

# **Color Psychology:** **Top Design Color Palettes**

Have you ever wondered why certain color palettes are used in design projects more than others? Or why some colors are more frequently featured in advertising and marketing? Two words: color psychology.

While many of us have an inherent understanding of what particular colors 'mean' – such as the color blue being associated with calm and serenity, or the color red representing romance or danger – the question remains, why?

Color psychology is the art of manipulating the mind by using certain colors to evoke specific emotions, thoughts or feelings. Colors may affect each of us differently depending on our personal experiences or current moods, but color psychology can be a helpful guideline on how different colors can enable you to create visuals that connect with people in a specific way.

Color psychology is the study of how color impacts the way we perceive the world around us. Colors can have a powerful effect on our emotions, as well as consumer behavior. Essentially, color psychology is a framework for understanding how we interact with different colors and why.

Having a solid understanding of color psychology can make integrating a certain color palette into your design, marketing, branding, or creative projects a deliberate decision to elicit an intentional emotional response, rather than simply a personal preference or fleeting fad.

If you want to integrate color psychology into your designs, here are the top colors for 2021 and the psychological theory behind why and how they work.



## **Red**

One of the most evocative colors of the rainbow, red is the color of emotional intensity. Red's associations with passion, romance, and danger, and its ability to catch the eye is the reason why it's often used in signage, branding, and even to warn people of impending risk or peril.

Red has been shown to reduce analytical thinking and speed up and intensify our reactions. In fact, athletes up against opponents wearing red are more likely to lose, and, if exposed to red just beforehand, students tend to perform worse on tests. But, it's not all doom and gloom...

Red is also associated with excitement, passion, impulsiveness, and spontaneity. This is why the color red is fantastic for sales, limited-time offers, or countdowns – it gets the blood pumping and inspires action.

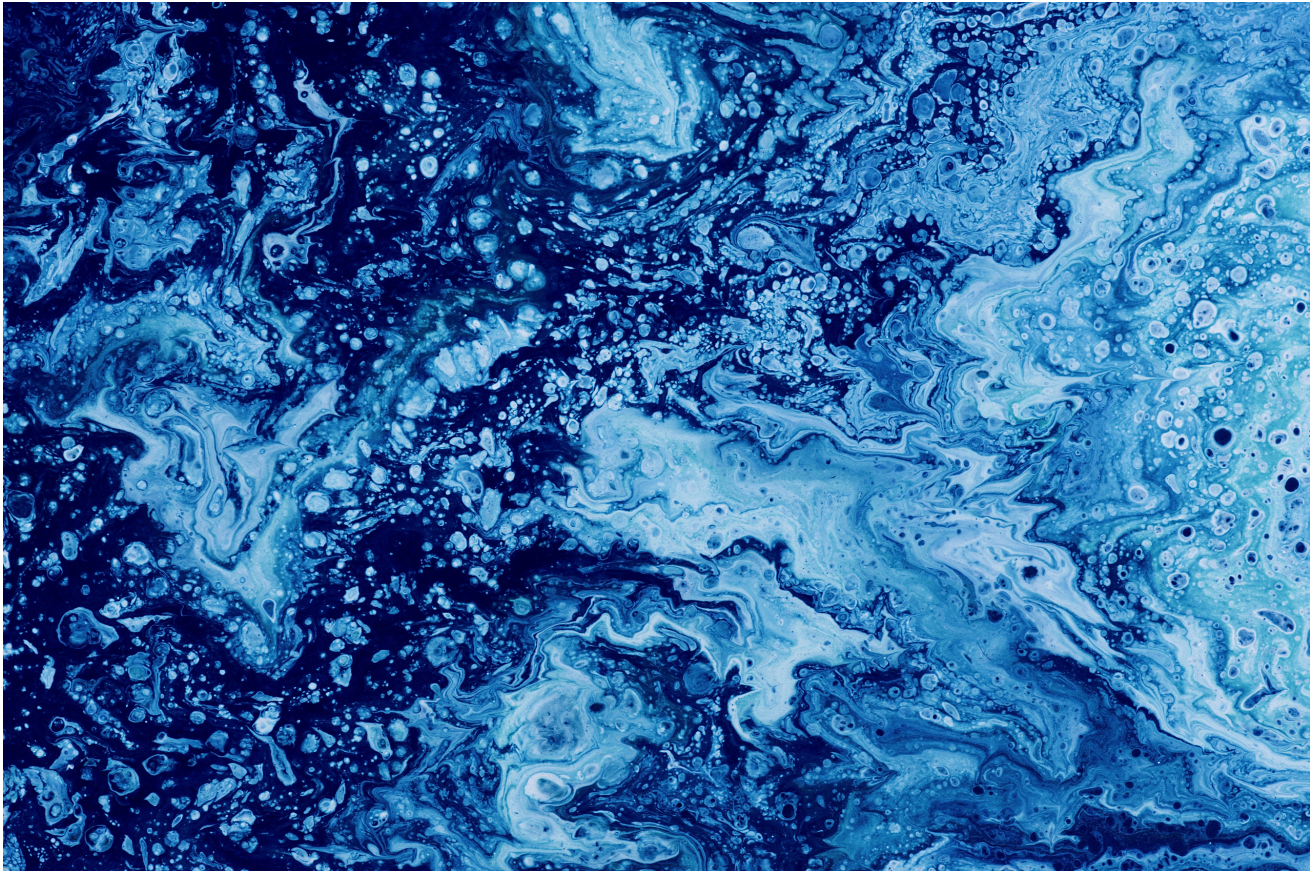
The super stimulating color's effect on the psyche is not subtle, so if you're wanting to integrate it into your designs or branding, it's important to be thoughtful and wary about how you use it. For example, it features just on the sole of Christian Louboutin pumps and is contrasted with white in Coca-Cola branding.

### **Positive associations:**

- Power
- Passion
- Energy
- Fearlessness
- Strength
- Excitement

### **Negative associations:**

- Anger
- Danger
- Warning
- Defiance
- Aggression
- Pain



## **Blue**

On the flipside, blue is the color of calm and serenity. According to color studies, blue is the most common favorite color among the world's population. It's the color of the sky, the ocean and is associated with clarity and communication. In fact, people have been found to be more productive, serene, and focused when working in a blue room.

Encapsulating shades from bright Azure to Classic Blue to deep Navy, blue is considered non-threatening, conservative, and traditional. Many successful brands such as Facebook and American Express have chosen blue to be the cornerstone of their visual identity, as it's seen as a sign of stability and reliability. While also linked to sadness and emotional coldness, overall, blue is a restful and relaxing color.

### **Positive associations:**

- Trust
- Loyalty
- Dependability

- Logic
- Serenity
- Security

### **Negative associations:**

- Coldness
- Aloofness
- Emotionless
- Unfriendliness
- Uncaring
- Unappetizing



### **Yellow**

One of Pantone's Colors of the Year for 2021, yellow is a happy and hopeful hue. The color of sunflowers, citrus fruits and sunlight, it sparks hope, creativity, and new ideas. Being the lightest color on the spectrum, yellow is uplifting and illuminating and evokes feelings of exuberance and fun.

However, too much yellow can also trigger anger, frustration, and anxiety. Due to the fact that it has one of the longest wavelengths on the spectrum, it's one of the hardest colors to take in. In fact, some studies have proven that a little yellow is enough to make a baby cry. It's also a color associated with cowardice, irrationality, and weakness.

But, when utilized correctly, yellow is the perfect color for improving mood and lifting self-esteem. As the most visible color, it's both stimulating and attention-grabbing – which is why traffic signs, advertisements, legal pads, and warning labels take advantage of its eye-catching nature, as well as fast-food chains such as McDonald's, Denny's, and Subway.

### **Positive associations:**

- Optimism
- Warmth
- Happiness
- Creativity
- Intellect
- Extraversion

### **Negative associations:**

- Irrationality
- Fear
- Caution
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Cowardice



## **Green**

Sitting comfortably in the middle of the spectrum, green is the color of balance. Representing nature, health and freshness, like blue, green is considered to be calming and restful.

The color of trees and nature, green is naturally very reassuring and grounding. It is also the easiest color on our eyes because it requires no adjustment when it hits the retina. In fact, green can actually improve vision and is used in night vision because our eyes can discern the most shades of it.

But, green also has a negative side. While simultaneously being a symbol of health and abundance, it is also associated with sickness, envy, and jealousy.

Green is often used in branding for its calming and reassuring effect: think Whole Foods, Land Rover, and Starbucks. It's also featured in decor, for example, performers wait in a "green room" to help them relax before a performance, and green product labels often suggest something natural, healthy or organic.

## Positive associations:

- Health
- Hope
- Freshness
- Nature
- Growth
- Prosperity

## Negative associations:

- Boredom
- Stagnation
- Envy
- Blandness
- Enervation
- Sickness



## Pink

A color associated with love and romance, pink typically represents traditionally feminine attributes such as softness, kindness, nurturance, and

compassion. Encapsulating everything from magenta to Living Coral, pink is thought to have a strong emotional effect on the psyche.

As well as emotional depth and compassion, pink is associated with support. It's a color of transformation and creativity, encouraging the birth of new thoughts and ideas.

While usually an inoffensive color, pink has also been associated with negative characteristics such as immaturity, shallowness, passiveness, flippancy, and impulsiveness.

For branding, pink is particularly on-trend right now. Millennial Pink – as it was first labeled in mid-2016 – has been used everywhere from Instagram posts and Tumblr pages to branding and catwalks, and Pastel Pink can give any design a young, fresh feel.

### **Positive associations:**

- Imaginative
- Passion
- Feminine
- Creative
- Innovation
- Balance
- Trendy

### **Negative associations:**

- Flippancy
- Childish
- Raw
- Impulsive
- Eccentric
- Ephemeral