SPOT

matching system

SMS G-20	SMS J-20	SMS K-20

SMS READY Expert training

July 2025

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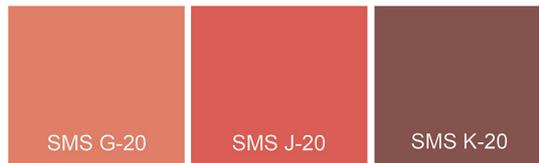
About the Spot Matching System

The Spot Matching System (SMS) is a colour palette, developed by Mr. Ingi Karlsson, CEO of Spot-Nordic.

The first version of the Spot Matching System was presented in December 2018 and contained a total of 420 colours, that we now refer to as the Standard version, suited for CMYK printing on both coated and uncoated paper.

What was - and still is unique about the SMS colours was that there was no visual difference between the same SMS colour when printed on coated and uncoated paper, - i.e. the CMYK values were adjusted for each substrate to ensure that the colour remained the same, despite of the different nature of coated and uncoated paper.

In technical terms: The LAB values of the SMS colours remain the same, regardless of substrate.

Since 2018, the Spot Matching System has also been normalized for the web (sRGB) and for Television (Rec. 709) - so today all SMS colours should look identical online, on TV and in printing, using mainstream icc colour profiles to move the SMS colours from one colourspace to the next.

The number of SMS colours has also risen considerably - from 420 in 2018 to 1.738 colours for the Standard system, 1.738 colours for the MAX system and 1.738 colours for the ECO system and in 2024 we added the SMS Home & Office version for our Standard and MAX range (1.738 colours each) to also serve the needs of customers that evaluate colour on laptop monitors that cover only 45% NTSC/60% sRGB.

If we compare other colour ordering systems, such as the Pantone Matching System, we all know that Pantone 300 C and Pantone 300 U are quite different visually. The reason is simply that the same ink recipe is used for both the Coated paper and the Uncoated paper.

This unusual nature of the Spot Matching System colours makes them especially well suited for brands, since consistency in marketing is becoming more and more important in our day and age.

At the time the Pantone Matching System - as well as for instance the German HKS system were developed, the only marketing that brands had to think about was print marketing. Television was in black and white and of course there was no Internet back in the sixties. Brand colours and consistency in colour were not such a big concern back then, nor slight differences in colour, as long as everyone knew what colour they were supposed to mix and print.

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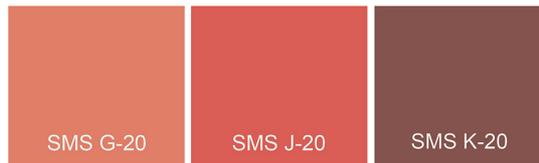
SMS READY Expert training

In order to ensure that our SMS colours are being correctly used, be it for design or reproduction/printing/dying, we launched the SMS READY Expert training program.

Brands, Designers and Architects - in any category

In order for individual designers or Architects to be cleared by Spot-Nordic to use SMS colours in a professional and official capacity, each active SMS user should undergo the SMS READY Expert training and pass our tests.

Design Agencies and Architectural firms seeking an SMS READY certification need to appoint at least one SMS READY Expert - a "super user" to take responsibility for SMS colours used by the agency/firm.

This is a purely technical test and has nothing to do with how creative and talented the user is.The tests require access to Adobe Photoshop and a design app such as Adobe Illustrator, Affinity Design or CorelDraw.

The goal of the training, which is done remotely, is to teach correct use of SMS colours in design, as well as how SMS colours are converted from sRGB to other colour spaces using icc colour management to convert SMS colours from one colourspace to the next.

Furthermore each SMS READY Expert should be able to check any job digitally to see if SMS colours are as they should be.

Designers will also learn how SMS colours can be used in industry sectors where icc colour management is not applied, but analog mixing of inks, paints or dyes.

Prepress personnel, Printers, Manufacturers, Quality Managers, Consultants

SMS READY Experts that are not involved with design but more focused on colour reproduction or sales still need to do the same tests as the designers - see here above.

This will enable them to check SMS colours and assist designers and brand owners and talk them through the process, in case incorrect SMS colours are delivered and answer the most common, colour related questions designers may have - for instance how they should convert their sRGB colours to CMYK or another colourspace.

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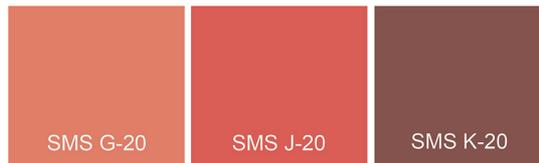
SMS READY Expert training - Design and Check

Individuals that select the SMS READY Expert Design & Check training, which is the basic training, described here before, will be authorized to organize onsite seminars and workshops to present the Spot Matching System, what is it for and how it should be used. SMS READY Experts get copies of all marketing material manufactured by Spot-Nordic - including seminar and webinar material in English, that they can use at their discretion and are "kept in the loop" about the progress of the Spot Matching System.

SMS READY Experts can offer their services to brands, design agencies, printshops and manufacturers that wish to become officially SMS READY - either to train their personnel in the use of the Spot Matching System or to take position of a super user.

Each individual who decides to apply for this training package must be a registered user of at least one SMS colour palette and will, once he or she has finished the tasks (which should not take more than a few hours), receive an SMS READY Expert diploma in PDF format in their respective field -
PRINT GRAPHICS, WEB GRAPHIC or VIDEO GRAPHICS - or all three.

Included with each SMS colour palette is a brand license* for one brand to use the respective colour palette for 12 months as of purchase.

The diploma is also valid for a period of 12 months.

The price of each SMS colour palette is EUR 90 and the price of the diploma is EUR 60.

Renewal of the brand license and the diploma after 12 months is EUR 60 per year.

The cost for each additional brand license is also EUR 60 per year.

SMS READY Expert training - Design, Check & Measure

Individuals that select the Design, Check & Measure training will in addition to the above also be taught how to measure SMS colours, how to locate the closest SMS Standard colour using the ColorMeter Exact instrument, and how to correctly communicate their SMS colours with other users of the ColorMeter Exact instrument to ensure that everyone is aiming for the exact LAB value of the respective SMS colour(s). The prices are the same for this training, but in addition the individual will need to invest in a ColorMeter Exact spectral instrument, that costs EUR 499 extra (normal price incl. the SMS Standard v6 colour palette built-in is EUR 599).

* An SMS brand license means that an owner of an SMS colour palette is allowed to use colours from that respective colour palette as official brand colours for one brand. Included is remote support from Spot-Nordic for that respective brand, during the term of the license.

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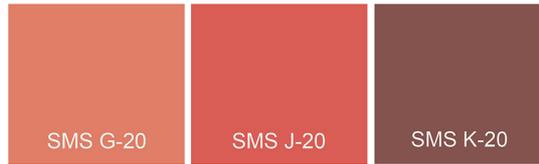
SMS READY Expert training - Design and Check

Once you have received your SMS colour palette in PDF format, please open the link

https://www.spot-nordic.com/sms/gettingstarted/SMS_Do_It_Yourself_05.2024.pdf

Follow the instructions carefully but pick out at least 4 SMS colours of your choosing.

Feel free to pick other CMYK icc profiles then the ones we used in the step-by-step training. The new version of our colour palettes - the Standard, the ECO and the MAX versions are now normalized for printing on white, neutral paper - according to the older Fogra 39 and Fogra 47 standards, while the older versions - up to version 5 were optimized for printing on papers that contain optical brighteners that reflect a bluish cast when they are exposed to daylight (due to UV that is found in daylight).

The reason we changed our SMS colours (ever so slightly - the difference is hardly noticeable) is the fact that normally colours are evaluated under normal LED lights that do not contain any UV - and thus the point of pushing the Fogra 51 and Fogra 52 standards is not relevant. Furthermore, papertypes that have a white point suited for Fogra 51 and Fogra 52 and contain optical brighteners can be used for printing to the old Fogra 39 and Fogra 47 standards - that most printers still remain loyal to, will not glow, if they are only evaluated under "normal" LED lights.

Email us your PDFs to sms@spot-nordic.com. Remember to embed the respective icc profile you are using in each case:

a) In the original sRGB format (for WEB GRAPHICS)

b) In a CMYK format ready for printing on white, coated and uncoated paper in the case of the Standard or ECO colour palette or just coated paper in the case of the MAX colour palette- for PRINT GRAPHICS.

c) In REC. 709 format - for VIDEO GRAPHICS (optional).

Once we have checked your colours and verified that the LAB value of each SMS colour is correct, we will email your SMS READY Expert diploma to you.

If you fail in converting your SMS colours correctly, you are allowed to repeat the job until you get it right.

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SMS READY Expert training - Design, Check and Measure

Once you have received your ColorMeter Exact instrument, we will provide you with the P20 Standard v6 and the P20x MAX library, that you can import into the Exact app and depending on your field of expertise, we will provide one-on-one support and assistance to make sure that you get the most out of your instrument and you get comfortable with using digital colour palettes rather than printer references to communicate your brand colours.