



# Make COLOUR work for you

Do you want to appear passionate, creative or trustworthy? Sarah Marinos talks to colour experts about what different shades represent

**C**olour is more powerful than many people realise, according to Jill Morton, professor of colour psychology. She says colour conveys meaning through natural associations and cultural symbolism. "For example, the fact that green is the colour of vegetation and blue is the colour of the sky and water has been a reality since the dawn of humanity," says Morton. "But colour may generate another level of meaning in the mind," she says. "For example, green is associated with nature, growth, fruitfulness and freshness... and is also symbolic of good luck, money and greed."

## ORANGE energy and creativity

Orange signals energy and creativity, warmth and fun, but it can also be abrasive and cheap, says Imogen Lamport, a member of the Association of Image Consultants International. "Don't wear orange if you are in a conservative workplace, but variations of the shade – burnt oranges and copper – look good," "The colour orange can even stimulate the appetite, making them ideal for kitchens and dining areas," says Resene Marketing Manager, Karen Warman.

## YELLOW sunshine and happiness

Yellow equals sunshine, happiness and warmth so it's a good social colour, says Lamport. "Wear some yellow to cheer someone up, but avoid it in business meetings or when asking the bank for a loan," says Lamport. "Too much yellow makes you look jaundiced." At home, yellow creates optimism and positivity.

## GREEN nature and abundance

Since ancient times, the colour green has been associated with fertility, growth, nature and the natural world. In Muslim countries green is a holy colour, while in Ireland it signifies luck.

"Green is reassuring because when trees and grass are green we know nature is abundant and there is food," says Lamport. "Light greens are fresh and professional and mid-greens are relaxed and casual," she adds.

"Green is at the centre of the spectrum and so represents

harmony, balance and peace," says Warman.

"It soothes and relaxes, and is a healing and reassuring colour. Olive and sage greens have a neutral, timeless character ideal for an office."

## RED the colour of extremes

Morton describes red as “the colour of extremes” – passion, love, danger and anger. In Asia, it’s the colour of good luck.

“Red is energetic and bold but it can be aggressive and argumentative,” says Lamport. “If you’re an introvert, red is great because it attracts people to you.”

In the home, red is welcoming in a hallway or entrance and is also ideal for a bedroom if you want to create a passionate space.

Avoid red if you want your bedroom to be relaxing and it’s not a good choice for a child’s room because it’s stimulating, so doesn’t encourage sleep, but in small amounts, red lifts your mood.

## BLUE most people’s favourite

This is many peoples favourite colour, says Morton. Dark blue is linked to dignity, trust and authority, while light blue equals peace, serenity and friendliness. “Blue doesn’t have the harshness or unfriendliness of black, but it’s still got authority,” she says. Warman says blue is popular for bedrooms because of its soothing qualities. “However, if you have trouble getting up in the morning, you may need to add an invigorating accent to get you out of bed and into action,” she suggests.

## BROWN warm and earthy

Brown is linked to Mother Earth. It’s dependable, non-judgemental and reliable. “But it can be seen as dull,” says Lamport. “An image consultant I know who works in London always says ‘there’s no brown down town’. Which means brown isn’t often worn by the people who are seen as successful and influential in London.

“You won’t be taken seriously in brown. But it is welcoming, so if you want to discover someone’s secrets wear earthy tones,” Lamport adds.

Browns create cosiness and warmth in both bedrooms and living areas. Brown also creates an atmosphere of richness, safety and solidity because of its links to the earth and nature. +

## PURPLE luxury and power

Purple was once a rare colour. “It took some 12,000 shellfish to extract 1.5g of the pure dye – barely enough for dyeing a Roman toga,” says Morton.

So purple signifies luxury, power, decadence, magic and spirituality. “The association with spirituality and witchcraft has given purple bad press, but it’s okay in a creative environment in small doses,” says Lamport. “And lilac is fine to wear at work.”

At home, red-purples create warmth and blue-purples have a cooling effect. Use purple to create luxury in your home. Team purples with plum, magenta, chocolate, navy, royal blue or hints of silver.

## GREY the new white?

Grey signifies calmness and authority, but it can also be perceived as dull and detached.

“If you have one business suit, make it a grey one,” says Lamport. “If you want authority, make it dark grey. To be approachable, choose medium grey.” Interior designers are calling grey ‘the new white’. Use matte grey paint to hide flaws and match it with layered lighting, such as a table and floor lamps.

