CREATE THE LOOK YOU LIKE–WITH COLOR

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CREATE THE LOOK YOU LIKE-WITH COLOR

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Do you have a favorite color or colors? Do you have only certain colors in your wardrobe? Do you feel or look better in some colors than others?

Colors you wear affect the apparent size and shape of your body and reveal your mood, personality or fashion knowledge. Certain colors flatter you while others are unbecoming. You can use color to your best advantage by following a few basic principles. You can create the look you like with the colors you wear.

Color is one of several design elements which together create illusion of size and shape. In clothing, color cannot be isolated from its combined effects with line and texture, but this publication concentrates on the influence of color. For details on other design elements, refer to Extension publications MP-1299 *Create The Look You Like—With Line* and B-1326 *Create The Look You Like—With Texture.*

DIMENSIONS OF COLOR

To become more familiar with the dimensions of color, let's consider a few principles.

Hue refers to the name of a color. *Primary* hues are red, yellow and blue. These cannot be produced by combining other colors and are the basis for making all other colors. On a color wheel (diagram of color), the primary colors form the major triangle (see Figure 1).

Secondary colors are obtained by combining primary colors and are arranged between the primary colors on the color wheel:

purple or violet—a combination of red and blue
green—a combination of blue and yellow
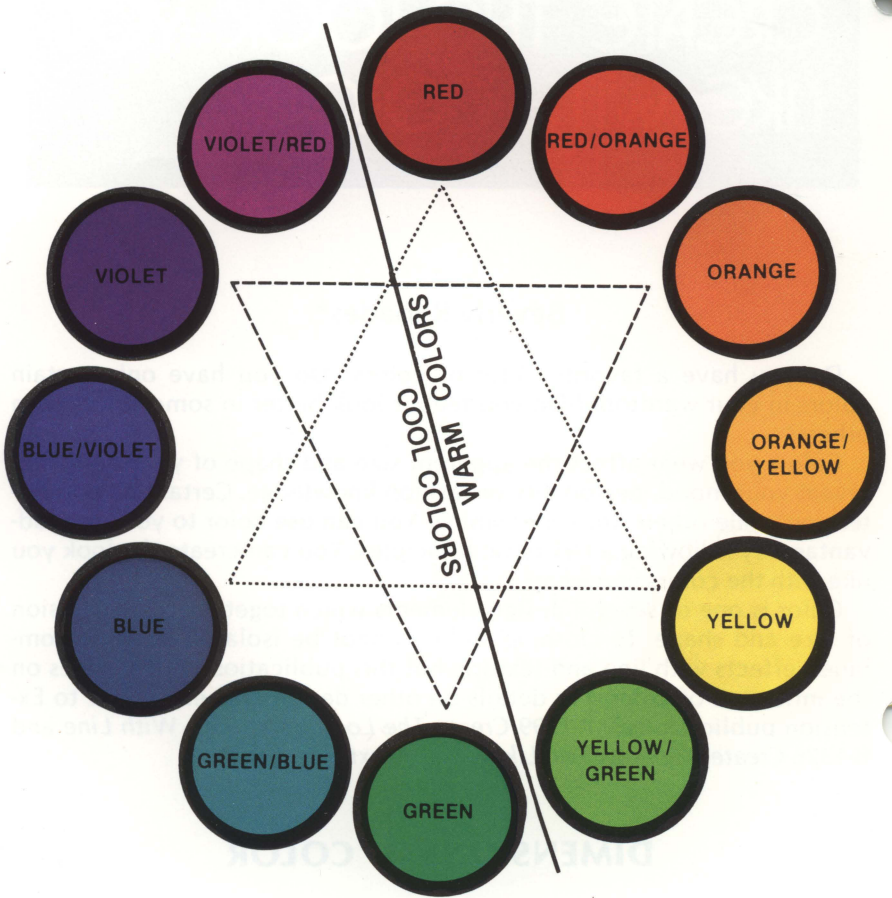orange—a combination of red and yellow

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COLOR WHEEL

Figure 1. .... *Connects primary colors*
_ _ _ _ *Connects secondary colors*

Intermediate or tertiary colors are produced by combining primary and secondary colors and are arranged on the color wheel between the colors combined:

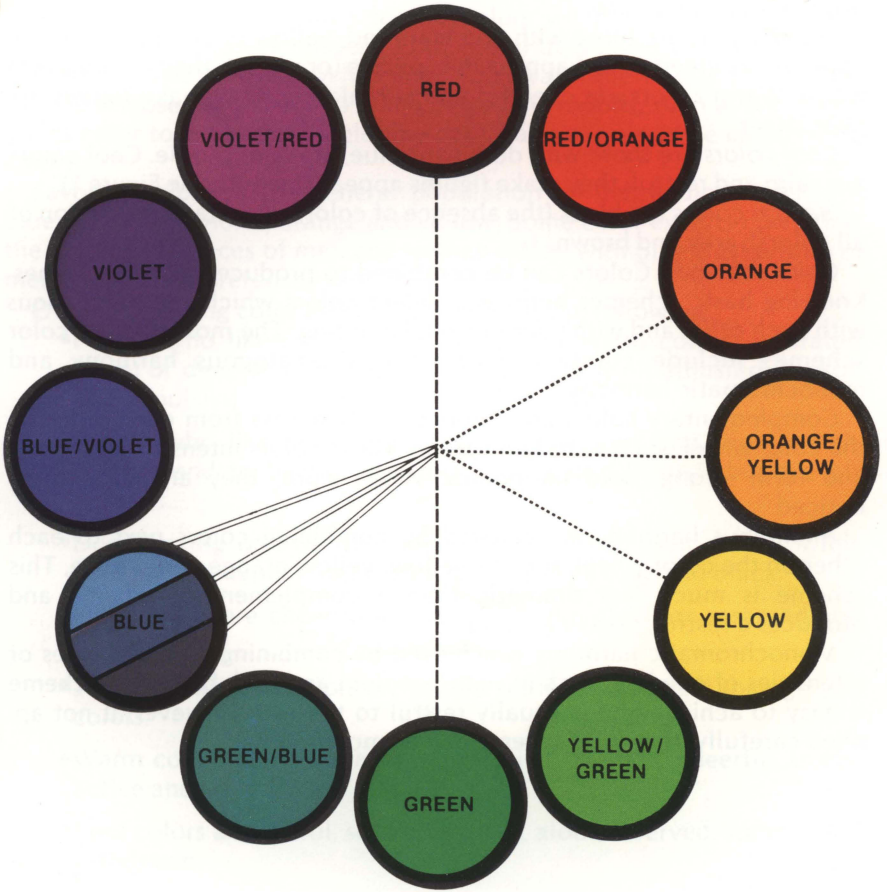|	
red/orange	green/blue
orange/yellow	blue/violet
yellow/green	violet/red

COLOR WHEEL

Figure 2.– – – – Complementary color scheme
.... Analogous color scheme
═══════Monochromatic color scheme

These twelve colors are just the basic ones, but any number of color variations can be produced.

Value is the amount of lightness or darkness of a color ranging from white to black. Light values are *tints;* dark values are *shades.* For example, pink is a tint of red while ruby is a shade of red.

Intensity is the brightness or dullness of a color. Full-intensity colors are striking while low-intensity colors are subtle. For example, hot pink is brighter than deep rose.

Warm colors are those with dominant red, yellow or orange. As yellow approaches green or red approaches purple (or violet), they become less warm. Warm colors are cheerful and stimulating; they make figures appear larger.

Cool colors are those with dominant blue, green or purple. Cool colors are calm and restful; they make figures appear smaller. (See Figure 1).

Neutral colors are black (the absence of color), white (a combination of all colors), grey and brown.

Color schemes. Colors can be combined to produce various schemes. Knowing basic schemes helps you select colors which are harmonious with each other and with your personal coloring. The most popular color schemes include complementary colors, analogous harmony and monochromatic harmony.

Complementary colors are colors directly across from each other on the color wheel, such as red and green. These colors intensify each other and form strong, bold harmonies. When worn, they are sure to be noticed.

Analogous harmony is achieved by combining colors next to each other on the color wheel, such as yellow, yellow-orange and orange. This scheme is much less dramatic than a complementary scheme and produces a restful, pleasing effect.

Monochromatic harmony is achieved by combining various values or intensities of one hue, such as light, medium and dark blue. This scheme is easy to achieve and is usually restful to the eye. However, if not applied carefully, this color scheme can be monotonous.

THE LANGUAGE OF COLOR

Color has its own language. We use names of colors to express our feelings. You have heard the expressions "green with envy," "true blue," "red with anger," "feeling blue." We are conditioned by color to stop on red, go on green and slow down on yellow. Color is used to inspire action, warn of danger, make us happy and promote serenity.

Color is usually the first characteristic noticed about an object. Color in advertisements and product packaging calls attention to a product. It also encourages you to remember products. Yellow and red are the greatest "attention getters," and we remember colors in the following order: red, green, yellow and blue.

When shopping for clothing, color is often the first attraction. If the

color is appealing, you will look at other aspects of the garment or fabric, such as style or texture.

Also, each of us is drawn to the colors we prefer when selecting clothing. Color choices influence our mood at a given time and reveal certain personality traits. What does your wardrobe reveal about you? Do you choose certain colors when in specific moods, such as wearing a bright color to counteract a gloomy day? Can your mood be changed by color?

Favorite colors of the general population (in descending order) are blue, red, green, violet, orange and yellow. Some color experts claim that the color preferences of men and women differ, with blue the favorite of men and women preferring red.

Other interesting color associations include the following:

- People who like *many* colors, especially warm colors, saturated (pure) or deep shades, tend to be outgoing, well adjusted, artistic and impulsive.

- People who like *few* colors, favor cool colors and tints or lighter colors, tend to be less sociable, less well adjusted, but are often thinkers.

- Domineering or assertive people often prefer bold colors while conservative types choose grey, taupes, dark blue and black.

- Light colors are cheerful and active; dark colors are reserved and sophisticated.

- True or saturated colors are more exciting or cheerful than greyed colors.

- Warm colors are stimulating, aggressive, exciting, cheerful, lively, active and intimate.

- Cool colors are restful, soothing, quiet, aloof, reserved, somber and withdrawn.

COLOR IN FASHION

Just as personal color preference reflects individual moods and emotions, fashion color trends reflect moods of the nation, or the world. Colors change with the economic condition of the nation, state of war or peace and interest in the environment. For example, sober moods during World War II brought an emphasis on khaki green. The postwar period of renewed hope brought greens, blues, pinks and yellows. The 1960s and a booming economy brought bright, bold colors and daring combinations.

Climate also affects color choice. For example, warm or hot weather often dictates brighter colors. In Texas, we wear brighter colors throughout the year which are generally worn seasonally in the northern states.

Each season brings color changes to the fashion scene. Seasonal colors make the wardrobe more exciting and help manufacturers sell new clothes. Observe current color trends and update your wardrobe with colors that coordinate with what you already have.

PERSONAL COLORING

Ideally, colors you prefer are also becoming to you; however, this is not always true. Your color preferences may have been influenced by your parents, a relative or friend who has very different personal coloring than you. If this is true, you may be wearing colors which do not flatter you. They may not look bad on you, but other colors may be more flattering. Your best colors make you look radiant and make your skin come alive with a healthy glow.

There are several different philosophies about clothing color selection based on personal coloring. Most regard skin color as the major factor. Hair and eyes are other important considerations.

Personal color types defined in color theories may be based on seasons, personality or other categories. Careful analysis of various color theories reveals both similarities and differences between personal color types and recommendations for colors to wear. Helpful hints can be learned from each of the theories.

To determine personal coloring, carefully study your facial skin for color undertones. Most skin, regardless of a person's race, will have undertones of red, yellow, pink or blue. Analyze your skin without any make-up. Do not be misled by surface color such as a ruddy complexion which may have yellow undertones. If you cannot determine the color, compare facial skin with skin color on other parts of your body such as your wrist or stomach.

Skin generally will reflect a cool or warm feeling. Cool skins include pink, blue or violet undertones while warm skins include peach, copper, yellow or red casts. Opaque white or beige skin and those with a slight greenish tint reflect a cool appearance.

Generally, colors that become your skin will also flatter your hair and eyes, but this may not always be true. You may have to research to find colors that coordinate perfectly with your personal coloring. If you wear clothing which does not complement all colors in your color palette, be sure the color you wear near the face at least complements your skin.

Also, to complement your skin, select cosmetics in your best colors. Coordinate eye, cheek and lip color with clothes you intend to wear for the day. If you wear clothes in your most flattering colors and your make-up coordinates with these colors, you are perfectly coordinated and will look fabulous.

For specific color recommendations, refer to the "Guide to Color Selection" chart.

Figure 3. Your personal color palette or color key

Once you have determined your skin coloring, you may want to make a personal color key that reflects your personal coloring. Look for colors of fabric or paper which exactly match your skin and the natural color of your hair and eyes. Paste these together on a piece of heavy paper (like an index card) to carry with you when selecting clothing or fabric colors. You may want to put together swatches of fabric or paper also which are becoming to your personal coloring to guide you in making future color choice.

Guide to Color Selection

Personal Color Description	Colors to Choose	Colors to Avoid
Skin Color		
White, translucent or cream-colored skin.	Red, bright pink, blue, orange, and green; black and white.	Overpowering, harsh colors, faded pastels, light beige, tan and drab gray.
Strong pink or red skin.	Analogous colors to red; orange, purple, soft blue and soft pastels.	Red, green and bright pink.
Olive skin.	Soft blues and greens, white, pink and beige.	Drab brown, tan, olive, yellow-green and black.
Brown skin.	Red, blue, green, yellow, gold and pink.	Dark and neutral colors.
Copper skin (red or golden).	Cool blue, green, soft beige, white, black, grey and navy.	Harsh orange, yellow, purple, red and red/brown.
Ebony skin.	Either light or bright colors; pink to orange-red, blue, pastels, gold, green, soft yellow and beige.	Black, brown, dark purple.
Hair Color		
Light hair such as blond, platinum or frosted hair.	Pastels, although contrast colors such as black are often attractive; to emphasize, use the complementary color to hair color highlights in a dark or light value and brighter intensity.	Overpowering brights in any color.

Medium hair such as brown or auburn.	Medium colors; beige and white; to emphasize, use the complementary color to hair color highlights in a dark or light value and bright intensity.	Colors which make the hair appear dull; use gray and tan with caution.
Dark hair such as dark brown or brunette.	Bright colors, although contrasting pastels can be attractive; to emphasize the color, use the complementary color to hair color highlights in a dark or light value and bright intensity.	Colors which make the hair appear dull; use gray and tan with caution.
Gray hair.	Soft pastels, bright colors or dark neutrals.	Stark white, washed-out pastels, beige, yellow and tan.
Red hair.	Soft cool colors; pastel yellow, black, beige, white and gray.	Vivid oranges and reds, red-brown and intense green.

Eye Color

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To make eyes appear brighter or darker.	The same hue as eyes in a lighter tint than your iris. For example, light blue will enhance blue eyes.	Darker shades of the same hue. For example, dark blue will make blue eyes appear lighter.
To make eyes appear lighter in color.	The same hue as eyes but slightly darker; or bright colors that vividly contrast with iris color. For example, bright blue will soften piercing blue eyes.	Lighter shades of the same hue. For example, light blue will make blue eyes appear darker.

EFFECTS OF COLOR ON THE FIGURE

Clothing color affects apparent body size. Generally, warm, light and bright colors make the figure appear larger, while cool, dark and dull colors make the figure appear smaller. However, some dark colors, such as black, often produce a "halo" effect causing one to look larger. Also, color contrast can have dramatic results. The point where different colors meet produces a focal point which draws the eye's attention. For example, a bright or contrasting color worn on or near the head draws the eye vertically and has a slenderizing effect. A contrasting or brightly colored belt draws attention to the waistline, cuts apparent height and has a broadening effect.

Specific suggestions for enhancing certain body features are given in the "Color Selection for Figure Types" chart.

Figure 4. Contrasting colors draw attention to certain points. When placed near the head, color accents the face and draws the eye upward. Contrasting color at the waist cuts height.
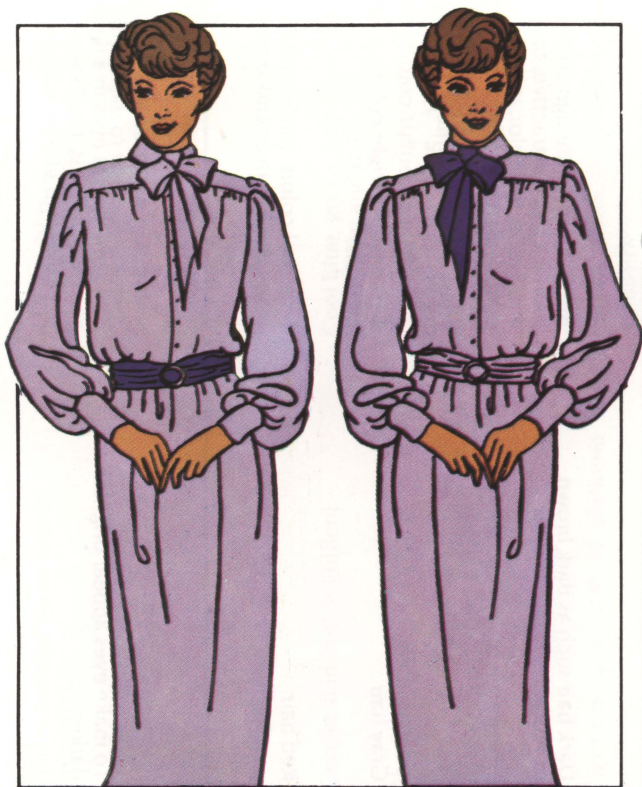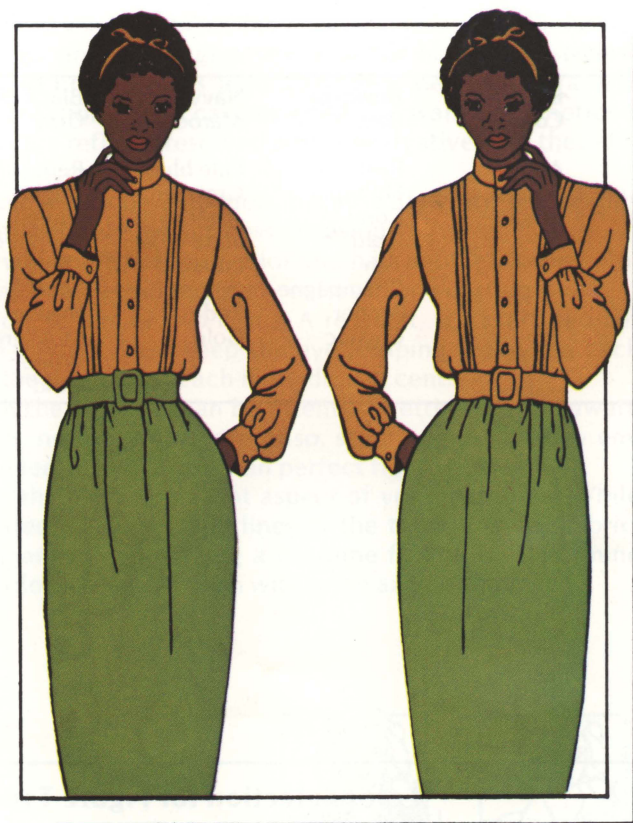
Figure 5. Match belt to bodice color if short-waisted. Match belt to skirt or pant color if long-waisted.

COLOR IN THE WARDROBE

Analyze your current wardrobe. What are the dominant colors? Are these colors your favorites? Are these colors your *best* colors?

Build your wardrobe around a few colors that compliment you. Avoid wearing clothes that are *not* your best colors. Almost any color can be used as the basis for a wardrobe. It need not be a color traditionally considered basic, such as brown, navy blue or black. However, the color(s) selected should easily coordinate with other fashion colors. For example, see the following chart:

Table 1. Combine one or more accent colors with the basic colors listed in each column.

Basic Colors	Brown or Beige	Navy or Maroon	Black or Gray	Navy or Red
Accent Colors	Rust	Pale blue	Red	Bright green
	Shrimp	Gray, all shades	Bright green	Pale blue
	Coral	Slate blue	Sapphire blue	White
	Gold	Emerald green	Lilac	Wine
	Tan	Red	Mauve	Slate blue
	Champagne	Gold	Moss green	Gray, all shades
	Amber		White	
	Cognac		Gold	

Color Selection for Figure Types

Figure Description	Colors to Choose	Colors to Avoid
To make entire figure or only a certain portion of body appear larger.	Warm colors, bright hues or light tints.	Cool colors; dark, grayed or subdued tones.
To make the entire figure or only a certain portion of the body appear smaller.	Cool colors; dark, grayed or subdued tones; neutral colors are usually good.	Warm colors, bright hues, light tints.
To appear taller.	Cool, dark colors, solid colors or muted prints. Direct attention upward with color; color contrast at neck or head or vertical graduated monochromatic color scheme from dark at bottom to light at top.	Light and warm colors; contrasting or bright colored belts.
To appear shorter.	Cool, dull colors, contrasting colors in top and bottom and in conspicuous accessories such as a belt to cut height.	Bright colors, warm colors, light tints.

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Use colors to reflect or counteract your mood. Colors can help you steal the limelight, go unnoticed, give you a lift or help you establish credibility. Warm and bright colors lend a friendly, personal aura. Use them for parties, recreation and occasions when you want to be noticed. Cool and dull colors are refined, reserved and conservative. Use these for ceremonial and quiet occasions.

Neutrals are good wardrobe extenders because they are not readily noticed. They are appropriate for business occasions.

Avoid costumes which are half one color and half another. Keep color proportions unequal. Also, avoid too many colors in one costume.

Limit accent colors to one or two items. A red belt, red scarf, red hat and red shoes with a white dress keep the eye jumping around to each accent, destroying the purpose of each individual accent.

Strong contrast in the costume can be attention getting, but be aware that *you* should star, not your costume. Also, strong contrasts may emphasize undesirable features in a less than perfect figure.

Color is probably the most important aspect of your wardrobe. While it cannot be separated from the style lines or the texture of the fabric, color has the dominant role in making a costume flattering. Determine your best array of colors and wear them with pride and confidence.
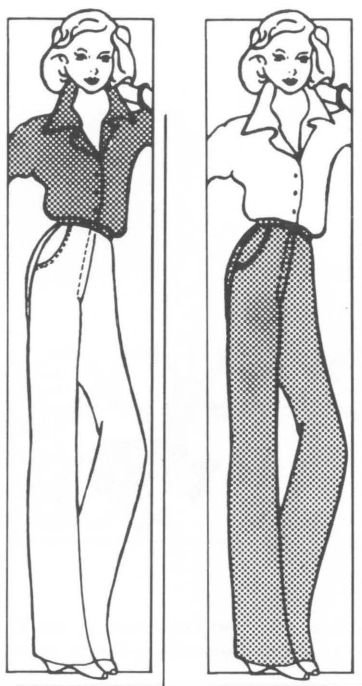
Figure 6. Dark colored pants or skirt slims heavy hips while a dark colored blouse helps de-emphasize a full bust. Light colored pants or blouse appears to increase size.

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