
Subject: Working with Specific Colors in IDL
Posted by [davidf](#) on Mon, 08 Mar 1999 08:00:00 GMT
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Martin Schultz (mgs@io.harvard.edu) writes in an article on another subject:

> it would certainly be
> helpful to have predefined drawing colors as default (instead of or in
> addition to) the grey scale color table which first has to be
> overwritten (and this seems to be a running theme on this newsgroup
> too). Best would be to have a standard set of named colors so that you
> could write `plot,color=black` and it would work no matter whether you
> have < 256 colors or 16M. This shouldn't be hard to implement for true
> color systems

Several weeks ago now Liam Gumley offered a color table in this newsgroup that represented the 16 colors offered in the McIDAS color map. I liked those colors so much that I added them to my GETCOLOR program. At the same time, I updated GETCOLOR to make it a little easier to use.

Those of you who have used GETCOLOR know that the purpose of it is to be able to ask for a color by "name". But I added a second positional parameter to it so that you can now pass it an index number where the color should be loaded. For example, suppose you want to draw a plot in yellow. You can do this:

```
yellow = GetColor("yellow", 10)
Plot, Findgen(11), Color=yellow
```

I tend to use it like this. Suppose I want a gray background, green axes, and yellow data colors:

```
; Load the colors.
yellow = GetColor("yellow", !D.Table_Size-4)
green = GetColor("green", !D.Table_Size-3)
gray = GetColor("gray", !D.Table_Size-2)
; Draw the plot.
Plot, Findgen(11), Color=green, Background=gray
OPlot, Findgen(11), Color=yellow
```

The code above will work on an 8-bit display or on a 24-bit display with DECOMPOSED color turned OFF.

If you want to work with DECOMPOSED color turned ON, it is even more straightforward:

```
Plot, Findgen(11), Color=GetColor("yellow", /True)
```

It is still possible to get the color triple back that represents a particular color. Just don't pass the index parameter:

```
triple = GetColor("yellow")  
Print, triple
```

While this doesn't address all of Martin's issues, it does make it a little easier to work with 16 pretty nice colors. :-)

You can download GETCOLOR at this URL:

<http://www.dfanning.com/programs/getcolor.pro>

Cheers,

David

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

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