

Working with color

You probably purchased your color printer with some idea of how you wanted to use color in your work. Whether you are producing color reports, memos, graphs, charts, overhead transparencies for presentations, color handouts, or design comps, there are a few things to keep in mind when using color. Colors look different depending on the size of the color area, the surrounding colors, and the lighting conditions.

- A large area of color looks more saturated (brighter) than a small area of the same color.
- A color looks brighter against a dark background than it does against a white background.
- Colors look different due to the background color or to the surrounding colors.
- The appearance of a color varies with the type and amount of light, for example fluorescent lighting versus sunlight.

General guidelines

- Keep it simple and consistent.
- Select colors that look good together and that reinforce your message.
- Check your application for standard palettes to get you started.
- Use a color scheme of five or six shades, and in a series of images, use the colors in a consistent manner throughout the series.
- Use color to highlight the most important information, such as a bar or pie segment in a chart or graph.

- Use color to show relationships between objects, such as a range of values. Objects with a similar meaning or value should be in similar colors.
- Use color as graphic elements in the design of newsletters, logos, and brochures.
- Avoid red and green combinations; these colors are hard for people with red/green color blindness to distinguish.

Using color in presentations

When used consistently, color in your presentations will help your audience remember key points. For example, graphics that represent your product should always appear in the same color. If you represent data graphically, be sure to put the most important data in red or the brightest, warmest color in your selected palette. Put the data you do not want to emphasize in cool colors.

Color design guidelines:

- Keep it simple; use up to seven colors maximum.
- Use color to indicate related elements.
- Use complementary colors for basic color schemes; use split complements for more subtle effects.
- Avoid blue/red and yellow/purple combinations.
- Use full-strength warm colors sparingly for emphasis.
- Use a cool, dark background color that won't compete with the foreground. Use foreground colors that stand out clearly against the background. Research indicates that blue is the most preferred background color, followed by black, gray, brown, red, green, and purple.

Text and font guidelines:

- For readability, use dark text on a lighter background, or light text on a darker background. For example, white or yellow text with a deep blue background.
- Make text bold for emphasis.
- Text sizes on overhead transparencies or slides:
 - Use a 40-point or larger font for titles.
 - Use 24- to 36-point fonts for body text.
 - Use 5 to 7 lines of text *maximum* per slide or overhead.