



The Plus One Approach

To Colours

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Welcome again to The Plus One Approach for making your course representative and inclusive.

In my previous post I talked about the use of images. Today I focus on the use of colour and how we can approach colour through the lens of supporting adult learners.

Colour is not the first item many (not all!) of us think of when preparing to teach. However, think of all the ways colours are associated with:

- Countries (i.e. flags)
- Emotions (e.g. green with envy)
- Fashion (e.g. Pantone's 2024 colour, Peach Fuzz)
- Health (e.g. a colourful plate)
- Temperature
- Seasons
- Cultural effects

Colour affects us, inadvertently or not, in many ways, but different contexts require different considerations when using colour.

In some subject areas, understanding colour theory can help develop more effective outcomes. Consider the effect that colour has on adventure games; in studies, the use of colour psychology principles has demonstrated an effect on the experience for the game player, enhancing the player's sense of immersion (Roohi & Forouzandeh, 2019).

Oftentimes we don't think that our perception of colour can differ from that of our learners. However, cultural differences, as well as universalities, exist for the meanings colours have for people globally (Adams & Osgood, 1973).

When we think about accommodations, we often do not consider what makes a learning environment overly stimulating for learners or how colour can affect learners, whether it is in a positive or negative way. Because of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the college requires AODA training for all of its employees. Nevertheless, just like Ontario has an accessibility gap (Baltinec, 2024), our AODA guidelines fall short of supporting a wide range of learners as "many websites remain inaccessible to autistic people, and existing efforts to improve accessibility are in early stages, do not directly include autistic users in their development, or have not been empirically evaluated" (Raymaker et al, 2019, p. 148).

Today, I'd like to focus on one way we can use colour to support learners who are not often included in accessibility considerations; the added benefit, as with all Universal

Design for Learning considerations, is that many will benefit from this Plus One Approach.

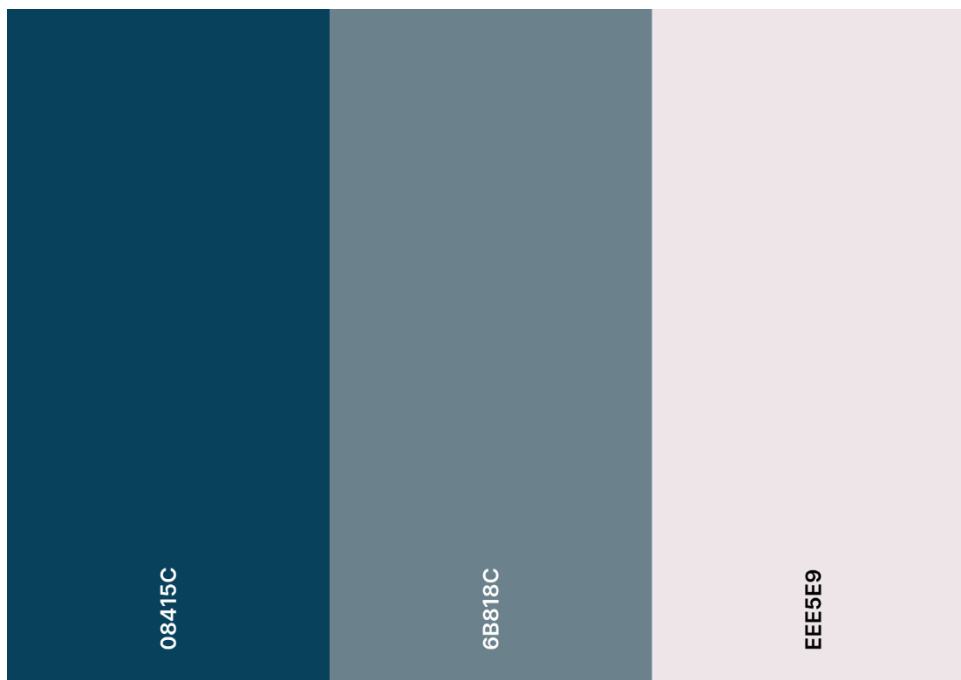
Let's consider the following situation:

In your face to face or online class, you have a student with unidentified accommodations for visual perception in your class and you use a lot of presentations (e.g. PowerPoint). What colours would you use for your presentation?

Anyone who has taught a course for a while may balk at making changes to their presentations, but a simple change to our presentation materials can be as easy as adjusting the colour scheme of our presentation.

For example, using a low vibrant blue and gray tint as a secondary colour for styling is calming; by using the muted hue you can protect against overstimulation. Selecting a light pink background colour reduces the amount of white, often a cause of eye strain and fatigue. Many people select a dark mode for their desktop computers for this reason.

Let's take a look at these colours together; this colour palette was created using Colors, an online tool that generates colour palettes and provides HEX codes for colours.



[How to change the colours in your PPT presentation](#)

By chance, a colleague in the TLX, Griffin Epstein, shared their slides with us for the session they hosted in the first week of January, called "Foundations of Community," the first in a series of four sessions they are offering called "Building Community in Online Classrooms".

Beyond the content of griffin's slides, which is fantastic, what struck me was their use of colour and how the colour palette I shared above was, coincidentally, appearing in their slides with the two colours listed below. To get the HEX colour code, I used the eyedropper feature in PowerPoint.

#2B4B82 periwinkle

#F7B4A7 pink

[How to find HEX colour codes in PowerPoint](#)

I found the content on griffin's slides easier to read because the colour was consistent and looked very soothing on my tablet. With griffin's permission, I'm sharing their first slide below so you can see for yourself.



I hope you find today's piece inspiring enough to make this one change to your presentations before your next class.

Next time, I'll talk about fonts and spacing.

My thanks to Griffin Epstein, PhD, TLX Associate and Professor of Social Service Work, for allowing me to talk about their presentation and share their title slide. You can register for Dr. Griffin Epstein's future sessions "Building Community in Online Classrooms" on Cornerstone.

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