

PANTONE Spot Color Name Suffixes

Understanding C, U, CV, and other naming conventions in PMS colors

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The PANTONE® Matching System (PMS) is the dominant spot color printing system in the United States. Printers use a special mix of ink to achieve the color needed. Each spot color in the Pantone system is assigned a name or a number. There are over a thousand Pantone spot colors available.

Are PANTONE 3258 C, PANTONE 3258 U, and PANTONE 3258 CVU the same color? Yes and No. While PANTONE 3258 is the same ink formula (a shade of green), the letters that follow it represent the **apparent color** of that ink mix when printed on different types of paper.

The letter suffixes of U, C, and M tell us whether that particular color is how it will appear on uncoated, coated, or matte finish papers, respectively. The coating and finish of the paper affects the apparent color of the printed ink even though each uses the same formula.

Pantone swatch books — printed samples of ink - come in coated, uncoated, and matte finishes. You would use these swatch books or color guides to find the desired spot color for the type of paper used in your project.

Software programs such as Photoshop and CorelDRAW contain color palettes for various printing systems, including PANTONE colors. You can add additional color palettes or create custom palettes for your software.

In your software color palettes you may encounter suffixes such as CV, CVU or CVC. CV stands for "computer video" and is an electronic simulation of the Pantone color. PANTONE Reflex Blue CVU is an on-screen simulation of how PANTONE Reflex Blue will appear when printed on uncoated paper. Likewise, CVC is a simulation of the color on coated paper. Be aware that there are additional suffixes for process colors but for this discussion we'll stick with spot color.

Quick Suffix Overview:

- U = uncoated paper
- C = coated paper
- M = matte paper
- CV = computer video (electronic simulation)
- CVU = computer video - uncoated
- CVC = computer video - coated

Name That Color

So, which designation should you use when specifying colors? It doesn't really matter as long as you are consistent. While PANTONE 185 CV and PANTONE 185 CVC are the same ink formula, your software may see them as two different colors, even if your [monitor](#)¹ shows them as virtually identical.

If PANTONE 185 is the shade of red you want, use either PANTONE 185 CV or PANTONE 185 CVC but not both in the same print job. Capitalization is also important. PANTONE 185 CV, Pantone 185 CV, and PMS 185 CV are three different colors as far as your software is concerned.

Software programs may use differing Pantone palettes. For example, Adobe InDesign 1.5 has Pantone coated (CVC) and uncoated (CVU) palettes while CorelDRAW 7 has a single Pantone CV palette. If you are importing images created in CorelDRAW into InDesign you'll need to rename your colors in CorelDRAW to match the InDesign color palettes.

When you define your own colors or creat custom palettes, use a consistent naming scheme. You can use oddball names to represent any color — such as Ruby Red Grapefruit #2 — but it is usually best to stick with a familiar naming convention: PANTONE in all caps, the name or number, then CVC or CVU as the suffix.

Remember, what you see on the screen is simply a simulation of the printed color. To insure the most accurate color, you should use your Pantone swatch books to find the right ink colors for your project.

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