



Coloring the Cosmetic World

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Chapter 1

Color Basics

It's a Colorful World

Is color a necessity of life, in the same manner as food, water and air?

The answer is no, but try to imagine a world *without* color. Nature would bear no brightly colored flowers, no green grass, no festively colored birds or fish. The blue of sky—rich and deep one day, only to yield a softer eye-blue the next—would not be there. How could we call it *sky* without those colors? What would the word, the idea, *sky* even mean? There would also be no colorful man-made objects: automobiles gleaming red, silver, piercing black; brightly colored newspapers and magazines whose purpose is to give image and substance to ideas, concepts and actions; children's toys and all that is implied by the joy given by their colorfulness; packaging materials that excite and endorse; the very houses we live in and countless other objects that make up the world as we know it.

Even though color is not counted as one of life's necessities, it is an integral part of every human being's existence. It is a fact, beyond contestation; there is color. Color pervades human life on two levels, the visual and the psychological. Visually, it is a welcome companion to human life. It provides texture, differentiation, and emotional value. In addition to the esthetic enhancement of life, color is functional in several aspects. It is used to communicate information: think of a traffic signal. No matter in which part of the world a person may travel, he or she can, without speaking the

Table 1.1 National Standards Institute Color Coding System

Color	Std	Meaning	Example
Red	APWA	Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables	Buried High Voltage Line
Yellow	APWA	Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials	Natural Gas Distribution Line
Orange	APWA	Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit	Buried Fiber Optic Cable
Blue	APWA	Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines	Buried Water Line
Green	APWA	Sewers, Drain Line	Buried Storm Sewer Line
Red	Traffic	Prohibition	STOP, Yield
Orange	Traffic	Temporary Work Zone	Construction Zone Ahead
Yellow	Traffic	Caution	Merge Ahead, Slow
Blue	Traffic	Information Signs	Hospital
Brown	Traffic	Historical or Park	Picnic Area Ahead
Green	Traffic	Directional Signs	Exit 1 Mile, Go
Red	ANSI Sign	Danger Signs, Highest Hazard	Hazardous Voltage Will Cause Death
Orange	ANSI Sign	Warning Signs, Medium Hazard	Hazardous Voltage May Cause Death
Yellow	ANSI Sign	Caution Signs, Lowest Hazard	Turn Machine Off When Not In Use
Blue	ANSI Sign	Notice Signs	Employees Only
Green	ANSI Sign	Safety First Signs	Wear Ear Plugs
Red	ANSI Pipe	Fire Quenching Materials	Fire Protection Water
Yellow	ANSI Pipe	Materials Inherently Hazardous	Chlorine
Blue	ANSI Pipe	Materials of Inherently Low Hazard, Gas	Compressed Air
Green	ANSI Pipe	Materials of Inherently Low Hazard, Liquid	Storm Drain
Blue/Red/Yellow	NFPA 701	Blue is used for Health Hazards, Red for Flammability and Yellow for reactivity	

local language, understand what the red, green and yellow lights mean when they are illuminated, and act according to that meaning. Along these same lines—and this example is nothing if not timely—it is possible to determine what the terrorist alert level in the United States simply by seeing what color it is. Color, in this case, corresponds to a set of criteria, upon which we may become informed, or if necessary, act.

A fine example of color communication can be found in the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) color coding system, which can be found in **Table 1.1**. This system assigns not only a valuation to color, as it is used in the public sphere of everyday American life, but it also goes further by offering common examples of color function in places such as public utilities, traffic coordination, and general public safety.

Beyond these functional aspects, color brings other dimensions to everyday lives. First, it is a very powerful tool for use in brand identity. There are many large multinational companies that use color as an integral part of their identity, as the following examples will attest. Coca-Cola has used red as an identifier for many years; in fact the Coca-Cola brand is so deeply tied to this color that one knows the brand identity by simply seeing this rich red accented by the silver wave, regardless of whether the words “Coca-Cola” are present or not. Royal Dutch Shell selected yellow as its brand color and have used it very effectively in the company’s seashell-esque logo. Finally, the United Parcel Service not only uses brown as its identifier visually, but has also incorporated the word into its corporate tag line, “What can brown do for you today?”

Along the same identity lines, companies also use color to brand specific items within their product portfolios. Over time the colors chosen to represent a given brand, through exposure and consistent marketing plans, become practically inextricable from the product itself. To go back to Coca-Cola, no one picks up a Coke and expects to taste Pepsi, just as no one develops a taste for Coke and then looks for the Pepsi label’s color scheme. Other examples of this type of color association are the bright, clean-looking orange trimmed in deep blue and white of Proctor & Gamble’s Tide detergent; Kodak’s yellow film boxes; and Cadbury Eggs’ distinct shiny blue wrapper.

Moving from brand and product identification, color usage is also very much a part of the foods we eat, both overtly and covertly. With regard to the former, each of us, dating back to childhood, has been instructed to “eat our greens,” the idea being that green foods bear healthful nutrients beneficial to growth and development. Color is also a very prominent factor in prepared foods such as candies (the chocolately brown wrapper of M&Ms), bottled and powder-mix drinks (the fun brightness of the Kool-Aid Man), and cereals (the “rainbow” of flavors suggested by Lucky Charms). From the latter, the covert role of color in food, color is used to enhance the appearance of foods from raw beef to McDonald’s golden fried Chicken McNuggets.

One final aspect of visual color use in everyday life is very important to any reader of this book. It is the essential core of the fashion industry, of which decorative cosmetics are a key element. Fashion, whether home, apparel, or other types, would be a three-legged stool missing a leg if everything were black and white.

The second level of color pervasion in human existence is psychological. Colors mean different things on this level than on the visual level, and can significantly affect human moods and attitudes toward events and people. Specifics of this phenomenon are as follows:²

Black tends to signify power and authority. Ever heard someone associate the term “power” with the color black, for example in an office setting wherein one may wear a “black power suit?” It is used in fashion so pervasively as there is a belief that it makes people look thinner. Black is often used to signify villainy and darkness of character; think Darth Vader, Dracula, or Batman. On the other end of the spectrum, priests wear black to show submission to God, and, of course, black is known as the color of mourning in the Western world.

White is the color of purity and innocence; it is commonly worn by brides in the Western hemisphere (though interestingly it is a color of mourning in certain parts of Asia). It is often used in summer fashions, as it reflects light and is therefore cooler in hot weather. It’s popularity in home fashions and clothing is largely due to the fact that it goes with all other colors.

Red heats up the emotions, and is commonly the color associated with love or matters of the heart—think Valentine’s Day. Red clothing has the opposite effect of black with respect to a person’s weight appearance and is not considered conducive as an apparel choice for successful negotiations.

Blue is red’s counterpoint, as it evokes calmness and tranquility; think of the soothing effect a calm blue sky or gently susurrus blue ocean has on one’s feelings of well-being. Due to this, it is one of the most popular colors and is commonly used in bedrooms and other places where a tranquil effect is desired.

Green is the corollary color to blue, as it produces a similar calm in one’s emotions as evidenced by the reference to a “green room” where people can relax while waiting to go onto a television set. For the same reason, it is a common color for hospital scrubs worn by doctors and nurses, and in fact often hospital rooms themselves sport walls painted a soothing shade of green. It is the color of nature and is therefore, in today’s world, used to symbolize what is good for the earth. It is not much of a surprise that there is no environmental “Blue Movement.”

Yellow is the color associated with the sun, making it one that promotes cheerfulness in people. However, it has been shown that too much yellow in a room can increase the chance of people loosing their tempers and even can cause babies to cry more frequently. Yellow is thought to focus attention, so it is often the color of choice in legal pads.

Purple is the color of royalty, symbolizing wealth and sophistication, and also of passion, be it artistic, emotional, or spiritual. It is commonly used in the vestments and decorations of Christian churches throughout the world to denote the sovereignty of God and the “passion” by which he rose to heaven and by which the faithful show their allegiance.

Brown is the color of earth (i.e. ground; dirt; soil) and, like earth, carries the connotation of stability and reliability. It is commonly selected by men as a favorite color.

Color Theory and Color Space

Before embarking on a discussion of color selection, it is important