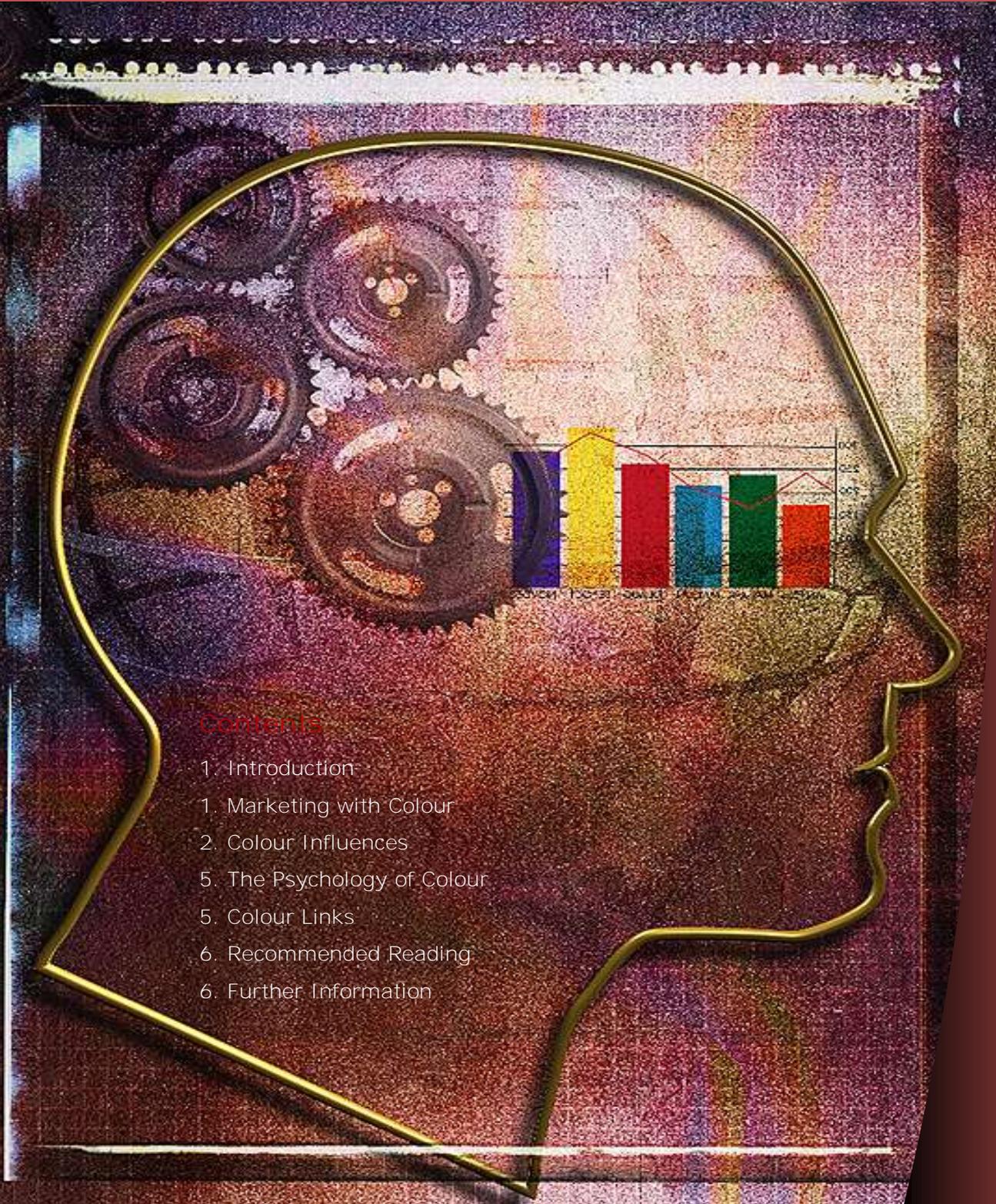


# Colours and their effect on Consumers

*Expert knowledge means success*



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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

## Introduction

Since the beginning of time, colour has influenced the human race. But the meaning of colour and its impact differs from country to country and from culture to culture. For example:

- Red in China is a colour for joyous and festive occasions, whereas in Japan it is used to signify anger and danger;
- Blue for the Cherokee Indian signifies defeat, but for the Egyptian, it signifies virtue and truth, while yellow signifies happiness and prosperity;
- In the Japanese theatre, blue is the colour for villains;
- White is the colour of death in Chinese culture, but purple represents death in Brazil;
- Yellow is sacred to the Chinese, but signified sadness in Greece and jealousy in France;
- In North America, green is typically associated with jealousy;
- People from tropical countries respond most favorably to warm colours, people from northern climates prefer cooler colours.

## Marketing with Colour

Although there are no hard and fast rules about colours in marketing, there are some things that seem to work well, time and time again.

Grey and blue corporate colours would be completely out of place for a fashion boutique. But these colours would be spot on for a financial services company, which must project permanence and responsibility.

Using colours in marketing is a powerful way to set emotion, which is the real driving force behind decision-making.

The simple fact is this:

*"Colour sells, but the right colour sells better".*

When choosing colours for your design, packaging or message, remember the rules for mixing colours. The human eye cannot focus on red and blue at the same time. You should never ever use blue type on a red background (or even worse, is red type on a blue background). If you do so, you will lose your audience since mixing colours like this causes extreme eye fatigue.

Colour can have great effect on whether or not your customer likes your product. In fact, some marketers use experts to help forecast which colours consumers will like two or three years down the road.

Researchers have found differences among social classes in colour preference:

- Hot, bright colours usually appeal to lower-end markets;
- Deep, rich colours have historically appealed to higher-end markets.

The good news is that most colours go well together with members of the same "family":

- Warm colours of type, such as red, brown, orange and yellow look better together in combination warm coloured backgrounds;
- Cool coloured type like blue, green, gray and white with cool coloured backgrounds;
- Using colour families generally makes for a more appealing presentation, especially for large amounts of information.

Colour is often one of the first things that consumers notice about something and, therefore, a dominant factor in determining a customer's first impression about a product or service. In his book, *The Power of Color* (Avery Penguin Putnam, January 1991, ASIN: 0895294303), author Dr. Morton Walker writes:

*"Marketing psychologists advise that a lasting color impression is made within ninety seconds and accounts for sixty percent of the acceptance or rejection of an object, place, individual or circumstance. Because color impressions are both quickly made and long-held, decisions regarding color can be highly important to success".*



### What is Colour?

In the world of physics, there are no colours - there are only light waves of different wavelengths.

Colour is the property depending on the relations of light to the eye, by which individual and specific differences in the hues and tints of objects are apprehended in vision. The sensation of colour depends upon a peculiar function of the retina or optic nerve, in consequence of which rays of light produce different effects according to the length of their waves or undulations, waves of a certain length producing the sensation of red, shorter waves green, and those still shorter blue, etc. White, or ordinary, light consists of waves of various lengths so blended as to produce no effect of colour, and the colour of objects depends upon their power to absorb or reflect a greater or less proportion of the rays which fall upon them.

Colours elicit different emotions and reactions from consumers - for example:

- Blue - dominance and respect;
- Yellow - caution or inexpensive;
- Brown - informality;
- White - goodness and purity;
- Orange - power and affordability.

## Colour Influences

Using colour influences the mood and emotion of your customers. The colours for type, illustrations and backgrounds influence the way they are perceived. Be careful with colours - using too many lessens the impact of each colour and confuses your audience.

### A Basic Guide

The following Table provides a basic guide to using colour in your presentations. You should be aware of the positive and negative connotations of colours and the emotional response certain colours may evoke.

Red – excitement, alert, deficits and financial failure	Green – growth, stimulates interaction
White – new, professionalism, innocence	Blue – conservative approach, truth, trust, justice
Yellow – confidence, warmth, wisdom	Black – authority, strength, history
Purple – dignity, sophistication	Orange – action, optimism
Brown – friendliness, warmth	Grey – integrity, maturity

### A Detailed Guide

#### WHITE

White is seen as representing freshness, cleanliness, purity and simplicity.

Doctors and nurses wear white to imply sterility. Brides wear white to symbolise innocence and purity. White reflects light and is considered a summer colour. White is popular in decorating and in fashion simply because it is light, neutral, and goes with everything.

On the other hand, white shows dirt and is much harder to keep clean than other colours.

White is often the colour of choice for bridal shops, religious groups, daycare centres, medical and dental facilities, caterers, bakeries, museums, and dry cleaners.

A few words of caution: white is a colour of death and mourning in China, Japan, and some Middle East countries.

#### PASTELS

If you want your message to seem fun, use a pastel colour. Make sure your copy shows up well on the paper.

#### BLACK

Black is dramatic, classy and serious. It suggests authority, power, boldness, seriousness and is distinguishing and classic. It represents formality, mourning, wealth, elegance, seriousness, distinctiveness, boldness, sombreness, authority and practicality. It is also a trendy colour that keeps consumers up to date with technology.

Black is the colour of authority and power. It is popular in fashion simply because it makes people seem to be thinner than they really are. It is also stylish and timeless.

Black also implies submission. Priests wear black to signify submission to God. Some fashion experts say a woman wearing black implies submission to men. Black outfits can also be overpowering, or make the wearer seem aloof or evil. Villains, such as Dracula, often wear black.

Black symbolises power, prestige, elegance, style, reliability, simplicity, and sophistication.

In the past, black was viewed as the colour of death, witches, demons and evil.

Black is a good colour choice for music shops, accountants, lawyers, computer stores, and tyre/motor spare shops.

#### GREY

Grey is business like and distinctive, yet it can be seen as cold and sometimes uninviting.

The cold influence of grey keeps it foreign, remote and distant.

People who relate to the colour grey are often those who are careful and articulate and who are focused and dedicated to their commitments.

#### BLUE

Blue represents comfort, loyalty, security, authority, dignity, faithfulness, trust, reliability, belonging, and coolness.

Blue, the colour of the sky, is one of the most popular colours. It causes the opposite reaction as red.

### Colours mean different things to different people

Colours often have different symbolic meanings in different cultures.

For example, white is the colour for weddings in western societies but for funerals in traditional Chinese culture; red is associated with rage in America but with happiness in China.

In the US and many European countries, in fashion and decoration, blue is for boys while pink is for girls, which is a symbolic use of colour not shared by many other cultures.

### Got the blues?

Deep blues mean being analytical, serious, scholarly, academic, and even regal.

Pale blues mean calmness, peace, ethereal, fresh, clean and cool.

Blue works well across the sexes and is the most popular colour of both men and women. Several well-known companies (such as IBM) use blue in their logos.

Fashion consultants recommend wearing blue to job interviews because it symbolises loyalty.

Blue has long been associated with Europe's royalty. Today, it works well to show power, authority, or prestige. It makes people feel calm, relaxed, tranquil, peaceful, wise, loyal, and trustworthy - it also helps people resolve their problems. Strangely, the colour blue also helps increase productivity – it has been shown that people are more productive at work in blue rooms and that weightlifters are able to handle heavier weights in blue gyms.

On the other hand, the colour blue can also symbolise sadness, coldness and depression. Since most foods are not blue, the colour blue is known as an appetite suppressant that can help people lose weight!

Blue is a good colour choice for travel agencies, pool companies, masseurs, health centres, chemists, motels and psychologists.

## BROWN

Brown relates to nature, and things that are aged and even eccentric as well as sombre, natural, authentic, utility, earthiness, woodiness and subtle richness. Brown is solid and reliable and helps to create a neutral, comfortable and open atmosphere. It communicates credibility, solidity, strength and maturity.

Brown symbolises coffee, timber, and earth-tone products. It is a reliable, solid, strong, mature, and comfortable colour. Brown, sensuous in nature, has an important connection with home life and family - it symbolises physical comfort, ease and contentment. Light brown implies genuineness while dark brown is similar to wood or leather. Men are more likely to say that brown is one of their favourite colours.

The colour brown is an excellent colour for ironmongery stores, coffee shops, craft shops, herbal shops, health food stores, male haberdasheries, furniture shops, western stores, contractors, clock shops, and carpenters.

## GREEN

The colour green is symbolised with money, life, health, food, nature, youth, the environment, motion, mobility, wealth, nature, tranquillity, renewal, hope and freshness.

Dark green is masculine, conservative, and implies wealth. It is the colour of life and represents freshness, security and tranquility whilst creating an atmosphere that is calm and restful and characterizes the intense power of nature. Interestingly, light green calms people, which is why most walls in prisons, schools, waiting rooms and hospitals are light green.

Many companies feel green makes their prospects think about money. A green border with a graphic of a stack of pound coins works well for business opportunities. It works well for health too – green is a colour that soothes people, reduces pain, and makes us feel safe and welcome. This is a great quality for any product or service.

A word of caution - yellow-green is not a good colour for food advertisements because it is an appetite depressant.

Green is a good colour for financial advisors, banks, and accountants because it signifies money. It is also good for outdoor products and sports because it gives consumers a natural outdoor feeling. Green can be used for greenhouses, landscaping, and farmers because of its connection with life and growth.

## ORANGE

Orange implies warmth, excitement, and energy as well as being cautious, hazardous, energetic, fun, cheerfulness, vibrancy and warm exuberance. Orange has a declassifying, broad appeal and can be used to indicate that a product is suitable for everyone and can make an expensive product seem more affordable. Little wonder that the mobile phone operator Orange chose this colour to relate to its target audience.

The colour orange can help an expensive product seem more reasonably priced. It is the perfect colour for products that appeal to a wide variety of people.

Orange is an appetite stimulant. It is a good colour choice for vitamin shops, Mexican restaurants, dance studios and products that target Latin and French people.

## Colour can convey meaning

Colour can be used to convey specific meaning such as warning (red), caution (yellow), safety (green), etc. There are international standards on the assignment of colours to meaning:

- red: danger
- orange: warning
- yellow: caution
- blue: notice
- green: safety

However, these associations of colour and meaning may be culture specific and should be used with care. Various sources have suggested other standard meanings signalled by colour:

- red: urgency, passion, heat, love, blood
- purple: wealth, royalty, sophistication, intelligence
- blue: truth, dignity, power, coolness, melancholy, heaviness
- black: death, rebellion, strength, evil
- White: purity, cleanliness, lightness, emptiness
- yellow: warmth, cowardice, brightness
- green: nature, health, cheerfulness, environment, money, vegetation

Source:  
Hewlett-Packard

## PINK

Pink means being healthy, childlike, feminine, innocent, soft and healthy. Pink is the most romantic and tender colour and it is also tranquilising. Research suggests that pink makes people calm and soft-hearted.

Universally representing romance, caring and sharing, pink indicates a strong personality. Marketers know that affectionate and concerned people prefer pink.

## PURPLE

Purple is a sophisticated, creative, luxurious, and wealthy colour. Purple is linked to royalty, sophistication and religion as well as spirituality, dignity, sophistication, luxury, wealth, sophistication, costliness and mystery.

Many people love purple. For some reason it is a favourite among children and many of us never get over it when growing up – a good example of this is the purple used in Cadbury's chocolate wrappers.

A bluish shade of purple tends to create mystery, while a reddish shade of purple is sensual, and creative. Purple with a red tint will get more attention.

Purple is a great colour for elaborate restaurants, clothing stores, book shops, art galleries, night clubs, photographers, country clubs, golf courses, jewellery shops, beauticians, and even fortune tellers.

## RED

Red is a highly visible colour that will always attract attention and also stimulate several emotions. It is the single most dynamic and passionate colour, symbolizes love, rage and courage. Demanding attention, red has great emotional impact.

Red is a colour associated with being aggressive, strong, heavy, assertive, intense, as well as connecting with, vitality, life-sustaining, passionate, courageous and, insightful. It symbolizes action, warmth, power, aggression, excitement, drama, fire, blood, passion, love, danger, anger, and heat.

In written communications, red makes a message seem urgent or even aggressive.

Red is an attention grabber. Words and objects in red get people's attention immediately. In decorating and design, red items are perfect since they attract attention. When it comes to cars, there is a positive correlation between the colour red and the rate of theft.

Apparently, gamblers spend more money in casinos decked in red than in casinos with any other colour. Red is a good colour for car sales, pet shops and, pizza/spaghetti restaurants.

However, the colour red is not recommended for medical companies because it signals bad health, blood, and emergencies. Red is also the colour that accountants use to show negative figures.

## YELLOW

Yellow represents caution, springtime and brightness. Other words associated with yellow are tropical, healing, illumination, discovery, sunshine and at the opposite end of the spectrum, cowardice. Yellow exudes warmth, inspiration and vitality, and is the happiest of all colours. Yellow signifies communication, enlightenment, sunlight and spirituality.

Whilst yellow gets attention, because it is bright it is hard on the eyes. Lemon yellow is the most eye-fatiguing colour - light is reflected by this bright colour, resulting in excessive stimulation of the eyes, causing eye irritation.

It's good to use some yellow in your marketing or on your packaging, but not too much of it.

Yellow is the first colour the eye processes. It is also the most visible colour to the human eye. This is why it gets attention faster than any other colour. But yellow is also used as a colour of caution.

Tests have shown that while yellow is considered to be an optimistic colour, people lose their tempers more often in yellow rooms, and babies will cry more.

Yellow is an excellent colour for sunny, happy, bright, cheerful, playful, easygoing, and optimistic advertisements. It's ideal for florists, sweet shops, toy stores, amusement parks, and discount stores.

## The General Principles of Colour

Colour is a very interesting phenomenon to which some general principles apply.

Warm colours, like red, orange and yellow, tend to stimulate, energise and activate, whereas cool colours, like blue and violet, relax, soothe, and calm us.

Green, because it is a combination of yellow and blue, can belong to either category, depending on the shade and tint.

In general, darker tones make objects look smaller, while lighter tones make things look bigger.

Colour is also affected by light. For example, in north facing rooms colours become cooler, and incandescent artificial lighting gives everything a yellow, warm tinge.

Source:  
[Handbag.com](http://Handbag.com)

## TEAL

Cool and constant, teal indicates stability and resistance to change. If teal is your favourite colour, you are a sensitive individual, and have excellent taste. Optimistic and trusting, you have a high degree of faith and hope, easily trusting others.

## VIOLET

Violet, the colour of luxury, indicates sensuality, passion and depth of feeling.

This lavish colour creates an unusual atmosphere and provides an unexpected essence. People who like violet, tend to be unique, highly sensitive and observant. Creative and artistically talented, violet-lovers tend to have a complex personality.

## The Psychology of Colour

Our moods and physical responses are affected by colours and our perceptions as customers are influenced by:

- Two colour hues (warm and cool);
- Degrees of colour saturation (refers to the amount of grey in a colour, and determines how vivid it is);
- Luminosity refers to the whiteness or intensity of a colour; luminosity for any one colour will range from pure white though to black; and
- Levels of depth (light or dark).

We all know that colour can affect our moods. We find that some colours are uplifting and inspiring, and others are depressing. We often use terms such as "feeling blue," "yellow-bellied," "green with envy," and "seeing red" without even thinking about the words we use to give the meaning we intend.

Colour psychologists have found that warm colours (red, orange, and yellow) generally encourage activity and excitement, whereas cool colours (green, blue, violet) are more soothing and relaxing. That's why so many soaps, lotions, body washes and other toiletry potions come in packages with cool colours; they're trying paint a calming picture of their product.

It's also why children's toys and sweets are often sold in the warm colours – they are trying to encourage notions of fun and energy.

Remember that there are no "good" or "bad" colours. All colours have positive and negative effects depending on context.

## Colour Links

Pantone, Inc. is the world-renowned authority on colour and provider of colour systems and technology. Pantone COLORTEAM defines and develops colour messages to help companies better connect with their customers by delivering a full suite of customised services from shade naming to interactive colour workshops to in-depth "Color Ideation" for product development. Details are at: [www.pantone.com/pages/pantone/index.aspx](http://www.pantone.com/pages/pantone/index.aspx)

### General

ColorMatters, various articles including colour theory  
[www.colormatters.com](http://www.colormatters.com)

ColorDome, various articles  
[www.colordome.com](http://www.colordome.com)

The Colour Wheel  
[www.colormatters.com/colortheory.html](http://www.colormatters.com/colortheory.html)

Colour Theory and History  
[www.wetcanvas.com/ArtSchool/Color/ColorTheory/](http://www.wetcanvas.com/ArtSchool/Color/ColorTheory/)

The Power of Color  
[www.wpdfd.com/wpdfpal3.htm](http://www.wpdfd.com/wpdfpal3.htm)

### Colour Selectors

Interactive colour picker  
[www.visibone.com/colorlab/](http://www.visibone.com/colorlab/)

Stormloader, 4 color combination picker  
[www.stormloader.com/4colors](http://www.stormloader.com/4colors)

### Colour and Cultures

Colorsystem, meaning of colours for other cultures  
[www.colorsystm.com/?lang=en](http://www.colorsystm.com/?lang=en)

Colours, meaning in Chinese culture  
[www.chinatownconnection.com/colors-chinese-culture.htm](http://www.chinatownconnection.com/colors-chinese-culture.htm)

Feng Shui Color Theory  
<http://fengshui.about.com/od/fengshuicures/qt/fengshuicolor.htm>

### Mixing Colours

Mixing colours in design is fine but remember that too much contrast makes your work difficult to take in.

For type, keep the contrast reasonable no matter what colours you're working with. If your background has a value of, say 20%, and the type has a value of 80%, it presents a subtle look that's easy on the eyes and is graphically appealing. You should try to avoid the extremes.

## Colour Psychology

Precision Intermedia:

[www.precisionintermedia.com/color.html](http://www.precisionintermedia.com/color.html)

Pantone's The Right Color - Color 101:

[www.therightcolor.com/color\\_101/color101\\_top.html](http://www.therightcolor.com/color_101/color101_top.html)

The Mood of Colour: [www.color-chart.org/mood-ring-color-chart.php](http://www.color-chart.org/mood-ring-color-chart.php)

Colour Blindness and Vision Deficiency:

What is color blindness:

[www.colourvision.info/](http://www.colourvision.info/)

Visibone colour palette, common colour

deficiency simulations:

[www.visibone.com/colorblind/](http://www.visibone.com/colorblind/)

Colour Maps, check legibility of colours:

[www.personal.psu.edu/cab38/ColorBrewer/ColorBrewer\\_learnMore.html](http://www.personal.psu.edu/cab38/ColorBrewer/ColorBrewer_learnMore.html)

Effective Colour Contrast:

[www.lighthouse.org/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/effective-color-contrast](http://www.lighthouse.org/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/effective-color-contrast)

## Books on Colour

Real World Color Management by Bruce Fraser, Fred Bunting and Chris Murphy, published by Peachpit Press; ISBN: 0201773406.

The Elements of Color: A Treatise on the Color System of Johannes Itten, Based on His Book "The Art of Color", by

Johannes Itten, Faber Birren,

published by John Wiley & Sons Inc; ISBN:

0471289299.

Interaction of Color, by Josef Albers,

published by Yale University Press, ISBN:

0300018460.

The Complete Book of Colour, by Suzy

Chiazzari, August 2000, published by

HarperCollins; ISBN: 1862042594.

Readings on Color: The Philosophy of

Color, Alex Byrne (Editor), David R. Hilbert

(Editor), June 1997, published by The MIT

Press; ISBN: 0262522306.

Global Graphics: Colour - Designing with

Color for an International Market, by L.

K. Peterson, Cheryl Dangel Cullen, Rockport

Publishers; ISBN: 1564962938.

Pantone Guide to Communicating with

Color, by Leatrice Eiseman, Design Books;

ISBN: 0966638328.



## Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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