

Module 1 - Color Modes and Application

Why Colors Matter

In design, color is not just decoration – it’s essential for **brand identity, mood, and communication.**

Using the right **color mode** and tools ensures your design looks correct whether it’s printed or viewed on a screen.

Color Modes: RGB vs CMYK

RGB Color Mode

- **Stands for:** Red, Green, Blue.
- Used for **digital screens:** websites, social media, apps, presentations.
- Colors are created by mixing light; adding more light makes colors brighter.
- Has a wider range of bright, vivid colors.
- 💡 Use RGB when your design is meant for computers, tablets, or phones.

CMYK Color Mode

- **Stands for:** Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Key (Black).
- Used for **printed materials:** brochures, posters, business cards.
- Colors are created by layering ink; adding more ink makes colors darker.
- Some bright colors in RGB can’t be printed exactly in CMYK.
- 💡 Use CMYK for anything you plan to print.

How to Check or Change Color Mode

- Go to **File > Document Color Mode > RGB/CMYK Color.**
- Important: always set color mode before starting your design to avoid color shifts later.

Tools to Apply and Manage Color

Illustrator offers multiple ways to set and edit colors:

Color Picker

- Double-click the Fill or Stroke square at the bottom of the Tools panel or in the Color panel.
- Opens a window where you can:
 - Choose a color by clicking in the color field.
 - Enter precise color codes (like #FF0000 for red).
 - See your color values in RGB or CMYK.
- Shows a warning if the selected color isn’t printable in CMYK.
- 💡 Use the Color Picker for quick, precise color choices.

Swatches Panel (Window > Swatches)

- Stores predefined colors, gradients, and patterns.



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Color, Typography, and Painting

- You can:
 - Save custom colors for reuse
 - Access Pantone or spot color libraries
 - Create new swatches from selected objects
 - 💡 Use Swatches to keep your colors consistent throughout a design.

Types of Swatches in Illustrator

The **Swatches panel** and **swatch library panels** let you save and reuse colors, gradients, and patterns in your artwork. Here's what you can store there:

1. Process Colors

- Made by combining the four CMYK inks: cyan, magenta, yellow, and black.
- These are the most common colors for printing.
- By default, new swatches in Illustrator are process colors.

2. Global Process Colors

- A **global color** updates everywhere it's used when you edit the swatch.
- Process colors can be local (only affect one object) or global (update all linked objects).
- Identified in the Swatches panel by a small triangle in the corner.

3. Spot Colors

- A premixed ink used separately from CMYK.
- Ensures exact color matching (e.g., a company's specific logo color).
- Identified in the Swatches panel by a small dot icon.

4. Gradients

- A smooth blend between two or more colors or tints.
- Can use process, RGB, or spot colors.
- Transparency in gradient stops is saved in gradient swatches.
- Note: Aspect ratio/angle settings of elliptical gradients aren't saved.

5. Patterns

- Repeating (tiled) designs that can include shapes, paths, or text.
- Patterns automatically repeat across an object's fill area.

Color Panel (Window > Color)

- Lets you mix colors manually by adjusting sliders for RGB or CMYK values.
- Shows both Fill and Stroke colors at the top.
- Great for exploring shades, tints, or subtle color adjustments.
- 💡 Use the Color Panel when you want fine control over colors or need to tweak them quickly.

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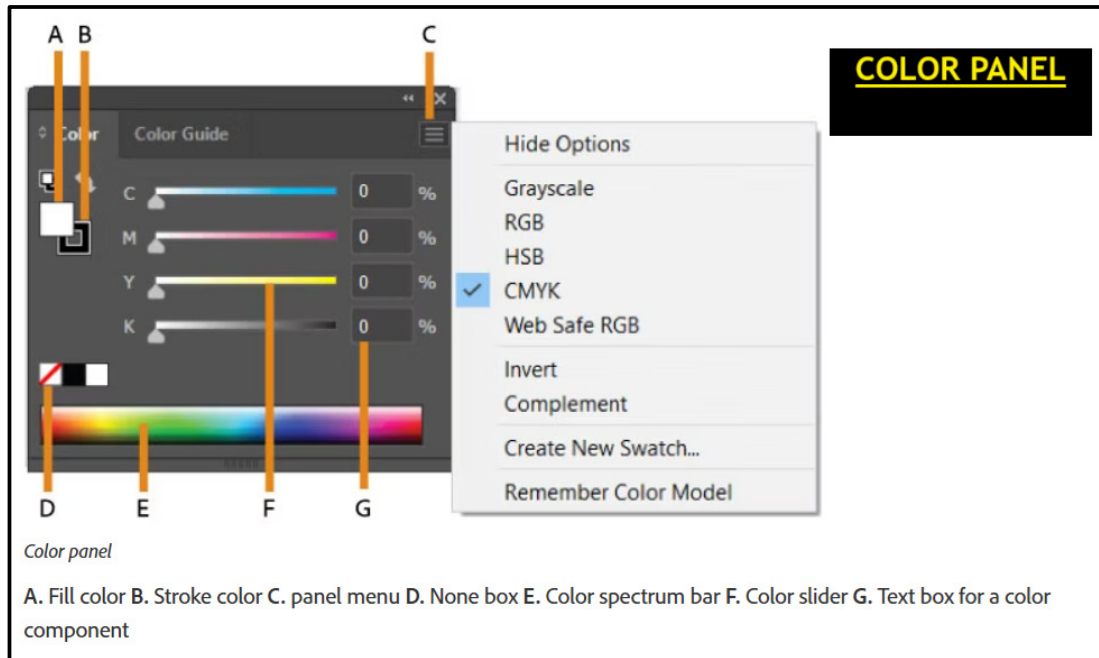
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Fill and Stroke Colors

Remember:

- **Fill** is the inside of a shape.
- **Stroke** is the border/outline.
- You can set them separately in the Color Panel or Swatches.

 To swap fill and stroke quickly, click the double-arrow icon near the Fill/Stroke boxes in the Tools panel or press **Shift + X**.

Tips for Applying Color

- **Global Swatches:** When you create a swatch, check “Global” so that any update to the swatch automatically updates all objects using it.
- **Eyedropper Tool (I):** Quickly copy color from one object to another.
- **Kuler/Adobe Color Themes (Window > Color Themes):** Explore professional color palettes for inspiration.
- **Recolor Artwork:** Use the **Recolor Artwork** feature (in the top Control bar) to change color schemes across your entire design.

Assignment

Scenario: You’re designing a promotional poster for a smoothie shop.

Tasks:

1. Create a new Illustrator document in **CMYK Color Mode** (for print).
2. Use the Color Picker to set:
 - o A bright green for the smoothie cup.

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- o A soft yellow for a background accent.
- 3. Save these colors as new **Global Swatches** named “Smoothie Green” and “Accent Yellow.”
- 4. Apply both colors to different shapes in your poster.
- 5. Switch to **RGB Color Mode** and notice any changes in appearance (don’t save changes after this test).

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