

COLOR REALITY CHECK

HEX/RBG VS CMYK.



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CMYK



RGB

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Why your screen is lying to you just a little?

The 10-second truth

Your screen shows color using light. Printing creates color using ink. So the same “red” can look different depending on the process.

Translation: - HEX / RGB = screen color (what you see on laptops/phones) - CMYK = print color (how ink behaves on real surfaces)

Whacky but true: Your monitor is basically a tiny light show. Printing is ink doing its best on fabric, metal, plastic, and paper.

What changes (and why)

- **RGB is brighter than CMYK**

RGB has a wider color range. Some bright, neon-ish colors look amazing on screen but get “calmer” in print.

- **The surface changes the color**

The same ink looks different on different materials: - Cotton absorbs ink differently than polyester - Metal bottles reflect light differently than paper - Matte finishes mute colors; gloss finishes pop more

- **Dark products need special handling**

Printing on black/dark products often needs an underbase (especially for light colors). Without it, colors can look dull.

- **Small branding areas exaggerate problems**

- On pens, keychains, small badges: - fine color transitions can blur - tiny text becomes unreadable - multi-color logos can look “busy”.

Quick rule

If color accuracy is critical, don't approve based on your phone screen alone. Approve a mockup — and for big / important orders, approve a sample.

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The buyer's checklist (use this before approvals)

Tell us what “color accurate” means for your project

Pick one: - **Close match is fine** (most common) - **Brand-perfect match required** (events, leadership gifts, external-facing kits)

Share the right color references

- If you have it: **Pantone** codes (best).
- If you don't: share your **brand guidelines PDF** or the closest reference you have.
- If you only have HEX/RGB: share it anyway (we'll translate and show a mockup).

Choose the right branding method for color expectations

Different methods handle color differently. We'll recommend the best fit based on your logo and product.

Approve the right thing

- **Digital mockup:** checks layout, placement, and general color direction.
- **Physical sample:** checks real-world color, finish, and durability

Common “color drama” scenarios (and how to avoid them)

- **“It looked brighter on my screen.”**
Screen brightness varies wildly. Use Pantone or approve a sample.
- **“The red looks different on the bottle vs the t-shirt.”**
Different surfaces reflect/absorb light differently. This is normal.
- **“Black product + JPG logo = weird box.”**
Use **PNG with transparent background** or **vector** files.
- **“Too many colors on a tiny pen.”**
Use a **1-2 color** logo version for small branding areas.

Quick rule

One logo, multiple versions = fewer problems.

Have a full-color version and a simplified 1-color version for small items.



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COLOR ON SCREEN = A SUGGESTION. COLOR ON PRODUCT = REALITY.

HEX/RGB is your monitor doing a light show. CMYK is ink doing its best on real materials. Expect small shifts—especially on dark products and textured surfaces.

TO AVOID COLOR DRAMA, SEND:

- Print-ready logo (vector preferred)
- Your best color reference (Pantone/brand guide/HEX)

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