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Introduction

The use of right color for the right context goes a long way in ensuring a good user experience. While designing the layout of the application it is very important to ensure that careful consideration is given while choosing the colors, their shades and other details.

Considerations while using colors

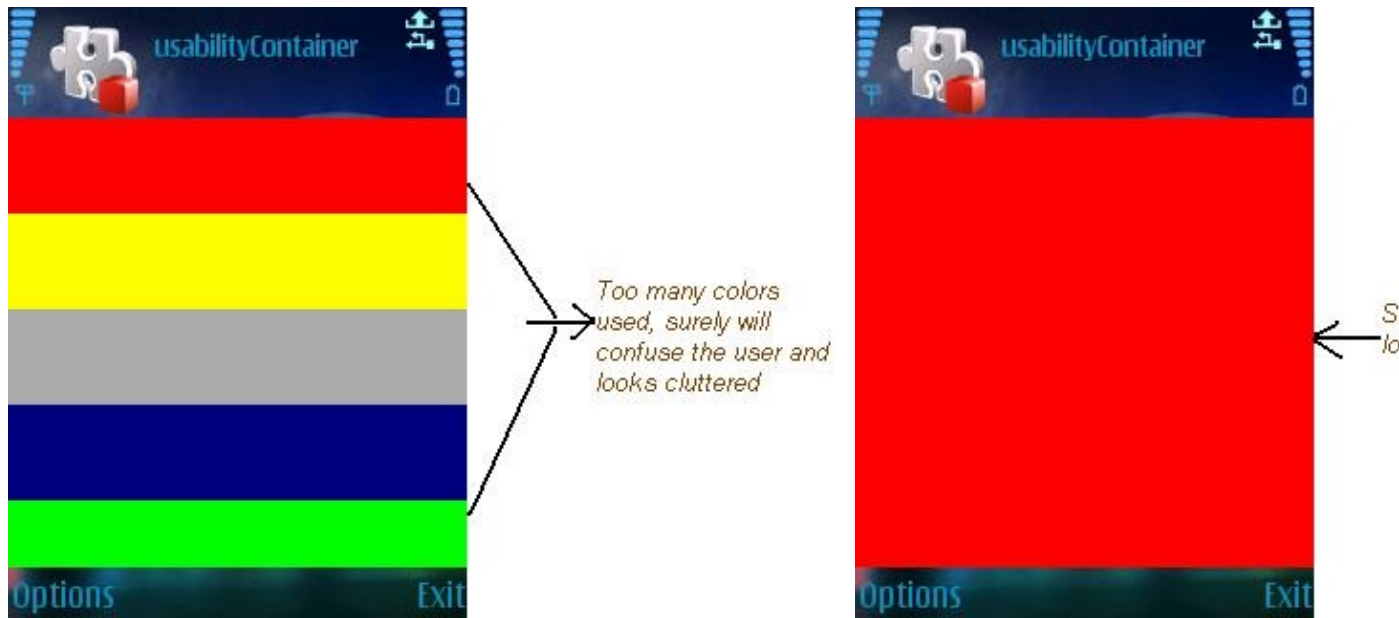
Limit the number of colors

The amount of colors used in a user interface should be kept within reasonable limits. With colors generally less is more, as lesser color gives the UI a neat uncluttered look.

Example of wrong color usage

Example of right color usage

Colors_in_User_Interface



Single color backgrounds look nicer

When designing colors for user interface you should also think of other aspects of colors. Almost 10% of males have some kind of color vision deficiency. So coding only with colors might not be a good idea. Maybe it would be a good idea to design the UI in black and white or at least try that it works without colors!

Example of white colored background



Colors are also culture related

Different cultures have different meanings for colors. For example, green is associated with heaven (Muslims) and luck (U.S. and Ireland) [www.colormatters.com Details from colormatters.com].

Importance of colors

Colors can be used to get viewers attention

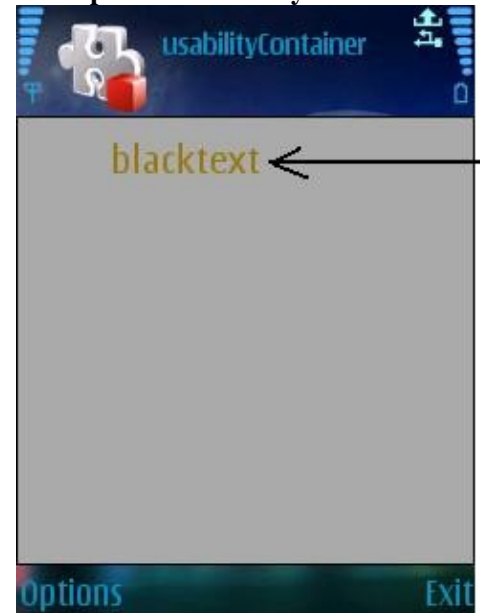
You should be careful with the usage of colors to attract the user's attention. If there is too much color to be noticed it won't do what it's supposed to do anymore. The information that needs attention gets quite easily if too many colors are used or if the wrong color combinations are used.

Example of text getting lost



Wrong colors used, tough to read the text

Example of text clearly visible

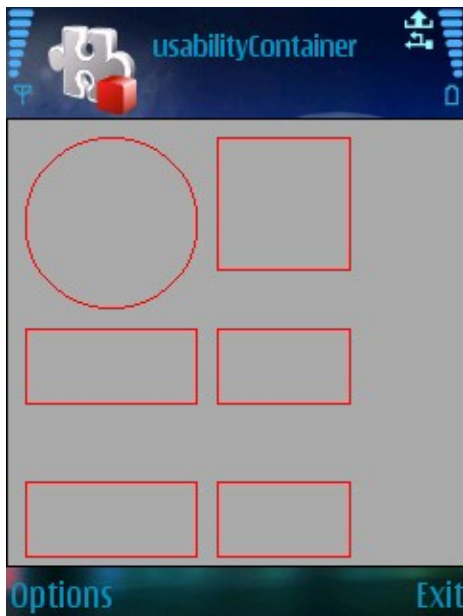


Right text

Use distinct shapes to get attention

You can catch the viewer's attention with shapes, too, for example. A round shape among rectangles will be noticed. You shouldn't rely on color coding only, because not everybody can distinguish all colors. Using shape coding might be a nice addition.

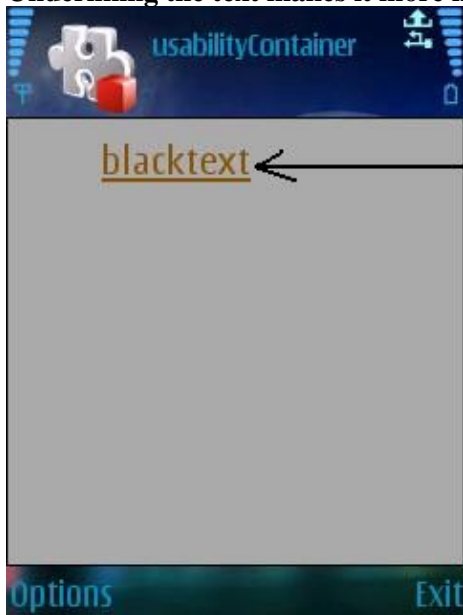
Circle gets noticed amongst the rectangles



Highlight & underline important things

Things/features/information that is more important should be highlighted, or written with different colors/fonts so that the user can notice it immediately. Also catchy colors like red, yellow can be used for this purpose.

Underlining the text makes it more noticeable



Underlined text is much easy to read, and get noticed

Enable skin

Enable the skin to take make use of the background wallpaper image of the selected theme. This makes the UI look much more elegant as compared to a white patch of colored rectangle.

Use distinct shapes to get attention

Example of a skin enabled container



Skin support is enabled, application draws the theme's background image

Perception of colors

Different colors are perceived differently and are often associated with specific ideas, so it is very important to ensure that the right color is used, otherwise you might end up offending the sensitiveness? of the user if wrong colors have been used.

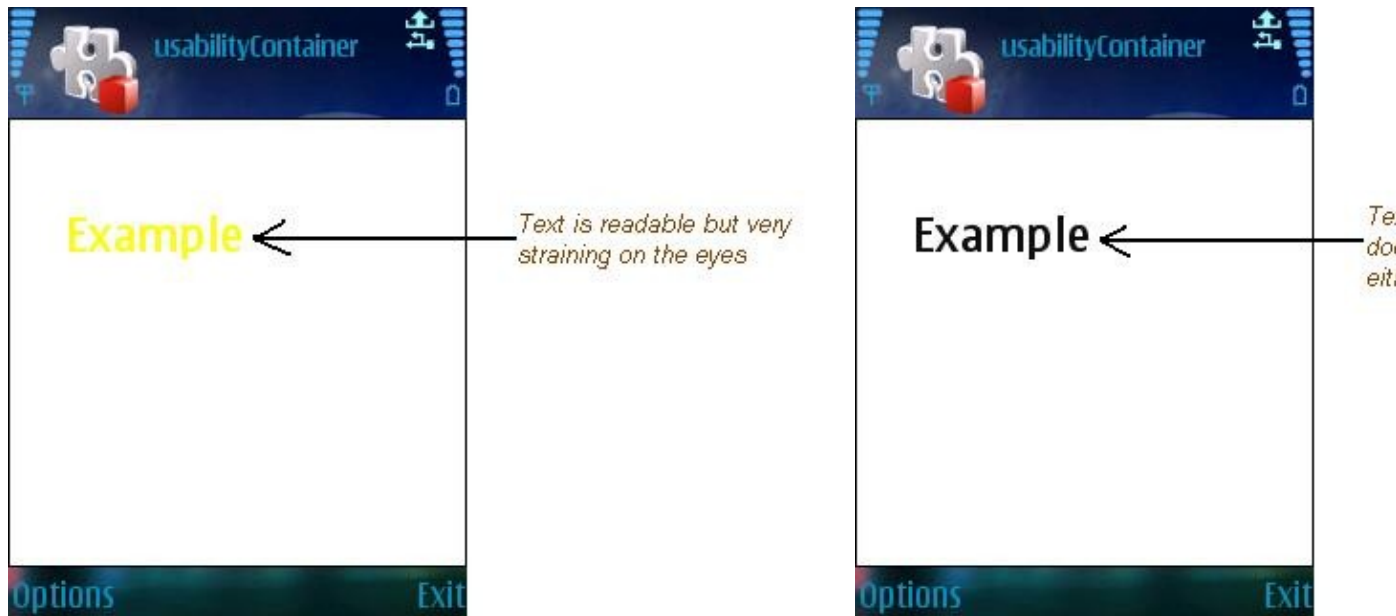
Human mind has a way of connecting things that are alike. Things that are colored with the same color or that are the same shape are easily associated. That?s why you should be consistent with the coloring and using different shapes. Use blue for links, black for other parts of text and red for important information and add shapes, underlining etc. to inform that there is something special there.

Cold colors (blue, green and purple) seem to be further away from the viewer than warm colors (red, yellow and orange). That?s why they should be used as background colors. Colors like red for instance are often perceived as signs of danger, and should be used when denoting an error case or a fault condition etc. In case of games they can be used to depict action, violent scenes etc.

Text should be written with a color that distinguishes from the background. So, yellow text on white background can be stated a bad idea. You might see the text but reading it is very energy consuming. The best combination for readability is black text on a white background.

Yellow colored text is visible but straining

Example of text clearly visible and not straining



Colors have many roles in a user interface, for example to get attention and to make the UI more vivid. The most important role is making the UI into a harmonic whole. That can be achieved by careful design.

Proper contrast

Make sure the color combinations for foreground and background provide sufficient contrast. E.g. use a black text on a white background.

Additional Resources

More information about colors can be found from www.colormatters.com.

- [General usability issues](#)
- [Web Safe Colors](#)

--- Edited by Mayank on 22/06/2009 ---