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## **ISO/IEC JTC 1 SWG-ARM N36**

### **ISO/IEC JTC 1 SWG on Archival and Retrieval Mechanisms**

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**TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEES  
TO TECHNICAL COMMITTEES AND SUBCOMMITTEES**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Guidelines on the use of colour in IEC documents**

Documents published by the IEC fall into one of two categories:

1. documents requiring only black and white;
2. documents requiring the use of colour.

NOTE For the purposes of IEC documents, most colour photographs can also be rendered in black and white without loss of essential information.

**1. Documents requiring only black and white**

For most documents produced by the IEC, the use of black and white is sufficient – see Annex A. If shading is necessary in figures, tables or text, grey scales shall be carefully chosen so as to be clearly distinguishable from each other. Furthermore, cross-hatching to produce greyscale effect should be avoided as this may cause compatibility problems between software. See Annex B for guidance on the choice of greyscale levels.

For this category of documents, no special indication is given on the cover page or in the text.

**2. Documents requiring the use of colour**

Colours in figures, tables or text shall only be used where they facilitate use of the document.

In choosing the colours, due consideration shall be given to the fact that users of IEC documents print them using varying qualities and types of printers. Therefore, the number of colours used shall be kept to a minimum; they shall be chosen so as to be clearly distinguishable from each other. Furthermore, cross-hatching to produce lighter effects should be avoided – whole colours are preferred. See Annex B for guidance on the choice of colours.

On publication of this category of documents:

- the use of colour will be indicated on the cover page by the 'colour inside' logo (see Annex C)
- the following note will be included at the end of the foreword.

**IMPORTANT – The 'colour inside' logo on the cover page of this document indicates that it contains colours which are considered to be useful for the correct understanding of its contents. Users should therefore print this document using a colour printer.**

In some exceptional cases, a document contains colours the precise reproduction of which is essential to its understanding. In such case, the TC/SCs are invited to consult the IEC CO and to provide technical details.

All documents published from 2009-07-24 will adopt this system.

Yours faithfully,

**A. AMIT**  
**General Secretary**

mjc

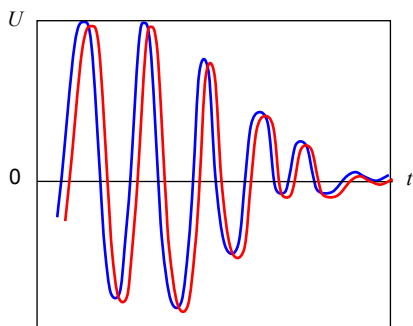


## Annex A

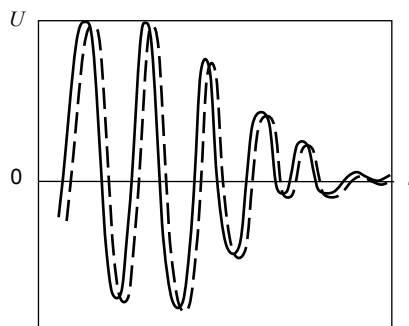
### Examples of unnecessary use of colour in documents

#### Example 1 – Graphs containing several curves

In Figure A.1, colour lines are used to distinguish between the two curves – the use of colour is not necessary, as Figure A.2 shows that the same information can be illustrated using different line types. Furthermore, should the document containing Figure A.1 be printed using a black and white printer, the two curves are impossible to tell apart.



**Figure A.1 – Use of colour lines to distinguish separate curves in a graph**



**Figure A.2 – The same information can be expressed in black and white using different line types**

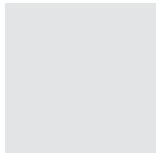


#### Example 2 – Use of colour in the text and tables

It is strongly recommended to follow the IEC template which uses black text and table margins, when formatting text in a document in order to ensure maximum readability. Use of colour in the text, highlighting, and use of colour shading in tables often make documents difficult to read or confusing for the user.

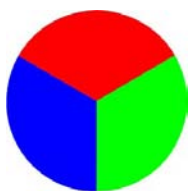

## Annex B

### Recommended use of grey scale and colour

**Recommended use of grey scale.** As used in the IEC Graphic Charter – red, green and blue values according to the RGB colour scheme.

	Black 15%  Red 227 Green 228 Blue 229
	Black 50%  Red 156 Green 157 Blue 159
	Black 80%  Red 88 Green 88 Blue 90

**Recommended use of colours.** Red, green and blue values according to the RGB colour scheme (primary and secondary colours).

Primary colours			
	Red	Green	Blue
	Red 255	Red 0	Red 0
	Green 0	Green 255	Green 0
	Blue 0	Blue 0	Blue 255
Secondary colours			
	Yellow	Cyan	Magenta
	Red 255	Red 0	Red 255
	Green 255	Green 255	Green 0
	Blue 0	Blue 255	Blue 255

When choosing to use secondary colours, consider selecting complementary colours. Complementary colours are any two colours which are directly opposite each other in the colour wheel, such as red and cyan or green and magenta. These opposing colours will create maximum contrast and maximum legibility in your document, both in electronic and in printed format.

## Annex C

Example of a cover of an IEC document bearing the 'colour inside' logo

