

The NYU Color Palette

Matthew Leingang*

v0.8.1, Released 2022/08/02

Abstract

We provide color names for the NYU visual identity.

1 Our Color Palette

This color palette is from the web page “NYU Colors” [1] from the NYU Brand Kit. A lot of this text is, too.

NYU Violet: NYU Violet is our principal brand color. It should be used in every communication and design. Violet is a distinctive color that has long been associated with the nonconformist who pushes boundaries to leave their mark on the world.

Ultra Violet: An electrified version of NYU Violet, this color adds excitement to our communications. Ultra Violet should be used thoughtfully and sparingly to add impact or interest, emphasize important information, increase contrast, or create rhythm within your design.

Black: A bold color, black strikes the perfect balance between sophistication and edginess when used alongside NYU Violet.

2 Color Values

2.1 Primary Colors

See Figure 1.

2.2 Secondary Colors

See Figure 2

2.3 Neutral Colors

See Figure 3.

*leingang@nyu.edu



Figure 1: NYU's primary colors

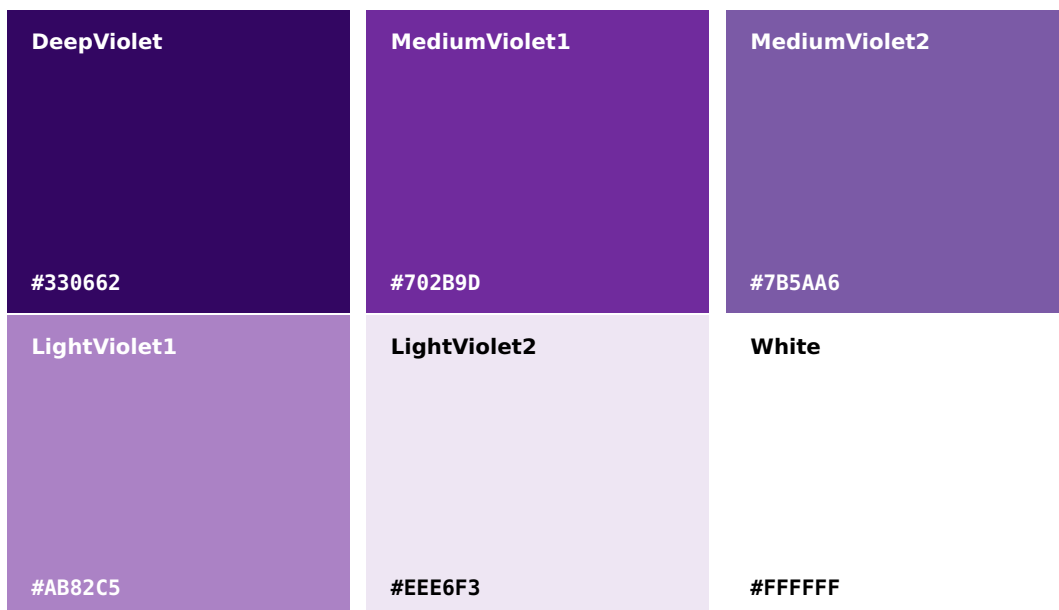


Figure 2: NYU's secondary colors. White is actually a neutral color, but it's included in this table for balance.



Figure 3: NYU's neutral colors

2.4 Accent Colors

Accent colors can be used for emphasis and contrast within your design. They can highlight important elements of your communication such as infographics, pull quotes, or even a single word in a title.

This selection of colors gives you the option to add variety to your content while working alongside NYU's primary palette. Accent colors are not required, but if you want to use one, choose only one and use it sparingly. See Figure 4.

Note that if these color names are already used, this package will overwrite them. That is expected behavior, though. The colors are chosen for their harmony with the primary colors, so another shade of yellow or blue should not be used anyway.

3 Using Color

3.1 Palette Ratios

The color palettes here are suggestions of how to flex the NYU colors to best suit the tone of your communication. Not every color in each palette has to be used, but NYU Violet should be present in every version of the palette to further emphasize the NYU brand.

Our visual tone ranges from **contemporary to traditional** and **bold to subtle**.

- **Traditional** visuals often use serif fonts, more detailed graphics, and quieter photography.



Figure 4: Accent colors

- **Contemporary** visuals often use sans serif fonts, geometric graphics, and dynamic photography.
- **Subtle** visuals include softer colors, toned down graphics, and less-busy photography.
- **Bold** visuals are louder, more vibrant, and compositionally energetic.

We created a visual tone spectrum with these tones representing the four quadrants. You can use this tone spectrum to help you convey a visual tone that complements your verbal tone. For more detailed descriptions, refer to the Visual Tone Spectrum web page.

These breakdowns are not exact percentages, but they provide an idea of relative use. For example, a traditional and subtle design could incorporate more NYU Violet than a contemporary and subtle design, and a contemporary and bold design could incorporate more black than a contemporary and subtle design.

Note: With the exception of headlines, you should set typography primarily in black or dark gray. In digital applications, body text should be set to #333333 or #404040 to reduce the eye strain caused by very high contrast.

3.1.1 Contemporary/Bold

The contemporary/bold palette sits in the visual tone spectrum grid's top-right quadrant. This tone captures the excitement and energy of urban life and NYU's innovative culture. It's a celebration of creative minds in all fields coming together to inspire one another, explore possibilities, and change the world. This tone is more informal, embracing some of the rougher edges and creativity of the city. It resonates most with prospective and current students, and alumni.

A beamer slideshow for a club event might use a contemporary/bold tone.

The palette consists of NYU Violet, black, Ultra Violet, Light Violet 1, light gray, and white. See Figure 5.

We used ImageMagick to make a histogram of the colors in the images from [1], and rounded the percentages. The shell command was basically

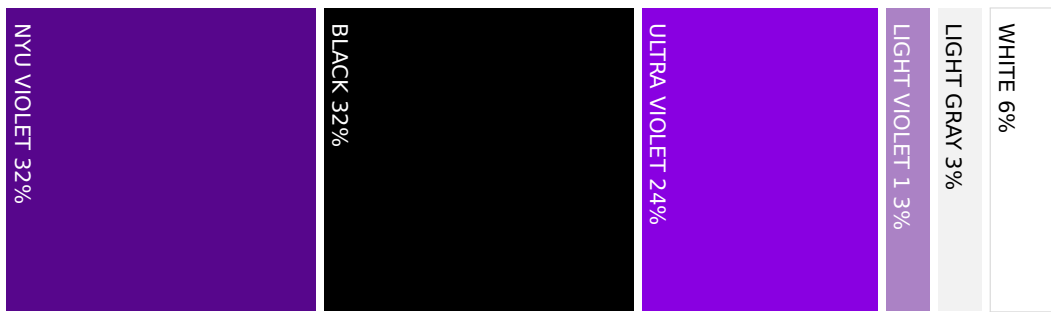


Figure 5: Palette ratios for the contemporary/bold tone quadrant



Figure 6: Example of the contemporary/bold tone quadrant. Notice the predominance of NYU Violet, black, and ultra violet.

```
% convert file.png \
%   -crop "100%x1+230+176" \
%   -fuzz "10%" -define histogram:unique-colors=true \
%   -format %c histogram:info:- \
%   | tr -d ':' | sed -e 's/^_/_/' | tr '_ ' '\t' \
%   > histogram.tsv
%
```

3.1.2 Contemporary/Subtle

The contemporary/subtle palette sits in the visual tone spectrum grid's top-left quadrant. This tone has the same energy and excitement as Contemporary/Bold but is grounded in maturity and confidence. This tone is less about getting your attention,

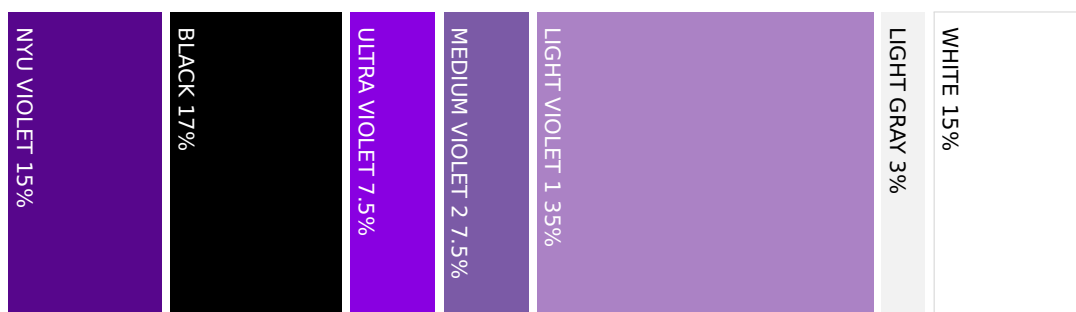


Figure 7: Palette ratios for the contemporary/subtle tone quadrant

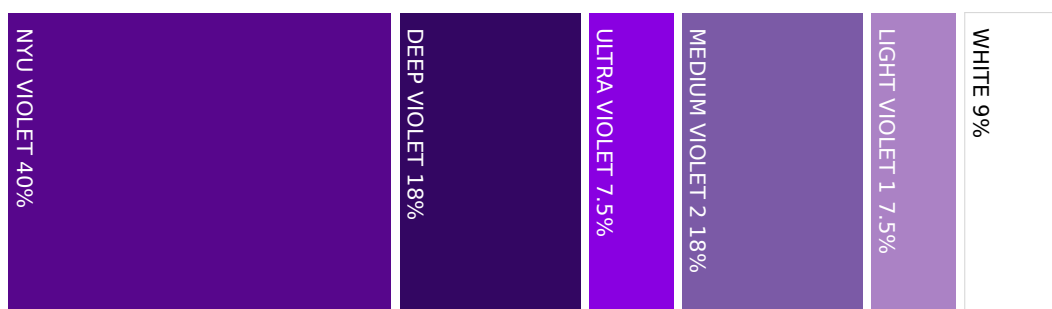


Figure 8: Palette ratios for the traditional/bold tone quadrant

and more about rolling up its sleeves and getting down to the work required to support the academic mission of the University. It resonates more with internal facing audiences like administrators, faculty, and staff.

A beamer slideshow for an undergraduate course might use a contemporary/subtle tone.

The palette consists of NYU Violet, black, Ultra Violet, medium violet 2, light violet 1, light gray, and white. See Figure 7.

3.1.3 Traditional/Bold

The traditional/bold palette sits in the visual tone spectrum grid's bottom-right quadrant. This tone is for matter-of-fact or hard-fact messaging that needs the weight of NYU's gravitas behind it. It conveys a sense of importance, so consider it for quieter, more reserved pieces. It resonates with more mature audiences like retired faculty, graduate students, and external financial partners.

An undergraduate exam might use this tone.

The palette consists of NYU Violet, deep violet, Ultra Violet, medium violet 2, light violet 1, and white. See Figure 8.

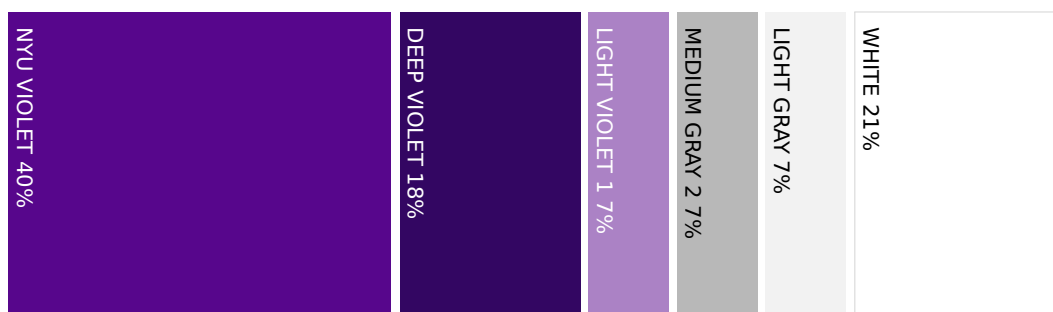


Figure 9: Palette ratios for the traditional/subtle tone quadrant

3.1.4 Traditional/Subtle

The traditional/subtle palette sits in the visual tone spectrum grid's top-left quadrant. This tone is for formal communications that require a personal and accessible touch. Grounded in tradition, it is sophisticated and restrained, and it emphasizes our position as a prestigious academic institution. It resonates with most donors, trustees, and audiences of formal events like commencement.

Class notes in article format might use a traditional/subtle tone. The same could be said about the documentation files for this bundle.

The palette consists of NYU Violet, black, Ultra Violet, medium violet 2, light violet 1, light gray, and white. See Figure 9.

3.2 Palette Ratio Examples

The bus wrap in Figure 6 shows a graphic in the contemporary/bold quadrant. It's not really possible to verify the percentages, but you can see the predominance of the NYU Violet, black, and ultra violet.

4 Accessibility

4.1 Color Contrast

Color contrast is the difference between two colors. If the foreground colors of visual elements are too similar to the background colors, it can be difficult for people to read or understand. Be sure to check the color contrast between your text and background colors to ensure your message is legible.

Text should have a contrast ratio of at least 3-to-1. According to the World Wide Web Consortium, if icons are required to understand content, then they must also have a contrast ratio of at least 3-to-1. There are many resources available, such as the WAVE tool, to check the color contrast in your designs. See Figures 10 and 11.

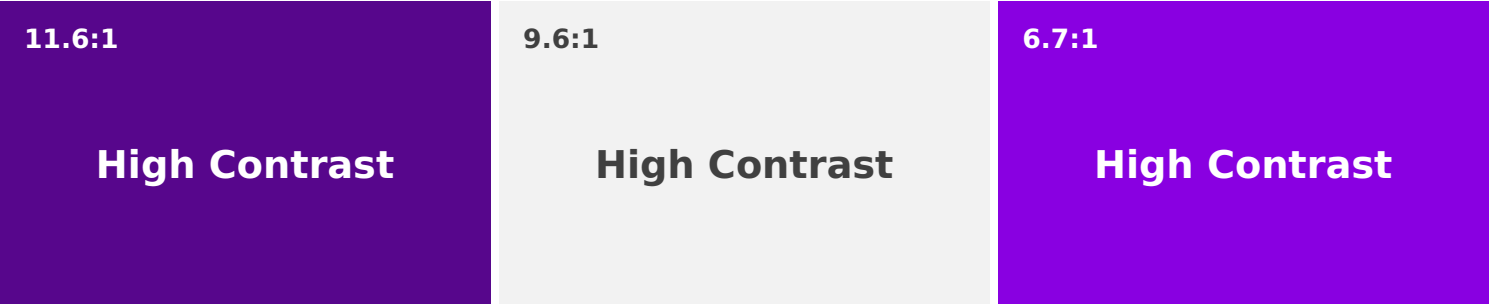


Figure 10: High contrast combinations of the NYU color palette



Figure 11: Low contrast combinations of the NYU color palette. These should be avoided.

References

[1] NYU Marketing and Communications. NYU Colors.