism and produces a calming effect. Blue is strongly associated with tranquility and calmness. In heraldry, blue was used to symbolize piety and sincerity.

You can use blue to promote products and services related to cleanliness (water purity filters, cleaning liquids, vodka), air and sky (airlines, airports, air conditioners), water and soda (sea voyages, mineral water). As opposed to emotionally warm colors like red and orange, blue is linked to consciousness and intellect. Use blue to suggest precision when promoting tech products.

Blue is a masculine color; according to studies, it is highly accepted among males. Dark blue is associated with depth, expertise, and stability; it is a preferred color for corporate America.

Avoid using blue when promoting food and cooking, because blue suppresses appetites. When used together with warm colors like yellow or red, blue can create high-impact, vibrant color mixes; for example, blue-yellow-red is a perfect color scheme for a superhero.

**Light Blue** is associated with health, healing, tranquility, understanding, and softness.

**Dark Blue** represents knowledge, power, integrity and seriousness.

## **Purple**

Purple combines the stability of blue and the energy of red. Purple symbolizes power, nobility, luxury and ambition. It conveys wealth and extravagance. Purple is associated with wisdom, dignity, independence, creativity, mystery and magic.

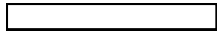
According to surveys, almost 75% of pre-adolescent children prefer purple to most other colors. Purple is a very rare color in nature; some people consider it to be artificial.

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Light purple is a good choice for a feminine design. You can use bright purple when promoting children's products.

**Light Purple** evokes romantic and nostalgic feelings.

**Dark Purple** evokes gloom and sad feelings. It can cause frustration.



**White**

White is associated with light, goodness, innocence, purity and virginity. It is considered to be the color of perfection.

White means safety, purity and cleanliness. As opposed to black, white usually has a positive connotation. White can represent a successful beginning. In heraldry, white depicts faith and purity.

In advertising, white is associated with coolness and cleanliness. You can use white to suggest simplicity in high-tech products. White is an appropriate color for charitable organizations; angels are usually imagined wearing white clothes. White is associated with hospitals, doctors and sterility; so you can use white to suggest safety when promoting medical products. White is often associated with low-weight, low-fat food, and dairy products.



**Black**

Black is associated with power, elegance, formality, death, evil and mystery.

Black is a mysterious color associated with fear and the unknown (black holes). It usually has negative connotation (blacklist, black humor, 'black death'). Black denotes strength and also it is considered to be a very formal, elegant, and prestigious color (black tie, black Mercedes). In heraldry, black is the symbol of grief.

Black gives the feeling of perspective and depth, but a black background diminishes readability. A black suit or dress can make you look thinner. When designing a gallery of art or photography, you can use a black or gray background to make the other colors stand out. Black contrasts with bright colors. Combined with red or orange—other very powerful colors—black gives you an aggressive color scheme.

As you plan your next exhibit, whether at an event or a tradeshow, keep in mind colors. Use them to your advantage and to subtly suggest the type of action and response you want.

**Coming Up:** In October, I'll take colors into your marketing, by talking about your color palette on your website, and how you can use color theory to your advantage.

