by Jenifer Juris

Secrets of Terrific Type

Lesson 04-07: Color

Text color may seem like a trivial topic but it's more important than you think.

Do you think about the color of your type? Or do you prefer to just always use black? Using color correctly, can be a great way to add polish to your next digital scrapbook page or card.

But, it can also be a detractor if the wrong color is used. So, let's talk about type color and how to use it effectively.

When it comes to type color, we have four simple rules to follow.

#1. Can you read it?

In the example I just showed you, if the color is too light or fades into the background too much, then the type will be difficult to read. Always choose a color that makes the type easily read.

#2. Does it go?

By go, I mean does the color of the type go with the color of the rest of the project. If you use a color that clashes with the rest of your page, your type will detract from the design instead of adding to it.

#3. Consider the size of your type.

If you're recoloring the title of your project, you're going to have more leeway with what color you choose than if you're recoloring the small type or journaling. Using a brighter or lighter color on something large is a possibility because the size of letters is so much bigger.

But, if you're taking the time to add journaling or smaller type, make sure you use a color that allows the type to be readable.

#4. When in doubt, stick to neutrals.

When you have a project with multiple colors, it's always a good idea to not use the most bright or loud color for your type. Again, we want our type to compliment the page, not detract or compete with the main subject of the design. So if you have a digital scrapbook page with a photo or photos, you don't want the color of the type to be so loud that it draws your eye away from the photos. Using one of the more neutral colors from the project will be a better choice.

Mixing Colors:

So what happens when we want to mix colors within a piece of wordart? The best thing you can do is start with a neutral shade.

So, let's talk about neutral colors. Neutral colors are not just black, white, or gray. Let's take a look at some color palettes and see if we can find the neutral shades from each one.

Palette #1 - This first palette makes me think of autumn. So when I look at a kit, the first thing I do is scope out the lightest color and the darkest color. In most cases, those are going to be the closest colors in the kit to neutral colors. And in this case, the light cream and the dark brown are just that. If I had a dark background, I would use the light cream color for my type and if I had a light background, I'd probably use the dark brown for my type. Also, the smoky blue is close enough to gray that you could use it for your type without it over-powering the rest of the design.
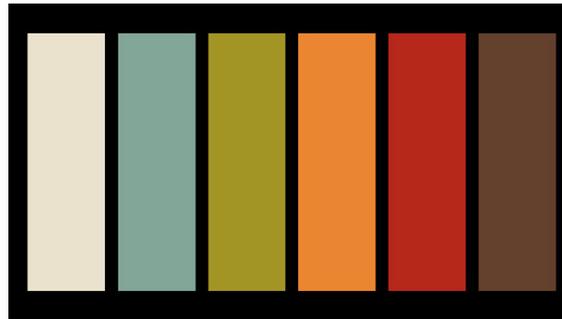
Palette #2 - This second palette is somewhat easier to spot the neutrals. White is the lightest color and a very dark gray is the darkest. These are even closer to neutral than the first one.
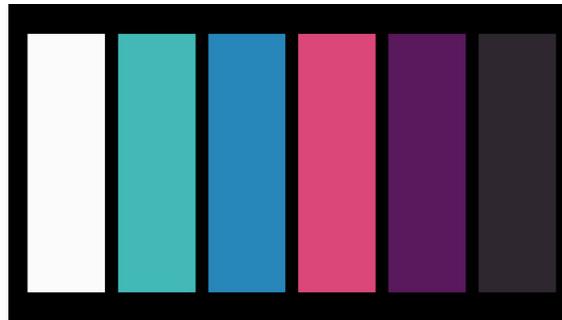
Palette #3 - This third palette is different because this palette has multiple colors that could be used as neutrals. The dark gray, the dark brown, the light brown, the creamy gray, all of those are neutral. And the blues aren't so crazy bright that couldn't be used either.

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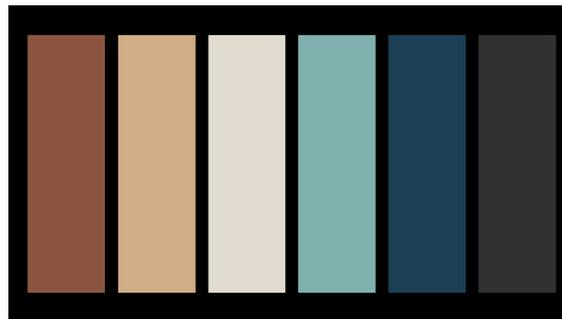
So, after picking out a neutral color, the next step in creating word art with mixed colors is picking out the accent color. I say accent because the best way to use a more bright or bold color is to use it sparingly. Only pick the main or important words to change the color. So, when picking a word for a color change, I usually choose one or two words of meaning.

So, let's walk through this process with this piece of word art as an example. And, let's use this word art with the three color palettes we've already looked at to mix some colors properly.

FOR WE WALK BY *faith,* NOT BY *sight.*
2 CORIN. 5:7

With color palette #1 in mind, let's pick out a neutral and a bright color we could try. So, as we discussed before, the creamy white and the dark brown colors both would work well as neutrals.
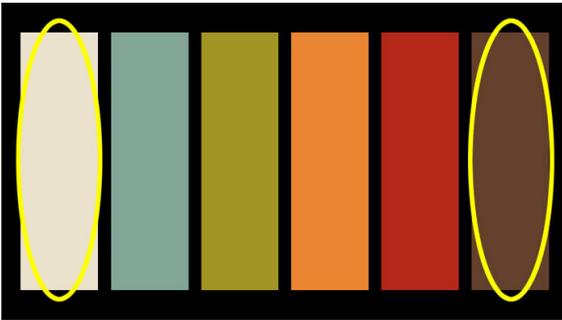
Next, we need to look at which colors would work as accents and any of these four colors would be ok for that. For this example, I will use the orange color as my accent color.
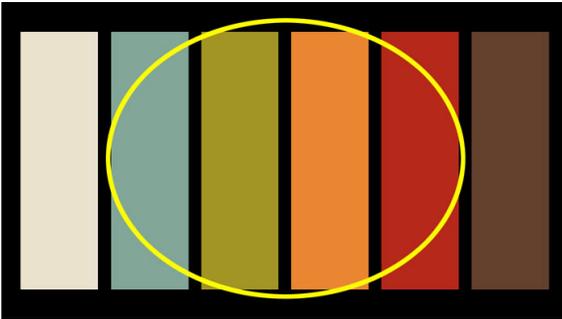

Now, when mixing colors for wordart, as we discussed before, it's a good idea to keep the bold colors for the accents and the rest of the word art should be a neutral. So here, I've left the smaller words the dark brown and the large, script words are my accent color, this soft orange color.

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Let's do the same thing for Palette #2. Here are my two neutral shades.
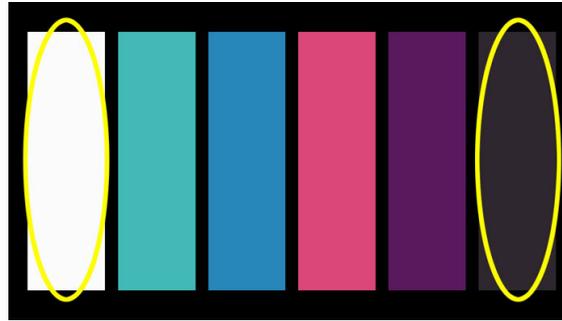
And here are the accent colors.
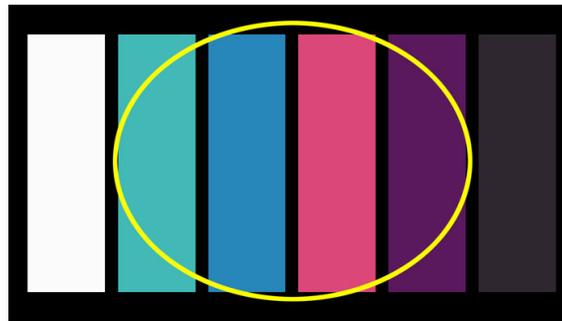
I chose to use the dark gray for the neutral and the bright blue for the accents and I really like how it looks!

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And one more time for Palette #3. Here are the neutral shades. Yes, that's right. None of these color are too bold to not be considered a neutral. And while the blue shades are less close to neutral than the rest, you can still use them as a neutral if you needed to. So if they can all be neutrals, how can we tell which ones would be good for accent colors?
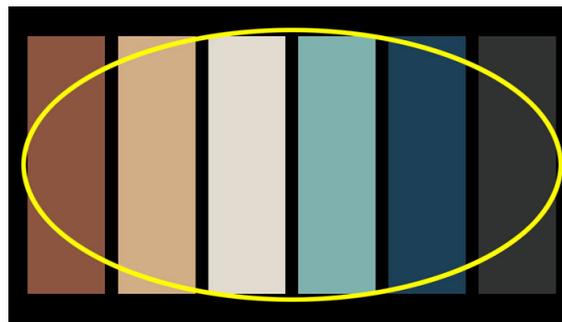
These three colors, of all 6, are the ones with the most vibrancy so I would consider any of these three a good accent color.
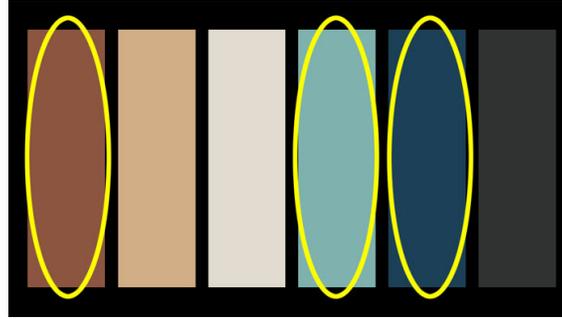
The genius behind this third color palette is that there are so many great color combos we can do here when mixing colors for wordart. This first example, I did the very dark gray and accented with the light blue.

Using the same color palette, I kept the accent the light blue and changed the neutral to the dark blue. The change isn't drastic but that shows again how the dark blue can be a neutral shade if you need it to be.

The next color combo I did with this palette is I used the light brown for the accent color and I used the dark brown for the neutral.

I could keep going but I think you get the idea.

The biggest thing to take from all of this is to remember that the color of your type is important. The color can influence readability and it can either enhance your design or distract from it. And when in doubt, stick to a neutral shade.

So that wraps up our quick lesson on type color. There's a fun quiz to follow that will help you better understand color palette neutral shades, readability, and color no-no's.