Review Guide: Web Design Basics

Let's review some of the key ideas introduced in this unit. You can also download all this content for future reference by clicking on the attached file.

Key Definitions

- **Glyph**: A single symbol of a given typeface. Individual letters, numbers, and punctuation are the most commonly used glyphs.

- **Typeface**: An entire family of glyphs defined by shared visual characteristics, e.g., Helvetica.

- **Font**: A specific set of characters of a given typeface, e.g., 12pt Helvetica Bold.

- **Serif**: A bracket-like extension from a stroke of a glyph that is usually not part of its essential structure. Common serif typefaces used in web design: Hoefler Text, Garamond, Times New Roman, and Perpetua.

- **Sans Serif**: Typefaces lacking serifs. Colloquially shortened to _sans—_French for "without." Common sans serif typefaces used in web design: Helvetica, Futura, Gill Sans, and Arial.

- **Point**: Common size measure of a typeface from the apex of the tallest ascender, e.g., the top of a lowercase "f," to the base of the longest descender, e.g., the lowest point of a lowercase "y."

- **Font Stack**: A prioritized listing of typefaces based upon a shared classification, as a means to standardize viewing experiences across browsers.

- **X-height**: The measure from the top of the lowercase "x" of a given typeface to the baseline, the optical plane on which a line of type rests.

- **Baseline**: The optical plane on which a line of type rests.

- **Cap Height**: The height of a capital letter above the baseline.

- **Header**: Often referred to as headlines and subheads. These are usually a focal point on a page and are visually reinforced by size and whitespace. In HTML, features of this type are normally created with the `h1` through `h6` elements.

- **Body**: Also referred to as "body copy" and not to be confused with the HTML `body` element, this term refers to visually smaller, long-form paragraph text. In HTML, features of this type are normally created

with the `p` element.

- **Line Length**: Frequently measured in the number of characters per line.

- **W3C**: An international consortium focused on developing web standards.

- **Type Foundry**: A business that builds and sells typefaces.

- **EM (CSS)**: The value of this element ties an element's size relative to a default value.

- **Ligatures**: Common glyph pairs joined as a single unit.

- **Alternates**: Additional versions of standard characters such as swashes.

- **Small Caps**: Capitals designed specifically to pair with lowercase letters.

- **Rivers**: An excess of vertical negative space that runs through blocks of copy and interferes with readability.

- **En Dash**: Used to indicate a range of values, e.g., "3–4 times per week."

- **Em Dash**: Used to indicate a break in thought, e.g., "if you have questions regarding grammatical style—and the corresponding typographic design conventions—a resource will be provided."

- **Smart Quotes**: AKA typographer's quotes. These are used for apostrophes and quotation marks. Smart quotes look like this: (" ").

- **Prime Marks**: Used for measurement: (' ").

Web-Based Type: Readability And Legibility

Legibility and readability of type are two factors that mediate text-based communication.

- **Legibility**: the degree to which the details of a typeface can be discerned, rooted in the physical characteristics of the typeface itself. Poor legibility example: small, heavily bitmapped text.

- **Readability**: the degree to which text can be read and ultimately understood, a function of the arrangement of text. Poor readability example: a paragraph of otherwise legible text set with too little space between lines.

Typographic Pairings

Let's review a few key ideas around pairing typefaces:

I. Typeface selection is largely based upon its function.

- Outline the text-based needs of the page and, ultimately, the site.

- Select your typefaces accordingly.

II. Initial selection of family pairs frequently begins with one sans and one serif.

- This will give the designer/coder a high degree of contrast between type—contrast between these classifications is generally greater than between two sans or two serif faces.

III. Select typefaces with ample degrees of weight.

- Common practice dictates leaving at least one degree between weights of a typeface when creating visual contrast.

Typographic Sins and Virtues

Use only a single space following periods or any other punctuation at the end of a sentence.

The usage of a double space between sentences is a relic of the days when typewriter usage was the norm. More importantly, usage of the double space throughout a page creates "rivers," an excess of vertical negative space that runs through blocks of copy and interferes with readability.

Understand the functional and physical differences between hyphens (-), en dashes (–), and em dashes (—).

An intro to rules of usage: hyphens join compound words, e.g., "a blue-green sea;" en-dashes are used to indicate a range of values, e.g., "3–4 times per week;" and em dashes indicate a break in thought, e.g., "if you have questions regarding grammatical style—and the corresponding typographic design conventions—a resource will be provided."

Use typographer's quotes (" "), also know as "smart quotes" for apostrophes and quotation marks; use prime marks (″) for measurement.

Typographer's quotes — Matthew Carter remarked, "type is a beautiful group of letters, not a group of beautiful letters."

Prime marks — Stefan Sagmeister, the Johnny Depp of the design world, is 6*′5″* tall.
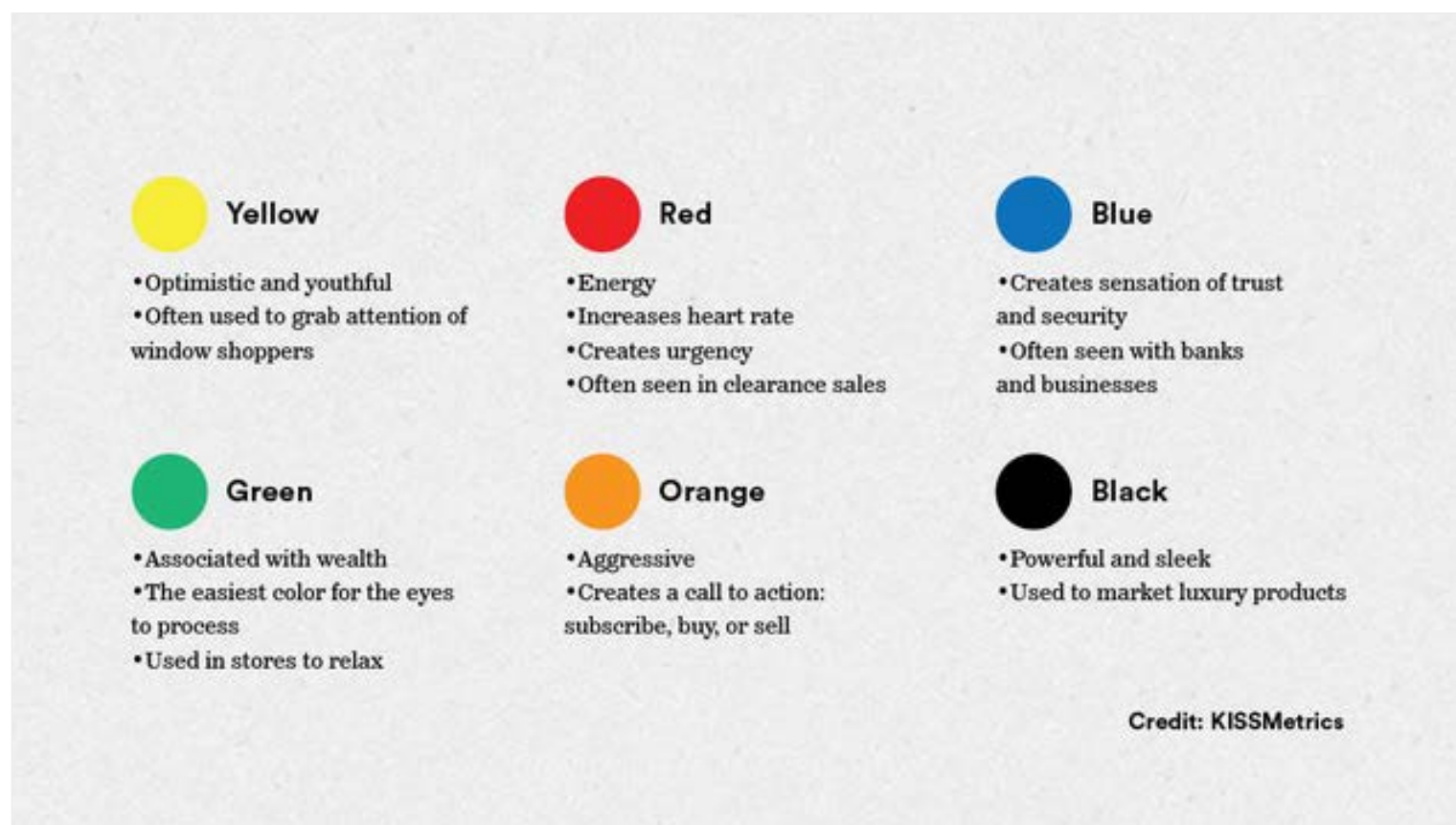
Typography and Color

The use of color on the web can create, entice, or repel users. It can establish a focal point or create distraction, and it can assist in way-finding or add confusion for the user.

Color and Navigation:

Color is often applied to text as a significant navigational aid. For example, moving the pointer over navigational text can trigger a "hover state," changing the appearance of text and providing a cue to the user.

Color Selection — Emotional:

Color is used to evoke an emotional response by drawing upon familiar associations. For example, red hues are evocative of energetic states and can imply activity. Blue hues, the color of the skies and oceans, can inspire feelings of serenity and security.

Yellow
- Optimistic and youthful
- Often used to grab attention of window shoppers

Red
- Energy
- Increases heart rate
- Creates urgency
- Often seen in clearance sales

Blue
- Creates sensation of trust and security
- Often seen with banks and businesses

Green
- Associated with wealth
- The easiest color for the eyes to process
- Used in stores to relax

Orange
- Aggressive
- Creates a call to action: subscribe, buy, or sell

Black
- Powerful and sleek
- Used to market luxury products

Credit: KISSMetrics
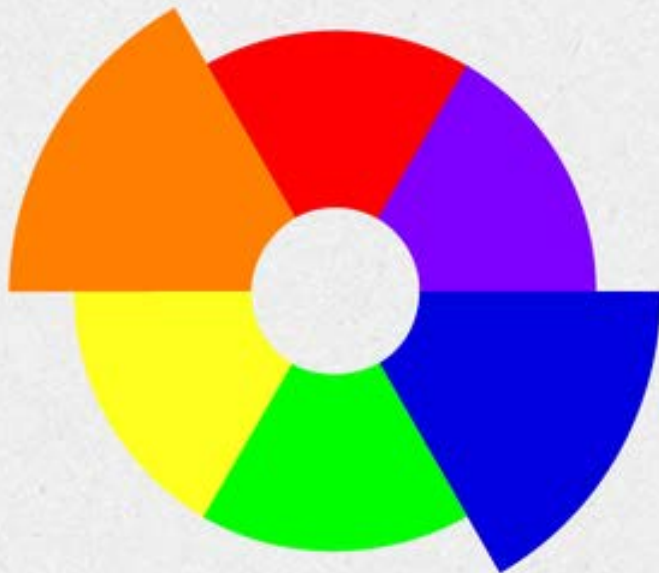
Color Selection — Technical:

Analogous Colors: Colors that are adjacent along the color wheel, e.g., green, yellow, and orange.
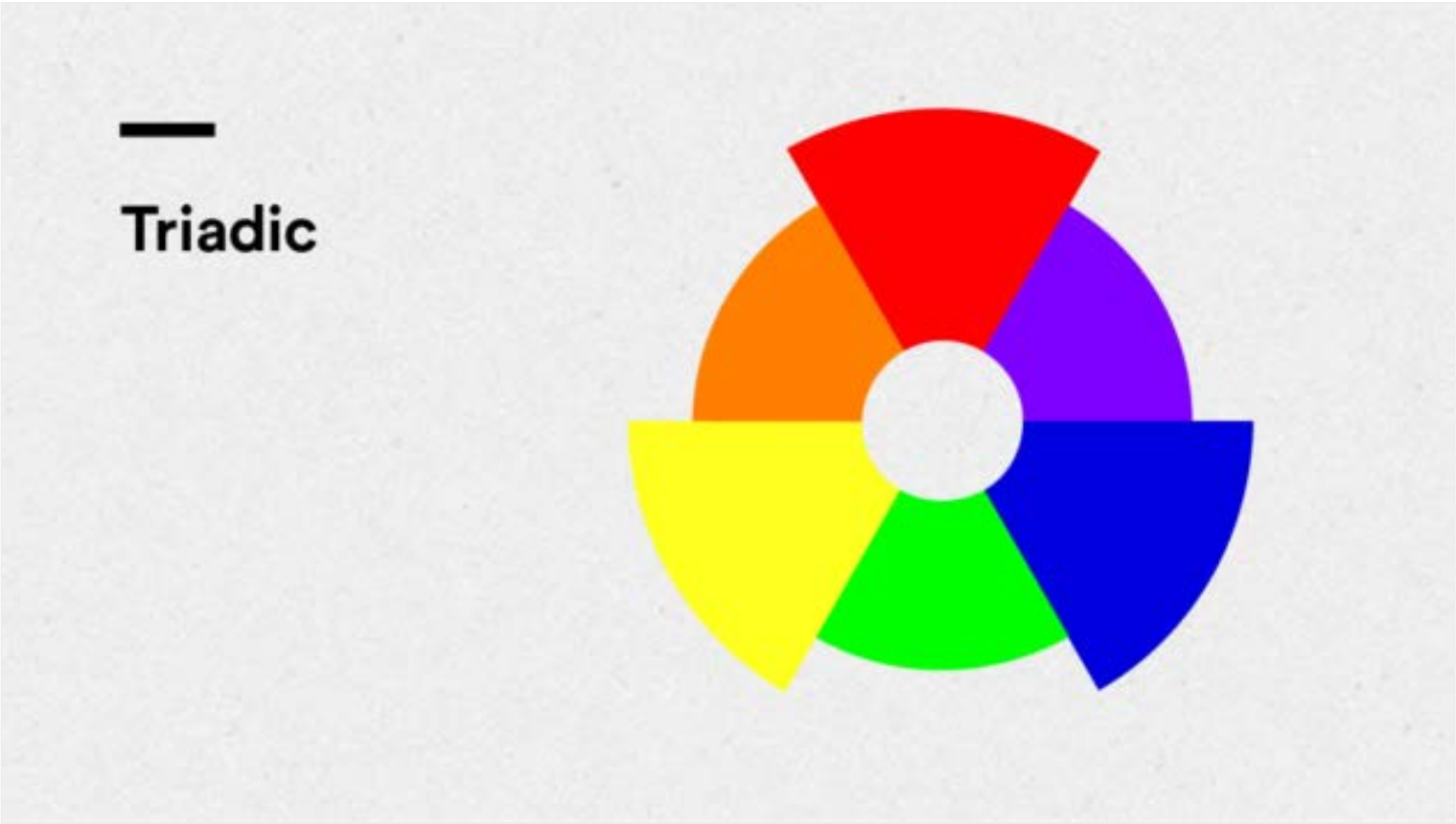
Analogous

Complementary Colors: Colors that are opposite one another on the color wheel, e.g., blue and orange.
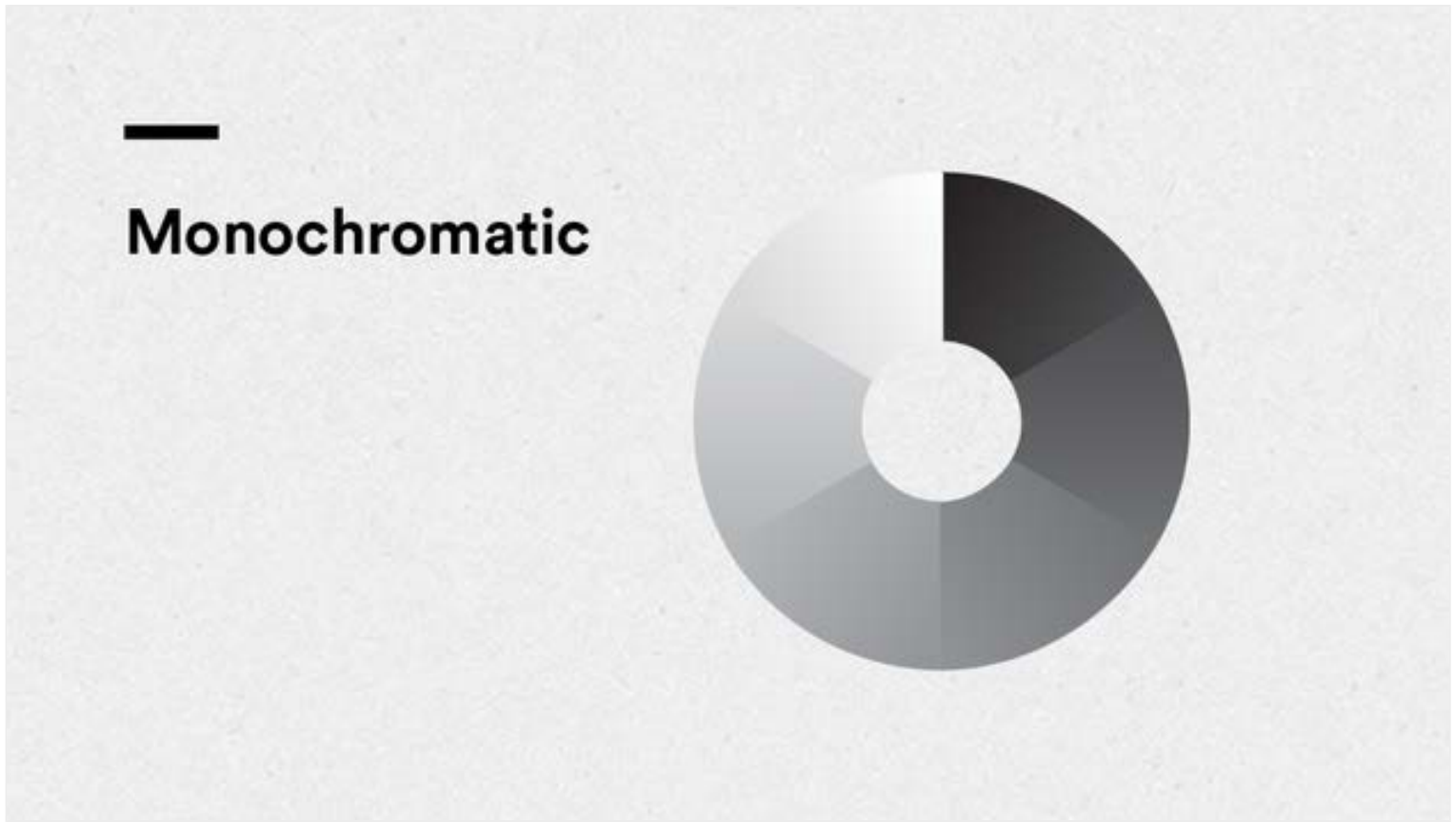

Complementary

Triadic Colors: Colors that are equally spaced apart along the color wheel. The primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—are an example of triadic colors.
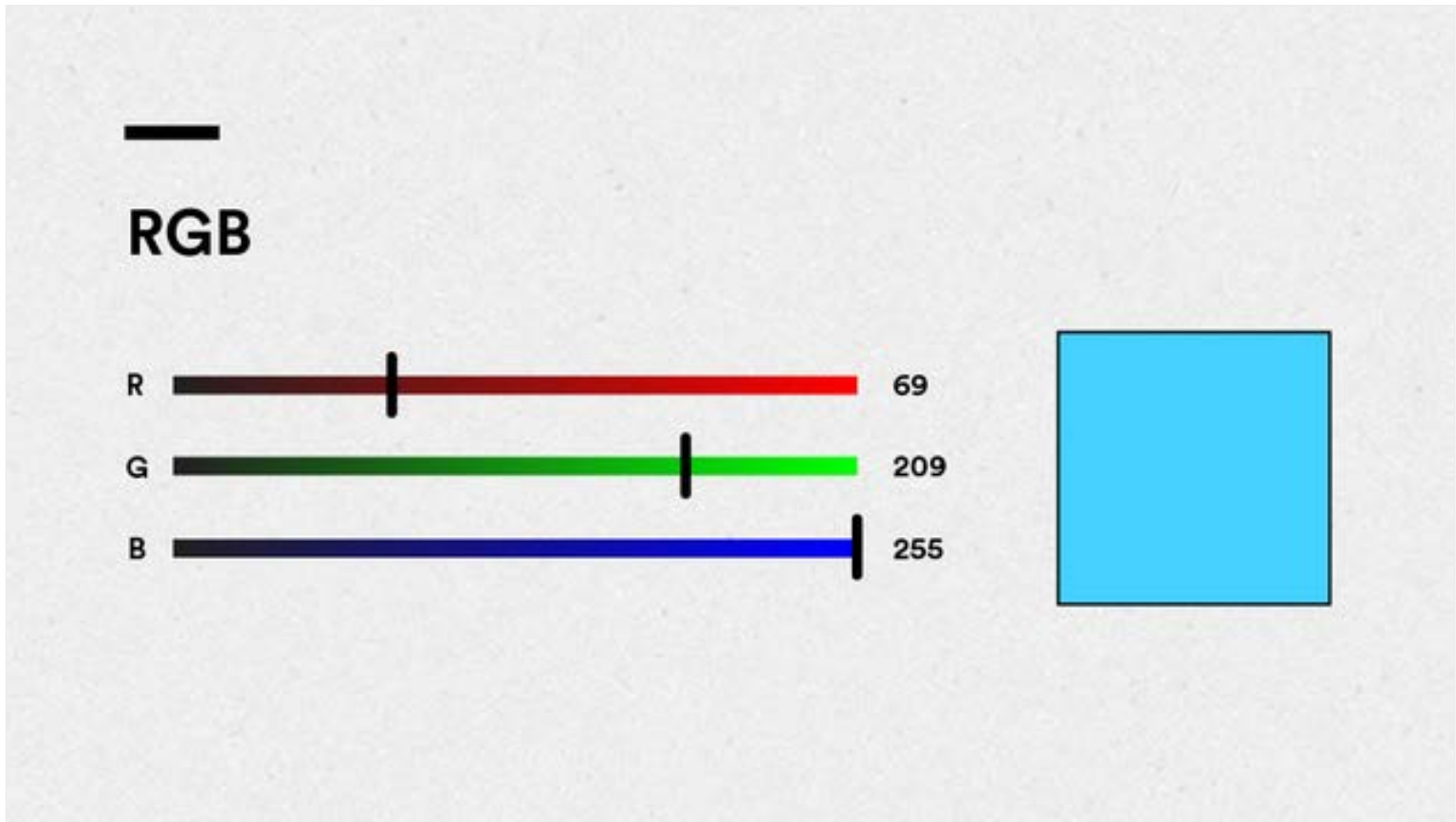

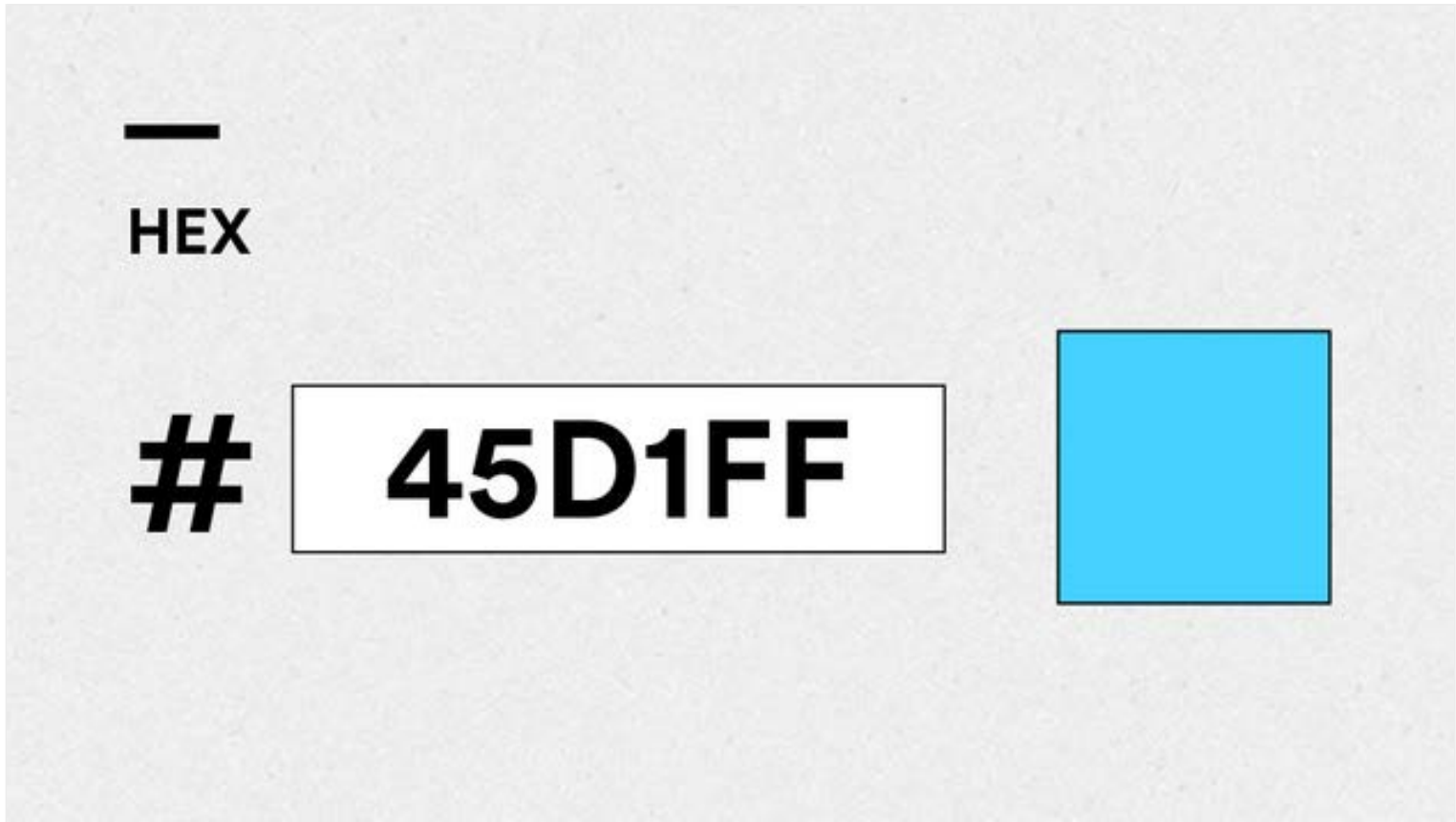*Monochromatic Colors:* A color scheme built upon a single hue, i.e., tints and shades of one color.

Color Models — RGB vs. Hex:

RGB: A model that expresses the additive color process as values of red, green, and blue ranging from 0 to 255.

RGB

R	69
G	209
B	255

HEX: Color on the web, represented by its hexadecimal value..

HEX

45D1FF

Questions to Review With Your Mentor

What do I need to know in order to become conversant with the basics of typography?

Where can I find inspirational sites that effectively use color?

What are good resources I can reference for additional readability and accessibility insights?

Are there standard typographic conventions I should adhere to?

What are the color models that are most relevant to the web designer/coder?

Further Reading

Looking for more help with typography and color? Here are a few places you can check out:

A further discussion of typographic basics can found at FontShop, a highly-regarded type design company:
http://www.fontshop.com/education/

Strong typographical resource site:
http://ilovetypography.com/2008/03/21/extreme-type-terminology/

Articles such as *How People Read on the Web: The Eyetracking Evidence* demonstrate the importance of readability, layout, and hierarchy in web design:
http://www.nngroup.com/reports/how-people-read-web-eyetracking-evidence/

Hoefler & Co. is a highly regarded type foundry, a company that designs and distributes typefaces, and offers a *Combing Fonts* page on their site that is both informative and visually inspiring:
http://www.typography.com/techniques/index.php

For more on advanced typesetting concepts see *Type on Screen: A Critical Guide for Designers, Writers, Developers, and Students* by Ellen Lupton, a designer and educator well known for her writings on typography and design:
http://www.papress.com/html/book.details.page.tpl?isbn=9781616891701

Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* is an English writing and style reference frequently referred to by writers, readers, and designers alike:
http://www.amazon.com/Elements-Style-Illustrated-William-Strunk/dp/0143112724/ref=sr11?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1296660224&sr=1-1

Companies such as the Color Marketing Group monitor trends and forecast colors:
http://www.colormarketing.org

Maintain your awareness of current design trends and bolster your technological prowess by continuously learning through sites such as *A List Apart* and *Communication Arts*:

- http://alistapart.com/topic/typography-web-fonts

- http://www.commarts.com

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DOWNLOADS

Summary