

BEST PRACTICES

FOR EVALUATING TEXTILE
COLOR APPROVALS





Best Practices for Evaluating Textile Color Approvals

Many color managers, apparel and soft home designers often wonder if they are evaluating textile color lab dips correctly and efficiently.

We interviewed Sophicolor CEO Mary Vigeant, a serious color expert, to get the best practices for evaluating lab dips. Here is what she had to say.

What is the best way to evaluate textile color approvals?

There are two ways to evaluate lab dips. You can do them physically the way we've always done and now we can do them digitally as well. Digitally means a dye house can use the "spectral data" (which Sophicolor provides provide for free) to measure their color submission against, using a spectrophotometer. You don't need to view physical color for most of your evaluations any more.

Dyers can tell if it's a match without the human eye. Digital is very accurate and saves tremendous lead time and money. A large percentage of companies use this method today. It requires that mills have the software and equipment and there's an understanding of tolerance between the parties.

What is spectral data and how does a mill use it?

Spectral data of a color refers to the spectral reflectance numerical data that is generated, when a color object is measured by a spectrophotometer. Essentially it is the measurement of how much light is reflected within the visible spectrum of energy. Sorry to get a little technical here!

The wonderful thing about spectral data is that all kinds of information can be derived from these numbers. We know how a measured color will look under many different light sources.

We can get RGB values from spectral data as well as HEX values, and Adobe Swatch Exchange (we provide these to clients for free). Color can be easily and accurately shared using digital data, sharing this way is instant and eliminates errors.

Do you have tips for physically evaluating lab dips, if you're a company without a light box or are working from home?

My first recommendation is to evaluate lab dips for your company globally using digital color evaluations where possible. The other recommendation is to use flat and repeatable color standards when possible.

If you are not using digital evaluations, I would always recommend a light booth or controlled lighting room to evaluate colors. They are available at many price points from companies such as XRite, Verivide and Datacolor.

If you must evaluate color physically, without a booth and you twisted my arm, I would use an artificial light (such as an indoor light source).

I'd make sure to use the same light every time and to share the color temperature of the light bulb with your mills or other partners. This information is usually found on the light bulb itself. This way both parties are using the same color light.

What is the best practice for using a light booth to evaluate physical lab dips?

- Make sure your light booth is clear from any other objects other than those you are evaluating.
- View in a dark room with only the light booth lit. Use the same viewing procedures for all evaluations, such as view 2 - ply of fabric, view side by side, same size samples, view samples at 45 degree angle.
- Check to make sure you are viewing under the correct primary light source (technically called illuminants, such as D65, or UL30, etc.).
- View the samples under other light sources to determine if the color sample differs greatly from the primary to a second or third light source.

What tips do you have for communicating color comments back to a mill or vendor?

- Be sure everyone is viewing and evaluating colors using the same light source.
- When providing comments always stick to 3 elements, lightness of the sample, hue of the sample and the Chroma (or brightness) of the sample, such as the sample is too dark, too red and too dull.
- Provide how close the sample is to the original (standard). Such as: “This sample is quite close to the original but is a tiny bit too dark, a little too red and should be a little less dull”.

Any final thoughts on getting colors right without time consuming submits?

The simplest way to get lab dips right, shorten lead times and save money, is to provide your mills with good color standards with spectral data, establish mutually acceptable tolerances and have them use digital data for approvals.

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