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1 Colors

1.1 Introduction

The Color Selection module is comprised of several sections:

- [The Scheme tab](#), used to manage schemes.
- [The Options tab](#), used to change the options of the current scheme.
- [The Colors tab](#), used to change the colors of the current scheme.
- [The state effects tabs](#) (Inactive, Disabled), used to change the state effects of the current scheme.

Note: This documentation will sometimes refer to the "current" scheme, or the "active" scheme. The "current" scheme is the set of colors and color scheme options that was most recently applied, i.e. what you would get if you choose Cancel. The "active" scheme is the set of colors as has been most recently edited by you, i.e. what you would get if you choose Apply.

1.2 Scheme Management

The Scheme tab lets you manage the color schemes on your machine. Only one scheme is active at once, but you may save schemes, allowing you to quickly change the scheme later. When you have created a scheme you like, you can save it with Save Scheme.... You can remove schemes using Remove Scheme. Note that system schemes cannot be removed; trying to do so will display an error.

KDE ships with several schemes. If you have an Internet connection, you can also browse and retrieve user-created schemes using Get New Schemes....

1.2.1 Importing Schemes

You can also import schemes that you have downloaded or otherwise obtained, as well as import KDE 3 schemes. KDE 4 color schemes are named like "*.colors", while KDE 3 schemes are named like "*.kcsrc".

Because KDE 4 has many more color roles than KDE 3, importing a KDE 3 scheme is different from importing a KDE 4 scheme. When a KDE 4 scheme is imported, it becomes part of your saved scheme collection. When a KDE 3 scheme is imported, the colors that exist in KDE 3 are overlaid onto the active scheme, and the result is not automatically saved into your collection. After importing a KDE 3 scheme, you will likely need to adjust the colors that are new in KDE 4, as well as the state effects. For best results, before importing a KDE 3 scheme, select a similar KDE 4 scheme (you do not need to apply the scheme before importing).

1.3 Color Scheme Options

The Options tab allows you to change some properties that deal with how the color scheme is used, as well as some options that change the color scheme that are different from actually assigning colors.

- Apply inactive window color effects — If checked, state effects (see below) will be applied to inactive windows. This can help visually identify active versus inactive windows, and may have aesthetic value, depending on your taste. However, some users feel that it causes distracting "flickering" since windows must be repainted when they become inactive. Unlike desktop effects, color state effects do not require compositing support and will work on all systems, however they will only work on KDE 4 applications.
- Inactive selection changes color — If checked, the current selection in elements which do not have input focus will be drawn using a different color. This can assist visual identification of the element with input focus in some applications, especially those which simultaneously display several lists.
- Shade sorted column in lists — If checked, multi-column lists will use a slightly different color to paint the column whose information is being used to sort the items in the list.
- Apply colors to non-KDE4 applications — If checked, KDE will attempt to export its color scheme so that non-KDE 4 applications will use the same colors. Most applications will honor the exported scheme to varying degrees, though some may have bugs or otherwise not honor the exported scheme.
- Contrast — This slider controls the contrast of shaded elements, such as frame borders and the "3D" effects used by most styles. A lower value gives less contrast and therefore softer edges, while a higher value makes such edges "stand out" more.

1.4 Colors

The Colors tab allows you to change the colors in the active color scheme.

Creating or changing a scheme is a simple matter of clicking on the swatch in the color list and selecting a new color. You can check your changes at any time by pressing Apply. It is suggested that you save your scheme (via the Scheme tab) when you are done.

The Common Colors set, which is displayed initially, is not actually a "set" in the sense used by KDE (see next section), but presents a number of color roles in a way that makes it easier to edit the scheme as a whole. When creating a new color scheme, you will usually change these colors first, and use the other sets to tweak specific colors if needed.

Note that Common Colors makes available roles from all sets. For example, "View Background" here is shorthand for the Normal Background role from the View set. Also, setting colors that do not refer to a specific set will change that

color in *all* sets. (As an exception, "Inactive Text" will change the color for all sets *except* for Selection; there is a separate "Selection Inactive Text" for Inactive Text in the Selection set.) Some roles may not be visible under Common Colors at all, and can only be changed (if needed) by selecting the appropriate set.

1.4.1 Color Sets

KDE 4 breaks the color scheme into several sets based on the type of user interface element, as follows:

- View — information presentation elements, such as lists, trees, text input boxes, etc.
- Window — window elements that are not buttons or views.
- Button — buttons and similar elements.
- Selection — selected text and items.
- Tooltip — tool tips, "What's This" tips, and similar elements.
- Window Manager — window title bars and related elements.

Each set contains a number of color roles. Except for the Window Manager colors, each set has the same roles. All colors are associated with one of the above sets.

1.4.2 Color Roles

Each color set is made up of a number of roles which are available in all other sets. (The Window Manager set is an exception; it has its own unique roles that do not exist in any other set, and does not use the same roles as the other sets.) In addition to the obvious Normal Text and Normal Background, these roles are as follows:

- Alternate Background — used when there is a need to subtly change the background to aid in item association. This might be used e.g. as the background of a heading, but is mostly used for alternating rows in lists, especially multi-column lists, to aid in visually tracking rows.
- Link Text — used for hyperlinks or to otherwise indicate "something which may be visited", or to show relationships.
- Visited Text — used for "something (e.g. a hyperlink) that has been visited", or to indicate something that is "old".
- Active Text — used to indicate an active element or attract attention, e.g. alerts, notifications; also for hovered hyperlinks.
- Inactive Text — used for text which should be unobtrusive, e.g. comments, "subtitles", unimportant information, etc.

- Negative Text — used for errors, failure notices, notifications that an action may be dangerous (e.g. unsafe web page or security context), etc.
- Neutral Text — used to draw attention when another role is not appropriate; e.g. warnings, to indicate secure/encrypted content, etc.
- Positive Text — used for success notices, to indicate trusted content, etc.

As well as the text roles, there are a few additional "decoration" roles that are used for drawing lines or shading UI elements (while the above may, in appropriate circumstances, also be used for this purpose, the following are specifically *not* meant for drawing text). These are:

- Focus Decoration — used to indicate the item which has active input focus.
- Hover Decoration — used for mouse-over effects, e.g. the "illumination" effects for buttons.

In addition, except for Inactive Text, there is a corresponding background role for each of the text roles. Currently (except for Normal and Alternate Background), these colors are not chosen by the user, but are automatically determined based on Normal Background and the corresponding Text color. These colors may be previewed by selecting one of the sets other than "Common Colors".

The choice of color role is left to the developer; the above are guidelines intended to represent typical usage.

1.4.3 Window Manager Colors

As previously stated, the Window Manager set has its own roles, independent of those in other sets. These are (currently) only accessible via Common Colors, and are as follows:

- Active Titlebar — used to draw the title bar background, borders, and/or decorations for the active window (that is, the one with input focus). Not all window decorations will use this in the same way, and some may even use the Normal Background from the Window set to draw the title bar.
- Active Titlebar Text — used to draw the title bar text when Active Titlebar is used to draw the title bar background. May also be used for other foreground elements which use Active Titlebar as the background.

The Inactive Titlebar [Text] roles are the same as the above, but for inactive windows, rather than active windows.

1.5 Color State Effects

Color state effects are applied to interface elements in the inactive (windows that do not have focus; only if Apply inactive window color effects is enabled) or disabled states. By changing the effects, the appearance of elements in these states can be changed. Usually, inactive elements will have reduced contrast (text fades slightly into the background) and may have slightly reduced intensity, while disabled elements will have strongly reduced contrast and are often notably darker or lighter.

Three types of effect may be applied to each state (with the effects of the two states being independent). These are Intensity, Color and Contrast. The first two (Intensity, Color) control the overall color, while the last (Contrast) deals with the foreground colors relative to the background.

1.5.1 Intensity

Intensity allows the overall color to be lightened or darkened. Setting the slider to the middle produces no change. The available effects are:

- Shade — makes everything lighter or darker in a controlled manner. Each "tick" on the slider increases or decreases the overall intensity (i.e. perceived brightness) by an absolute amount.
- Darken — changes the intensity to a percentage of the initial value. A slider setting halfway between middle and maximum results in a color half as intense as the original. The minimum gives a color twice as intense as the original.
- Lighten — conceptually the opposite of darken; lighten can be thought of as working with "distance from white", where darken works with "distance from black". The minimum is a color twice as "far" from white as the original, while halfway between middle and maximum gives an intensity halfway between the original color and white.

1.5.2 Color

Color also changes the overall color, but is not limited to intensity. The available effects are:

- Desaturate — changes the relative chroma. The middle setting produces no change; maximum gives a gray whose perceptual intensity equals that of the original color. Lower settings increase the chroma, giving a color that is less gray / more "vibrant" than the original.
- Fade — smoothly blends the original color into a reference color. The minimum setting on the slider produces no change; maximum gives the reference color.
- Tint — similar to Fade, except that the color (hue and chroma) changes more quickly while the intensity changes more slowly as the slider value is increased.

1.5.3 Contrast

The contrast effects are similar to the color effects, except they apply to the text, using the background color as the reference color, and desaturate is not available. Fade produces text that "fades out" more quickly, but keeps its color longer, while Tint produces text that changes color to match the background more quickly while keeping a greater intensity contrast for longer (where "longer" means higher settings on the slider). For Contrast effects, the minimum setting on the slider produces no change, while maximum causes the text to completely disappear into the background.