

How to Choose the Best Colors for Your Presentations

By [Scott Schwertly](#) on March 17, 2014

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Choosing the right colors for your presentation can quickly become a surprisingly difficult task. It's easy to know when color combinations don't look good, but it's tougher to figure out what actually works. If you don't know where to start, here are a few things to keep in mind the next time you begin to design your presentation.

WHAT NOT TO DO

The Vibrating-Color Headache

Vibrating color combinations are colors that give the illusion that they are vibrating on screen. Not only are they ugly combos, but they can actually give people headaches and have been known to even make some people nauseous. If you need to use bright colors, always use them with a complimentary (neutral) background.



Low Contrast Colors

While subtle color contrast can be great for print design, it rarely works with presentations.

A projector is limited in the colors it displays, therefore, colors with little contrast can easily be washed out and "invisible" when projected. I recommend always using high contrast colors when designing a presentation that will be viewed on a projector.



Not So Black and White

Print design can look professional and elegant when only using black and white, but in a presentation, black and white generally look boring and as if little thought was given to the design of the presentation. If a black and white feel is needed, I recommend adding a subtle gradient to blacks and whites to add a little depth/interest.



WHAT TO DO

The Emotional Power of Colors

Colors possess many emotional connotations. For example, the color red can infer anger or frustration, but when used as an accent color (let's say a white/black/red color scheme), it can provoke feelings of power, excitement or confidence. Another example is blue. Blue provokes feelings of trust or calmness, which is why many medical companies use blue in their brand color scheme. However, blue can also infer sadness or boredom. My advice is to choose a color scheme that fits your material (i.e. strong, high contrast colors for tech/innovation; pastel or dulled colors for emotional, human material), and stick with it.

Bold, high contrast colors



Pastel, soft colors



Stay Trendy

One of the best resources on the web right now is [Kuler](#). It is a fantastic color resource. You can create your own color schemes (choose a base color and Kuler provides a color scheme, based on the base color) or search their gallery or color schemes uploaded by users. It's a great place to stay on top of color trends to see what will be best for your presentation.

Go Online With It

[Color Scheme Designer](#) is another excellent color-scheme site similar to Kuler, except it gives you the ability to view examples of what your chosen color scheme would look like on a website like SlideShare. It also has the “accented analogic” color option, which provides an analogic color scheme with a complimentary accent color.

Presentation color selection matters. Choose wisely.

[READ MORE: 4 Design Tactics to Take Your Deck From Good to Great](#)

About the Author

Scott Schwertly is the author of [How to Be a Presentation God](#) and CEO of [Ethos3](#), a Nashville, TN-based presentation boutique providing [professional presentation design and training](#) for national and international clients ranging from Fortune 500 companies to branded individuals like Guy Kawasaki.

If Scott is not working with his team building presentations, you will find him in the pool, on the bike, or on a long run. Scott lives in Nashville, TN with his wife and three dogs. He has a B.A. and M.B.A. from Harding University. [Find Scott on Google+](#).



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