# **Using Color in Graphic Design**

## **What Is Graphic Design?**

**Graphic design**, sometimes also called visual communication, is the art and skill of combining words and pictures to convey ideas and experiences. Graphic design is also important in branding, the creation of logos, and other effective connections between consumers and trusted products so we'll continue buying those products.

## **Using Color in Graphic Design**

Color conveys messages and can create a sense of emotion or mood. The mood can vary, depending on different color combinations. But how do designers know what to use?

**Color theory**, the understanding of how colors relate to one another and how we see them. As a result, colors have lots of psychology associated with them. Graphic designers learn about color theory, and they use it in their work.

**Color wheel**, which shows the colors in relation to each other. The color wheel usually includes 12 hues.

**Hue** is a basic color without it being darkened or lightened. The hues include the primary colors of red, blue, and yellow; the secondary colors of orange, green, and purple (made by mixing the primary colors); and the tertiary colors, made by mixing primary and secondary colors. When these colors are used in combinations, different effects can be created.

Graphic designers also need to know how to use and balance color combinations. Often, designs will only include two or three colors, because too many can create confusion and muddy a message. Color also has different meanings in different cultures, so designers need to be aware of where their work will be seen. The key is understanding the message to be conveyed and choosing the colors that will best achieve it.

## **Colors and Meanings**

While everyone reacts to color in different ways, colors tend to have general characteristics that connect them to ideas and traits. Warm colors, like red, yellow, and orange, are seen to be active, while cool colors, like green and blue, are viewed as calm and more passive. Graphic designers know these characteristics and use them in their work. Let's explore a few colors and potential messages.

* **Red** is a powerful color that can signal passion and love. It's effective for accents and images that convey vigor and power.
* **Yellow** stands for warmth and hope. It's cheerful when used sparingly but can become overwhelming.
* **Orange**, the combination of red and yellow, attracts attention but is not as overpowering as red. It suggests vitality, creativity, and determination. Think of the orange Home Depot logo. By buying what you need at Home Depot, you have the determination and energy to finish your home improvement project. The color selection in this logo isn't an accident.
* **Green** conveys growth, nature, and relaxation. It's an easy color on the eyes and can balance and harmonize when used in designs. It can also stand for money and protection. It's a color you'll often see in bank logos.
* **Blue** is one of the most-used colors in graphic design. It can stand for integrity, trustworthiness, and responsibility. Think of signage for companies like American Express and *The Weather Channel*. In these cases, blue sends messages of trust and confidence.