

HOW TO GET COLORS TO PRINT CORRECTLY

Color consistency in print is important.

Having all your marketing and sales materials, packaging, signage, web graphics, etc. look consistent and matching helps build the perception that your brand is professional and top-quality. It also contributes to better recognition, helping customers remember your company.

In addition, having confidence in knowing exactly how your colors will print and how to best design with them will help you avoid misprints or other unwanted results, saving time and money.

Imagine this scenario –

You're working at home and receive a proof to review of materials to be printed. You open the file to take a look – the colors look vibrant and match your logo. You give your approval to print.

Flash forward a week later and you receive your printed materials... only to find that the colors look completely different than they did on your e-mailed proof and don't match your logo at all!

What happened?

There are a few things you can be aware of to help prevent these kinds of color mishaps from occurring on your materials.

Read on to learn about them!

“...having confidence in knowing exactly how your colors will print and how to best design with them will help you avoid misprints...”



CHOOSE YOUR COLORS UPFRONT

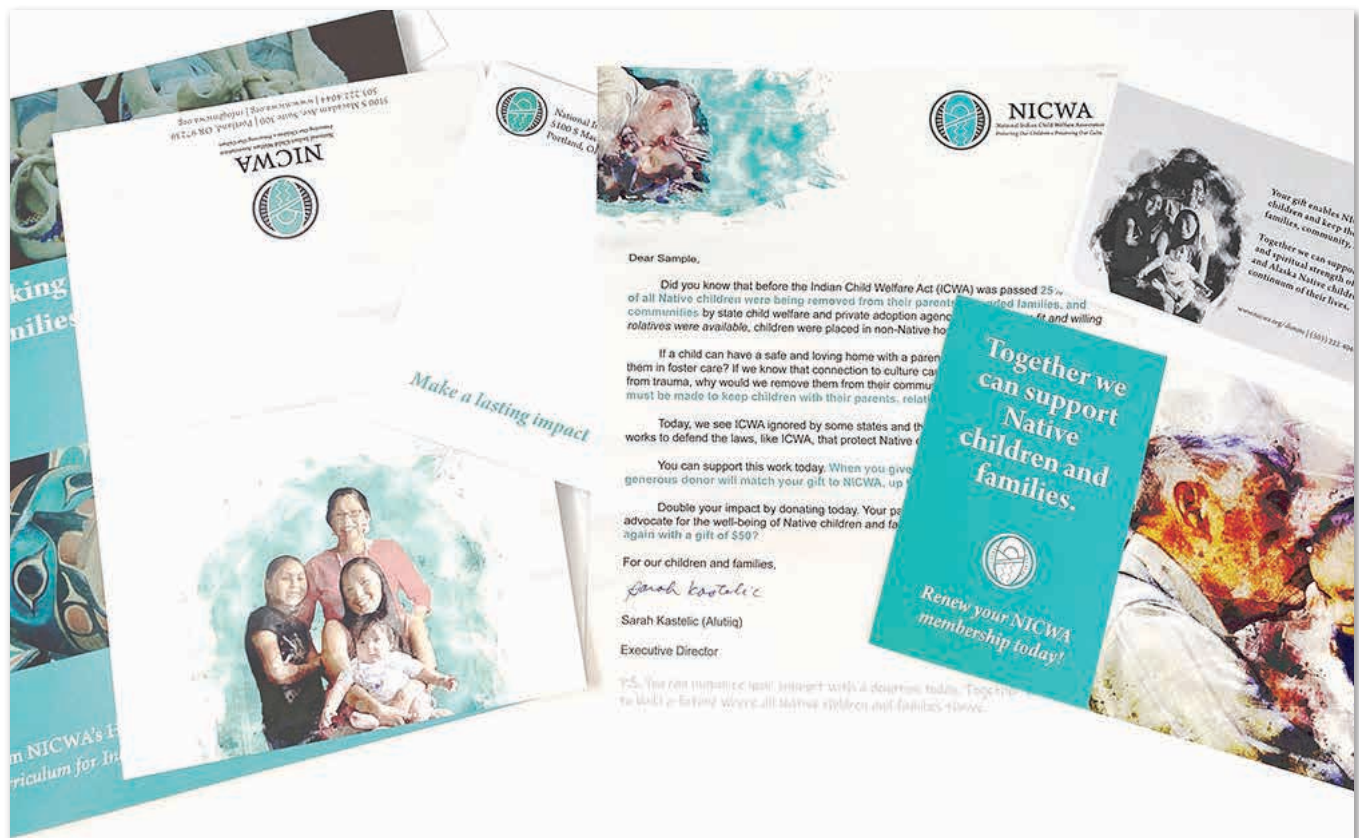
Colors on-screen look differently depending on your monitor. Instead of picking colors on the fly from your program's digital swatch palette, make sure you really know how those colors will look when printed. The best way to do this is to select colors from printed swatches, then use their color codes to design with.

Whether you are establishing your brand palette, or choosing colors for a stand alone piece, seeing how they will print upfront can help to avoid confusion and time consuming color-corrections on your files.

Before you – or anyone else – starts creating your materials, pick the colors you want to use from physically printed color samples or a standardized swatch book.

Selecting colors this way gives everyone – you, your designer, and your printer – the same expectation of how those colors should look on your final materials.

Once you've selected colors, keep the information handy to pass along to any designers, web developers, printers, or other creatives that will use your chosen colors in their work.



Nonprofit organization NICWA maintains their brand color consistency by keeping established Pantone® and CMYK color information on file. We also keep up to date color-accurate physical samples on hand to compare to newly printed materials to ensure they match.

SELECT COLORS FROM A PANTONE® GUIDE OR THE CMYK GUIDE

For the most accurate and consistent printed colors, choose your colors from the physical Pantone® or CMYK Guide swatch books.



There are many different color modes out there – **the ones to use for print are Pantone® and CMYK.**

Pantone® colors are solid, bold colors of ink mixed according to a specific formula that keeps them consistent. Offset Press printing exclusively uses these mixed inks, **while modern digital printing software incorporates the Pantone® color libraries for added color adjusting capabilities.**

This software can select a specific Pantone® swatch used in a file and adjust all instances of that color directly from the printer, saving time and providing a more accurate color match.

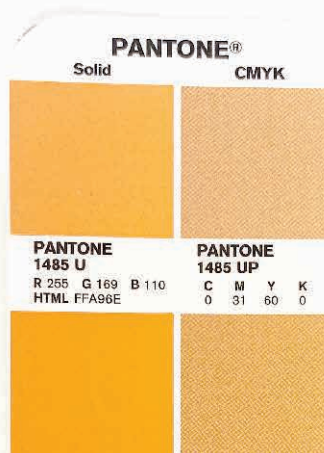
If you are printing on Offset Press or working with a printer who uses Pantone® color matching in their digital printing process (*like AnchorPointe does*), work in Pantone® colors.

The CMYK color mode is how digital printing equipment builds color on paper – with layers of Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Black (K) toners laid down in small dot patterns.

Because CMYK printing produces in a limited color spectrum, choosing colors upfront that will be accurately produced with these four colors of toner is critical for digital color printing.



**The
Pantone
color you
want...**



**... how it
will look
printed
in CMYK**

The Pantone® Bridge Guide shows a solid Pantone® ink compared side by side to how it would look produced with CMYK toners. As you can see, some colors (like bright oranges or reds) can't be reproduced with CMYK digital printing.

Using a guide helps to ensure you select colors that will look as you intend them to, whether they are on-screen, printed digitally, or printed via Offset Press.

DON'T TRUST YOUR COMPUTER SCREEN

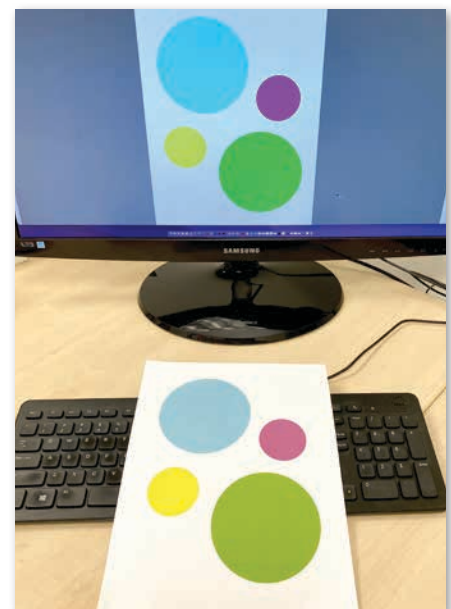
As we mentioned before, colors look differently depending on your monitor, making screens an unreliable way to choose or proof for accurate colors.

All computer screens are calibrated differently and no two show colors exactly the same. In addition, screens use the RGB color mode, which creates colors by mixing Red, Green, and Blue – these on-screen colors often cannot be reproduced in print with CMYK toners.

For example, a bright orange color may look fine on screen in RGB, but when printed it changes to a dull, rusty orange in CMYK.

When proofing printed materials, reference the physical color samples or swatch book you used to select your colors in the first place. This will give you an accurate idea of how each color on your on-screen proof will print in person.

You can also ask for a “physical proof” from your printer. With a physically printed proof, you can compare the colors to a previous piece that was printed with the same colors, or to the correct color in a swatch book.



These RGB colors look bright and vibrant on-screen, but change to darker versions when printed in CMYK.

MORE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT ACCURATE COLORS IN PRINTING

Here are a few other things you can take charge of to ensure consistently correct colors on all of your print projects.



Keep up to date color samples of your materials on hand for visual comparison. Keep them out of direct light (like inside a folder). Be sure to update your print samples every year or so, as colors will fade and change over time.



Work with a print vendor who invests in **color-correction software and equipment** that can color adjust for accuracy, and invests in their staff to ensure trained, experienced eyes are on the job. (Yes, like AnchorPointe!)



Keep an up to date Brand Guide with color profiles in Pantone, CMYK, RGB, LAB, and HEX color data. Provide this information to all vendors, designers, web developers, and anyone else who creates materials for your brand. Starting from the same color palette will help to ensure your colors come out as you expect them to, no matter when, where or how they're produced.

The screenshot shows the Colorbook website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'colorbook', 'HEX COLOR CONVERTER', 'COLOR SCHEME GENERATOR', 'COLOR PALETTES', 'LOGIN', and 'FREE ACCOUNT'. The main content area displays the 'HEX COLOR CONVERTER' tool with the input color '#0CA89E'. Below the input, there's a 'switch color' button. The right side of the interface shows a detailed 'Conversion table' for the color #0CA89E, which is categorized as 'green (dark green)'. The table lists the color in various formats: HEX (#0CA89E), RGB (R 12, G 168, B 158), HSL (H 176.15, S 0.87, L 0.35), and CMYK (C 61%, M 0%, Y 4%, K 34%). There's also a 'Usage of green' section with a description and a link to 'Read usage recommendations ...'. At the bottom, there's a 'More about this color' section with links to 'Color Shades and Tints', 'Color Usage Recommendations', 'Complementary color', and 'Download Color Card'.

Category	green (dark green)
HEX	#0CA89E copy to clipboard
RGB	R 12 G 168 B 158 copy to clipboard
HSL	H 176.15 S 0.87 L 0.35
CMYK	C 61% M 0% Y 4% K 34%

Usage of green The color #0CA89E is a great dark shade. Is it suitable for text, buttons or backgrounds? [Read usage recommendations ...](#)

More about this color

- [Color Shades and Tints](#)
- [Color Usage Recommendations](#)
- [Complementary color](#)
- [Download Color Card](#)

You can use a Color Conversion tool, like the one pictured above from www.colorbook.io, to get the color data for multiple color modes. Save them all in one location and provide it to all vendors, designers, web developers, etc. to keep the color consistency across all platforms and instances.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Below are some helpful online resources we've gathered to help you achieve color accuracy and consistency on all of your materials – in print or online!



To identify a specific color you like, such as out of a photo or graphic, use this **Color Picker Tool** to get the HTML Color Code of the pixel you've selected.

<https://imagecolorpicker.com/en>



When building a Brand Guide color data sheet, this free online **Color Converter Tool** comes in handy. Use it to translate HTML colors into all the different color modes.

<https://www.colorbook.io/>



Looking to get a set of your own color accurate swatch books to use? Check out this resource – **Where to buy CMYK Swatch Books.**

<https://www.hellogriff.com/2020/04/09/where-to-buy-cmyk-swatch-books/>



PARTNER WITH US.

We'll help you choose hues from the right color model, show you how those colors will be produced on our equipment, and be able to adjust them to meet your expectations while they are being printed.

Get reliably high quality printed materials with less stress and effort on your part!

[Schedule a consult](#) or give us a call at **503.619.3000** to start planning!

