



1980 CALLED
IT WANTS ITS COLOR BACK

It's estimated that the human eye can distinguish roughly **10 million colors**. With all of these options, how can you know if you've picked the right colors for your brand? Here are some general rules to keep in mind when selecting a color palette—and to expand your personal repertoire of “colorful” language and thoughts.



Black will always be the new black.

No matter what the fashionistas tell you, green will never be the new black. Black is a constant, classic color—and no other color will ever replace its power and emotion. It partners perfectly with nearly every other color in the spectrum, while providing an elegant backdrop or making a distinctive statement all its own. Yes, it's important to know the latest trends, but you don't have to follow them blindly. Your brand needs to live beyond the next season or even next year. While deep plum might be the hottest lipstick color today, tomorrow dusty rose could be all the rage. Build your palette on feelings not fads—and you'll have a much longer shelf life.

Colors, much like Barbie's Ken, don't have a gender.

Consumers are complex, and your color palette should reflect this knowledge. While your target might be female, there's a big difference in color preferences between 20-somethings and 40-somethings. And when you bring factors like gender, ethnicity, education, social status, and other demographics into play—the rules become much less clear-cut. A basic rule is to keep an open mind and remember that most men and women over the age of five probably don't need their world color-coded in blue and pink. Although, Ken may need a little more help than most of us.

Red isn't always "red."

Every color has an array of varying tints, shades, and mixes. Allowing yourself to see colors in a more multifaceted light can keep you from making the assumption, "I can't use red, because our biggest competitor uses red." A great thing about colors is that they change appearance based on the colors around them. Case in point: Coke and Pepsi both use a warm, orangey red in their brand palettes. However, the addition of white or blue completely changes the perception of this red.



Black and white are colors too.

You don't have to choose every color of the rainbow, so don't be afraid to use blacks and whites as your predominant colors. Black plays well with almost every other color—and it can be sophisticated, luxurious, or even powerful. White, like black, blends well with other colors—and can create a clean, friendly, or optimistic feeling. Test yourself—open one of those big boxes of crayons, and you'll see there's also black and white inside.

Colors also have feelings.

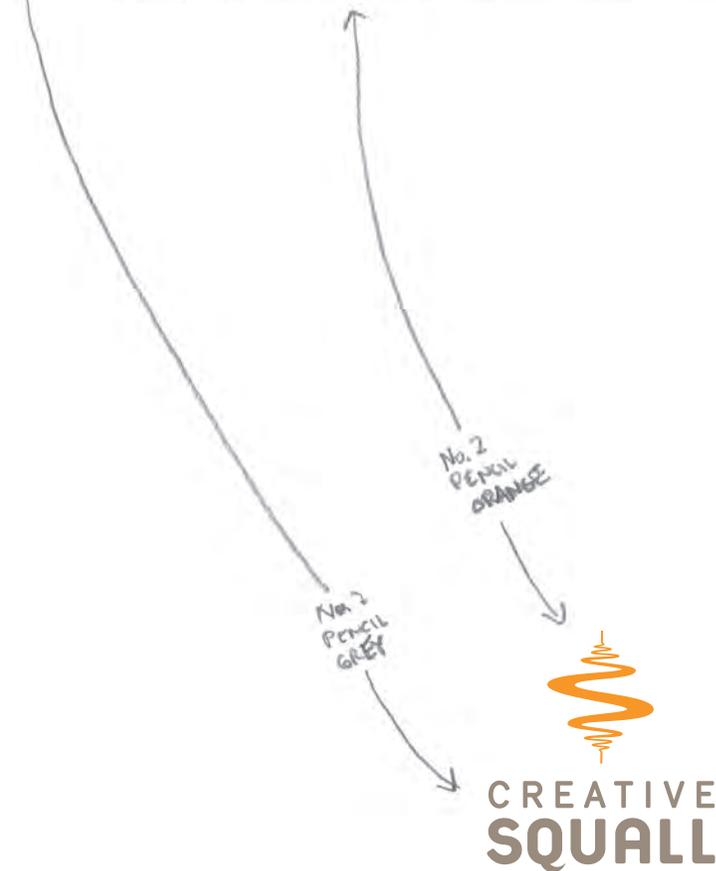
When developing your color palette, try to think of colors in terms of the emotions you want them to convey. Don't get too wrapped up in stereotypes—and remember that everyone sees color differently. What some people see as a yellow school bus, others see as orange. Often, an individual's perception of what a color is called or means has been developed and reinforced over their entire life. In the end, it's best to target an emotional response based on color combinations and your target's profile. After all, I've been told that yellow is the color of optimism by many color theory books, yet I still find it to be very irritating. However, my copywriter loves it.

Orange doesn't like you either.

Once again, we find ourselves back at the old mantra, "Who's your target?" Always keep your audience in mind when developing a color palette for your brand. The fact that you really like green because it was one of your college colors doesn't hold any weight with the first-time mothers you're trying to reach. Just as you feel strongly about some colors, your target will too. When you choose a color palette that means something to both you and your target—your customers will feel like you're talking directly to them. And, in fact, you actually will be. Just ask a certain shipping company with an affinity for brown.



The bottom line is that the best color palette is one that speaks directly to your target market on a meaningful and compelling level—without relying on the latest gimmicks or trends. Remember, your brand needs to outlive the fads and that colors come in more than just the primary and secondary colors we all know so well. Label your colors with emotional tags that meet your target’s needs, and you’ll develop a palette as memorable as the products and services you sell.



No. 1
COLOR
SOURCE

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