Color: 2-3 Shades of (Purple-ish) Gray

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Final Designs

Figure 1. Final 3-Color Design

Figure 2. Final 2-Color Design
Design Inspiration

In terms of layout, the initial blank design felt very structured and rigid, as though it served the purpose of some formal business function. It immediately reminded me of the old company home pages from the early 2000’s, when every business and their mothers wanted a website of their own but lacked the know-how to make them aesthetically pleasing. With this in mind, I wanted to create a color scheme that felt highly business-like, with darker, muted (desaturated) colors to set the tone, invoking a sense of seriousness and professionalism.

To accomplish this, I initially created a color scheme entirely in grayscale, as seen in *Figure 3* below, for two purposes. The first was to better visualize for myself which relative shades of colors I should be using for my final design. The second was to ensure that whichever color scheme I ended up choosing, it would still be accessible for individuals with color-deficient vision. Note that this grayscale design uses 4 different shades of gray rather than the required 2-3 in the final design; I felt using 4 shades would be more flexible in terms of choosing an initial color scheme and I could decide later which colors to eliminate or which sections to combine.

![Initial Grayscale Design](image)

The next step was to then decide on a specific color scheme. To do this, I decided to draw inspiration from the fictional character “Christian Grey” from the popular 2005 movie “Fifty Shades of Grey” (which I found disappointingly to not be a rich documentary about the color gray). To create a color scheme based off of Mr. Grey, I imported a picture of him I found online into Adobe Color and directly applied color samples from his suit (and hair) to the design. This process is illustrated in *Figure 4* below.

![Figure 4. Initial Grayscale Design](image)
Design Justification

*Figure 1* and *Figure 2* show the final color schemes I chose for my designs. I go into detail about each of them, as well as their difficulties and differences, below.

The 3-color design in *Figure 1* uses the following colors: a dark purple-ish gray (#4A4853) for the headers and footers, a lighter shade of this color (#7C7C8C) for parts of the navigation and sidebars, and a light yellow-ish brown for the remaining portions of the navigation and sidebar as well as the content portion. Here, color is used primarily as a separator between different parts of the page, although I had some difficulty choosing whether to make the background color of the content completely different from parts of the navigation and sidebars (I decided against it, though you can see an alternative 4-color design in which I do separate them in “4-Color Design” below). Note that the two similar shades of purple are analogous, and purple and yellow are complimentary, which is why this color scheme works well.

The 2-color design in *Figure 2* was, if you can imagine, even more challenging to design due to the fact that I needed to further eliminate colors or combine sections in order to meet the limited palette requirement. I chose to stick with the color scheme I was using before rather than come up with a completely new scheme, and I discarded the light brown in favor of entirely analogous colors. To increase the contrast between colors, I increased the brightness of the lighter purple and changed the color of the footer to this color. This ensures that there is still separation between different parts of the page, though this separation is obviously a lot less clear.
As expected, the 2-color design loses some ability to delineate different sections using color, as the number of colors is even more limited than the already difficult task to separating sections using only 3 colors. In implementing the 2-color design, I also found that the contrast between the colors was even more important than in the 3-color design, especially when using entirely analogous colors, and the use of hue can no longer be depended on to separate the sections.

4-Color Design

In addition to the designs above, I also wanted to share this 4-color design I made shown in Figure 5 below.

This design shows just how useful having an additional fourth color can be in the design. The color scheme here was chosen after browsing multiple images of business suits and sampling from them. Notice how the content portion of the page is now completely separate from the navigation and sidebar portions. Notice also how the use of 2 different colors in the navigation and sidebar help separate the different menu items. This makes for what I feel to be a more aesthetically pleasing color scheme and one that is easier to read and use.