

The Psychology of Colours

How Colours Affect Our Mood

Why the colours around you are shaping your feelings right now

■ B1 Reading ■ 30 min ■ Fun & Culture

Level	B1 (Intermediate)
Skill	Reading
Topic	Fun & Culture
Duration	30 minutes
Age Group	Teens & Adults

Learning Objectives

- ◆ Read and understand a text about how colours influence emotions and behaviour
- ◆ Learn 15 key vocabulary items related to psychology, design, and perception
- ◆ Identify the psychological effects of different colours
- ◆ Discuss personal experiences with colour and its emotional impact
- ◆ Write about the role of colour in daily life

1 Before You Read — Colour Quiz

Think about colours in your life and discuss:

1. What is your favourite colour? Why do you think you like it?
2. What colour are the walls in your bedroom? How does your room make you feel?
3. Have you ever noticed that certain shops or restaurants use specific colours? Why do you think they do this?

2 Reading: The Hidden Power of Colour

The Hidden Power of Colour

Look around you right now. What colours do you see? Perhaps blue walls, a red logo on your phone, green trees outside the window, or the warm yellow glow of a lamp. We are surrounded by colour every moment of our lives, yet most of us rarely stop to think about how profoundly it affects us. Colour is not just something we see — it is something we **feel**. Scientists have discovered that different colours can change our heart rate, influence our appetite, alter our **perception** of temperature, and even affect how quickly time seems to pass.

The study of how colours affect human behaviour is known as colour **psychology**, and it is used everywhere — from hospital design to fast-food branding, from fashion to football kits. Understanding the power of colour can help you make better decisions about everything from what to wear to a job interview to what colour to paint your living room.

Red: Energy, Passion, and Danger

Red is the most **emotionally intense** colour. It raises your heart rate, increases your breathing speed, and stimulates your appetite. This is why so many fast-food chains — from burger restaurants to pizza companies — use red in their logos and interiors. Red grabs your attention faster than any other colour, which is also why it is used for stop signs, warning labels, and emergency vehicles.

In culture, red carries powerful **associations**. In Western countries, it is linked to love, passion, and danger. In China, it represents luck and prosperity and is the dominant colour at weddings and festivals. Sports teams wearing red have been shown to win slightly more often than those in other colours — researchers believe the colour makes players feel more **confident** and opponents feel more intimidated.

Blue: Calm, Trust, and Productivity

Blue has the opposite effect to red. It slows the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and creates a feeling of calm and **tranquillity**. This is why blue is the most popular colour for bedrooms and is widely used in hospitals to help patients feel relaxed. It is also the colour most associated with trust and **reliability**, which explains why so many banks, technology companies, and social media platforms choose blue for their branding.

Interestingly, blue has also been linked to **productivity**. Studies show that people working in blue environments concentrate better and produce more creative solutions than those in red or white rooms. However, blue also **suppresses** appetite — so you will rarely see blue used in restaurant design.

Yellow and Green: Happiness and Nature

Yellow is the colour most strongly associated with happiness, **optimism**, and energy. It catches the eye quickly — which is why taxis in many cities are yellow and warning signs use bright yellow backgrounds. However, too much yellow can actually cause anxiety and agitation. Babies cry more in bright yellow rooms, and people are more likely to lose their temper in yellow environments. Like many things, yellow works best in **moderation**.

Green, on the other hand, is the most restful colour for the human eye. It represents nature, **balance**, and renewal. Hospitals often paint recovery rooms green because it promotes healing and reduces stress. Green is increasingly used in offices and schools to create calm, focused environments. The growing trend of bringing plants into workspaces is partly driven by the calming effect of the colour green itself.

The Business of Colour

Companies spend millions researching the perfect colours for their brands. Studies show that up to 90 percent of a customer's first **impression** of a product is based on colour alone. Luxury brands tend to use black and gold to suggest **elegance** and exclusivity. Health and organic food brands choose green to communicate freshness and nature. Children's products use bright primary colours to convey fun and energy.

Even the colour of a pill can affect how well it works. Research has found that people believe red pills are stronger stimulants, blue pills are better sedatives, and yellow pills are the most effective antidepressants — regardless of what the pills actually contain. This is the **placebo** effect of colour, and it shows just how deeply colour is woven into our unconscious minds.

The next time you choose what to wear, decorate a room, or notice a company's logo, remember: colour is never just colour. It is a silent language that speaks directly to your emotions, your behaviour, and your decisions — whether you are aware of it or not.

3 Key Vocabulary

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
perception	the way you notice or understand something through your senses	Colour can change our perception of how warm a room feels.
psychology	the scientific study of the human mind and behaviour	Colour psychology is used in marketing, design, and healthcare.
emotionally intense	producing very strong feelings	Red is the most emotionally intense colour in the spectrum.
associations	mental connections between a thing and an idea or feeling	In Western culture, white has strong associations with purity and peace.
confident	feeling sure of yourself and your abilities	Wearing red can make people feel more confident and powerful.
tranquillity	a state of peace and calm	Blue walls create a feeling of tranquillity in bedrooms.
reliability	the quality of being dependable and trustworthy	Banks use blue because it suggests reliability and trust.

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
productivity	the rate at which work is completed efficiently	Blue environments have been linked to higher productivity.
suppresses	prevents or reduces something	Blue suppresses appetite, which is why restaurants avoid it.
optimism	a feeling of hopefulness about the future	Yellow is strongly associated with optimism and cheerfulness.
moderation	avoiding extremes; using a reasonable amount	Yellow works best in moderation — too much can cause anxiety.
balance	a state where things are equal or in correct proportions	Green represents balance, nature, and renewal.
impression	an idea or opinion formed quickly about something	Up to 90% of first impressions of a product are based on colour.
elegance	graceful beauty and style	Luxury brands use black and gold to suggest elegance.
placebo	a harmless substance that has a psychological effect	The placebo effect of colour shows how it influences our minds.

4 Useful Collocations

colour psychology · first impression · brand identity · warm colours · cool colours · colour scheme · mood lighting · bright colours · pastel shades · primary colours · colour palette · visual impact · eye-catching · colour blind · skin tone · colour theory

5 Reading Comprehension

1. Why do many fast-food restaurants use red in their design?

- a) Because red is the cheapest paint colour
- b) Because red stimulates appetite and grabs attention ✓**
- c) Because red keeps the restaurant cool
- d) Because customers prefer red furniture

2. Why do banks and technology companies often use blue?

- a) Because blue is the most expensive colour to produce
- b) Because blue is associated with trust and reliability ✓**
- c) Because blue makes people spend more money
- d) Because blue is the CEO's favourite colour

3. What happens when there is too much yellow in a room?

- a) People fall asleep faster
- b) People feel colder
- c) People may feel anxious and babies cry more ✓**
- d) People eat less food

4. Why is green used in hospital recovery rooms?

- a) Because it is the cheapest paint available
- b) Because it promotes healing and reduces stress ✓**
- c) Because doctors prefer green walls
- d) Because it matches the colour of medicine

5. What percentage of first impressions of a product is based on colour?

- a) About 30%
- b) About 50%
- c) About 70%
- d) Up to 90% ✓**

6. What does the pill colour experiment show?

- a) That red pills are genuinely stronger
- b) That colour has a placebo effect on our unconscious minds ✓**
- c) That blue pills cure insomnia
- d) That yellow pills contain more chemicals

6 Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blanks

Complete the sentences with the correct word from the box:

perception · tranquillity · confident · suppresses · optimism · moderation · impression · elegance

1. Colour can change our _____ of how warm or cold a room feels.

2. Blue walls in bedrooms create a feeling of peace and _____.
3. Wearing her favourite red dress made her feel more _____ before the presentation.
4. Blue is rarely used in restaurants because it _____ appetite.
5. Yellow is the colour most strongly associated with happiness and _____.
6. Too much of any bright colour can be overwhelming — it is best used in _____.
7. Studies show that 90% of a customer's first _____ of a product is based on colour.
8. Luxury fashion brands use black and gold to communicate _____ and exclusivity.

7 Answer Key

■ Vocabulary Exercise Answers

1. perception
2. tranquillity
3. confident
4. suppresses
5. optimism
6. moderation
7. impression
8. elegance

8 Speaking & Writing Tasks

■ ■ Speaking Task: Discussion

Discuss these questions with a partner or your teacher:

- What colours dominate your home? How do they make you feel?
- Do you choose your clothes based on colour? Does it affect your mood?
- Think of a famous brand. What colour is its logo? Why do you think they chose that colour?
- If you could paint your classroom or office any colour, what would you choose and why?

■ Useful Phrases for Describing Effects

- **Research shows that** blue environments help people concentrate better.
- **It is believed that** red makes people feel more energetic and confident.
- **According to studies,** colour can influence up to 90% of first impressions.
- **The reason why** hospitals use green is that it promotes healing.
- **What I find most surprising is that** the colour of a pill can affect how well it works.

Writing Task: My Colour World

Write a paragraph (120–160 words) about this topic:

"How do colours affect your daily life? Describe how specific colours make you feel and explain which colours you prefer in your clothes, your room, and your environment. Why?"

Use vocabulary from this lesson. Include specific examples and try to explain the connection between colours and your emotions.