**What do colors say?**

**Warm Colors**

*Warm colors include red, orange, and yellow, and variations of those three colors. These are the colors of fire, of fall leaves, and of sunsets and sunrises, and are generally energizing, passionate, and positive.*

*Red and yellow are both primary colors, with orange falling in the middle (making it a secondary color), which means warm colors are all truly warm and aren’t created by combining a warm color with a cool color. Use warm colors in your designs to reflect passion, happiness, enthusiasm, and energy.*

**RED (PRIMARY COLOR):** Red is a very hot color. It’s associated with fire, violence, and warfare. It’s also associated with love and passion. In history, it’s been associated with both the Devil and Cupid. Red can actually have a physical effect on people, raising blood pressure and respiration rates. It’s been shown to enhance human metabolism, too.

Red can be associated with anger, but is also associated with importance (think of the red carpet at awards shows and celebrity events). Red also indicates danger (the reason stop lights and signs are red, and that warning labels are often red).

**ORANGE (SECONDARY COLOR):** Orange is a very vibrant and energetic color. In its muted forms it can be associated with the earth and with autumn. Because of its association with the changing seasons, orange can represent change and movement in general. Orange is also strongly associated with creativity.

Because orange is associated with the fruit of the same name, it can be associated with health and vitality. In designs, orange commands attention without being as overpowering as red. It’s often considered more friendly and inviting, and less in-your-face.

**YELLOW (PRIMARY COLOR):** Yellow is often considered the brightest and most energizing of the warm colors. It’s associated with happiness and sunshine. Yellow can also be associated with deceit and cowardice, though (calling someone yellow is calling them a coward).

Yellow is also associated with hope, as can be seen in some countries when yellow ribbons are displayed by families who have loved ones at war. Yellow is also associated with danger, though not as strongly as red.

**Cool Colors**

*Cool colors include green, blue, and purple, are often more subdued than warm colors. They are the colors of night, of water, of nature, and are usually calming, relaxing, and somewhat reserved.*

**GREEN (SECONDARY COLOR):** Green is a very down-to-earth color. It can represent new beginnings and growth. It also signifies renewal and abundance. Alternatively, green can also represent envy or jealousy, and a lack of experience.

Green has many of the same calming attributes that blue has, but it also incorporates some of the energy of yellow. In design, green can have a balancing and harmonizing effect, and is very stable.

**BLUE (PRIMARY COLOR):** Blue is often associated with sadness in the English language. Blue is also used extensively to represent calmness and responsibility. Light blues can be refreshing and friendly. Dark blues are more strong and reliable. Blue is also associated with peace and has spiritual and religious connotations in many cultures and traditions (for example, the Virgin Mary is generally depicted wearing blue robes).

**PURPLE (SECONDARY COLOR):** In ancient times, the dyes used for creating purple hues were extracted from snails and were very expensive, so only royals and the very wealthy could afford them.

Purple is a combination of red and blue and takes on some attributes of both. It’s associated with creativity and imagination, too.

**Neutrals**

*Neutral colors often serve as the backdrop in design. They’re commonly combined with brighter accent colors. But they can also be used on their own in designs, and can create very sophisticated layouts. The meanings and impressions of neutral colors are much more affected by the colors that surround them than are warm and cool colors.*

**Black:** Black is the strongest of the neutral colors. On the positive side, it’s commonly associated with power, elegance, and formality. On the negative side, it can be associated with evil, death, and mystery. Black is the traditional color of mourning in many Western countries. It’s also associated with rebellion in some cultures, and is associated with Halloween and the occult. Black, when used as more than an accent or for text, is commonly used in edgier designs, as well as in very elegant designs. It can be either conservative or modern, traditional or unconventional, depending on the colors it’s combined with.

**WHITE:** White is at the opposite end of the spectrum from black, but like black, it can work well with just about any other color. White is often associated with purity, cleanliness, and virtue. In the West, white is commonly worn by brides on their wedding day. It’s also associated with the healthcare industry, especially with doctors, nurses and dentists. White is associated with goodness, and angels are often depicted in white.

**GRAY:** Gray is a neutral color, generally considered on the cool end of the color spectrum. It can sometimes be considered moody or depressing. Light grays can be used in place of white in some designs, and dark grays can be used in place of black. Gray is generally conservative and formal, but can also be modern. It is sometimes considered a color of mourning.

**BROWN:** Brown is associated with the earth, wood, and stone. It’s a completely natural color and a warm neutral. Brown can be associated with dependability and reliability, with steadfastness, and with earthiness. It can also be considered dull. In design, brown is commonly used as a background color. It’s also seen in wood textures and sometimes in stone textures.

**BEIGE AND TAN:** Beige is somewhat unique in the color spectrum, as it can take on cool or warm tones depending on the colors surrounding it. It has the warmth of brown and the coolness of white, and, like brown, is sometimes seen as dull. It’s a conservative color in most instances, and is usually reserved for backgrounds. It can also symbolize piety.

**CREAM AND IVORY:** Ivory and cream are sophisticated colors, with some of the warmth of brown and a lot of the coolness of white. They’re generally quiet, and can often evoke a sense of history. Ivory is a calm color, with some of the pureness associated with white, though it’s a bit warmer. In design, ivory can lend a sense of elegance and calm to a site.