Crash Course in Infographics

A Resource For

Educators

Those Who Want to Illustrate a Point

Marketers

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What Are Infographics?

An infographic uses visuals—sometimes supported by text—to represent information or data, often with the aim of educating or informing an audience.
Why Do Infographics Matter?

Infographics are an effective way to educate or inform an audience. They can be used to make complex data easier to understand and digest.

5x
We receive 5x as much information as we did in 1986.

Users only read roughly 1/4 of the words on a webpage.

We process the equivalent of 100,000+ words (that’s 34GB!) on an average day. And that’s not even including time spent at work!

100,000+

Visual Information on the Rise

There are 4x as many visuals in literature since 1990.

Visual information has increased by over 9000% on the internet.

As of 2015, there are 62 million search results for “infographic” and that number is projected to increase.

People like pretty pictures

90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual.

Color images make people 80% more likely to read something.

We are 30x more likely to read an infographic than a text article.

Images are great teachers

There’s a 70% rate of understanding for text-only labels, and a 95% rate of understanding for text and picture labels.

People recall 80% of what they see and do, 20% of what they read, and 10% of what they hear.

65% of people are visual learners.

It only takes 150ms for a symbol to be processed and another 100ms to attach a meaning to it.

70% of marketers plan to increase their use of original visual assets in 2015.

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A Checklist for Every Good Infographic Ever

Infographics support focused data with good design to tell a shareable story in a clear and concise manner.

The quotes come from industry experts.

Focused data:
- Use relevant data
  “A great infographic allows the viewer to grasp the implications of big data.”
  – @Steveology
- Fact-check
  “If the data you're working with is untrustworthy, then your infographic will be too.”
  – Tiffany Farrant-Gonzalez
- Credit your sources

Clear design:
- Limit your color palette
- Use simple graphics
- Use data visualizations that most clearly illustrate the data
- Convey the message at a glance
  “Take a lot of data, or a number of concepts, and boil it down to one image.”
  – @mvolpe
- Establish a connection between sections
- Good infographics utilize the hierarchy of information
  See “The Simplest Infographic Structure” section
- Make sure the graphics and numbers match
- Limit width to 735 pixels
  (it’s the standard)
- Anything over 5000 pixels tall will lose attention
  “Too many infographics now are too darned big.”
  – @TDefren

Shareable story:
- Answer an interesting question to grab audiences
  “A good infographic starts with a good ‘why’ question.”
  – @ConversationAge
- Use rational data to elicit an emotional response
- Graphics should tell the story
  “A great infographic tells a meaningful story in an instant.”
  – @jowyang
- Use as little text (as possible) in a clear font
  “If your infographic is supplemented with 1,000 words, you’ve missed the mark.”
  – @mikemacfarlane
- Make the file as small as possible (compressed .jpeg) without sacrificing fidelity
- Don’t forget to sign it with an embed code

“A great infographic allows the viewer to grasp the implications of big data.”
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The 7 Common Types of Infographic

**List**

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Supports a claim through a series of steps

**Best used to:**
- support a specific claim or argument

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**Flowchart**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Provides a specialized answer to a question via reader choices

**Best used to:**
- provide personalized answers for readers
- showcase how multiple situations can reach the same conclusion

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**Versus**

A
B
C

Compares two things in a head-to-head study

**Best used to:**
- highlight differences between two similar things
- highlight similarities between two unlike things
- prove one option is superior/inferior to the other

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**Map**

1
2
3
4
5

Showcases data trends based on location

**Best used to:**
- compare places and cultures via setting-centric data

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**Data Visualization**

Communicates data through charts, graphs, and/or design

**Best used to:**
- make data-driven arguments easier to understand
- make facts and statistics more interesting to absorb

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**Timeline**

1
2
3
4
5

Tells a story through a chronological flow

**Best used to:**
- show how something has changed over time
- make a long, complicated story easier to understand
- show how one thing leads to another

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**Visual Article**

Lorem ipsum
dolor sit amet
consectetur adipiscing elit!

**Best used to:**
- cut down on text
- make a plain article more interesting
- increase sharing potential
The 13-Step Guide to Building an Infographic

Steps 1-4 will help you make your rough outline

1. **Consider your audience**
   Who are you creating this infographic for? What would they be interested in knowing?

2. **Create a thesis/question**
   If there was a question your infographic is going to answer, what is it?

3. **Focus it**
   Now that you know your question, remove any and all information that isn’t in support of answering that question or addressing the topic behind it.

4. **Tell a story to create flow**
   In terms of design, people read left to right and top to bottom. But equally important is that your infographic has a narrative; make sure there is a logical flow to your points, and that each one leads into the next.

Steps 5-10 will help you design your infographic

5. **Brevity is the soul of wit**
   The appeal of infographics is that they take big, complex things, and they make them into something almost anyone can understand. Too much information, too much text, or too many graphics can make it difficult to understand and unappealing to read.

6. **A picture is worth a thousand words**
   Text can be necessary for minute clarifications, but your graphics should be doing all the heavy lifting. What can be summarized or represented graphically?

7. **Limit color and font choices**
   Though there are exceptions to this rule, two fonts and three colors is usually more than enough. Be consistent with font sizes too.

Steps 11-13 will help you ensure the quality

8. **White space is good**
   Don’t clutter up your design—give the graphics and text room to breathe.

9. **Don’t get too big**
   735 pixels wide and fewer than 5000 pixels tall is ideal. 8000 pixels tall is an absolute limit; the smaller it is, the easier it is to download, share, and view.

10. **Use accurate data**
    Double check that decimal points are in the right place and that there aren’t too many zeroes in spots. Ensure stats are true, sources are reliable, and that graphics accurately represent their content.

11. **Credit your sources**
    You can do this next to each fact, or in a reference list at the end of your infographic.

12. **Sign it**
    Don’t forget to credit yourself, your site, and anyone else involved.

13. **Make it viewable and legible**
    Your infographic should be readable and coherent even if it isn’t quite full size.
How to Come up with a Winning Idea for an Infographic

Ideas come from a lot of places, but for infographics, access to new data and timely topics is particularly important.

Use the news
Topics inspired by sites like news.google.com and news.yahoo.com are great for media pitches

Help a Reporter
HARO (www.helpareporter.com) is a daily email newsletter with story ideas that could turn into infographics

Check what’s trending
Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook will all tell you what’s popular via their Trending Topics sections

Explore existing infographics
Use Google Images, Pinterest, or one of the infographic directories for inspiration and to get an idea of what audiences like

Lean on your own expertise
Try to create an informative infographic on a niche you know well
The Simple Infographic Structure

Every infographic benefits from this basic structure. Infographics follow the same structure as a good paper or news article.

- **EVERYTHING** included in the infographic should be related to the topic
- An introduction to the topic
- **Content that supports your argument or topic:**
  This is the biggest section, and it should include multiple examples or facts in support of your topic
  Content that addresses arguments AGAINST your topic could also be included
- **A conclusion or call to action:**
  This is where you summarize and reinforce your argument, and where you provide a call to action for your readers (if appropriate).
How to Outline an Infographic

1. Collect your resources and content. They don’t need to be finalized, but you should have a good idea of what you’ll be including in the final version.

2. Create a ‘wireframe.’ Think of this as the skeleton of your infographic. Don’t worry about making it perfect; this is your rough blueprint.

3. Use whatever you’re comfortable with: paper, a whiteboard, Word, Illustrator, etc.

Your wireframe needs to:

- have room for your title and introduction
- outline sections (if you’re using them) and organize them in a logical flow
- make space for any images you plan to use
- note which facts or arguments are going where; show how they flow into one another
- include the rough renderings of any data visualization you plan to use
6 Best Practices for Designing an Infographic

Infographics are all about visuals; make sure yours looks its best.

1. **Limit your color palette**
   - Three colors are usually ideal, with one of those colors working as a contrast
   - Solid colors are better than gradients
   - Avoid anything too bright or hard to see (e.g. highlighter yellow)

2. **White space is a good thing**
   - Don’t feel like every pixel has to be used
   - Spacing your content makes it easier to read and understand

3. **Keep imagery simple**
   - Use uncomplicated graphics that look good big and small
   - Things like drop shadows are rarely necessary

4. **Two fonts is more than enough**
   - Keep font size consistent—three sizes (header, subhead, body) should suffice
   - Typography is a great way to draw attention to a fact or figure

5. **Size matters**
   - Width should be 600 to 735 pixels
   - Anything taller than 5000 pixels will start to lose attention

6. **Be consistent with style choices**
   - A limited color palette helps
   - Using 1940s imagery? Don’t drop in something from the 1980s
6 Best Practices for Creating Marketable Infographics

1. **Answer**
   a question with your infographic: for example, the title of this section addresses “how to create a marketable infographic”

2. **Tie**
   your infographic into a popular or trending topic: this is the least universal suggestion, and one that varies depending on the topic, but if you’re trying to get your infographic noticed, tying it to something popular will garner that initial attention (and can help you decide where you can submit your infographic in the later steps)

3. **Use**
   useful data: one interesting fact is worth more than a dozen middling ones; a fact like this can be the lynchpin for your infographic and the reason it’s shared by others

4. **Make**
   information digestible: the main purpose of infographics is to distill facts down into something palatable for non-expert audiences; the use of graphics and succinct text is how most infographics accomplish this

5. **Inform**
   your sources: sourcing your facts is good practice; letting your sources know you used them can bring in additional eyes

6. **Cater**
   to short attention spans: it’s always tempting to include every fact, but keeping infographics short and sweet is a big part of what makes them so enjoyable to read
3 Free Ways to Market Your Infographic

Paying for SEO or a sponsored tweet will work wonders, but there are plenty of free options.

Submit to blogs, collections, and directories.
Reach out to industry experts. Bloggers and prominent twitter users are always hungry for content.
Add your infographic to relevant collections and directories. Here are a few places to submit your infographic:
- Easel.ly
- Charts Bin
- Pinterest
- Daily Infographic
- Cool Infographics
- Infographics Archive
- Infographic Journal
- Infographics Showcase
- Visual Loop
- Chart Porn
- Daily Infographic
- Flickr (Infographics Group)
- Reddit's Infographics Subreddit

Leverage social media
Make sure social bookmarking tools (e.g. “Share on Facebook” buttons) are next to the source site for your infographic.
- Twitter follow button: https://twitter.com/about/resources/buttons#follow
- Twitter share button: https://twitter.com/about/resources/buttons#tweet
- Twitter hashtag button: https://twitter.com/about/resources/buttons#hashtag
- Twitter “Tweet this” button: http://clicktotweet.com
- Facebook like button: https://developers.facebook.com/docs/reference/plugins/like-box/
- Facebook share button: https://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/share-button
- LinkedIn follow button: https://developer.linkedin.com/plugins/follow-company
- LinkedIn share button: https://developer.linkedin.com/plugins/share-button
- Pinterest follow button: http://business.pinterest.com/widget-builder/#do_follow_me_button
- Pinterest “pin it” button: http://business.pinterest.com/widget-builder/#do_pin_it_button

Include an embed code
An absolute necessity! This is our favorite resource: http://www.siegemedia.com/embed-code-generator
1 Richard Alleyne (2011). Welcome to the information age, The Telegraph


4 Google Books Ngram Viewer

5 Google Trends

6 The Content Marketer’s Fact Pack, One Spot


