

## Infographics for Research

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Infographics are visual representations of information or data in a graphic format which is designed to make the information easy and quick to understand. Infographics are a powerful way of conveying key findings from research.

### What do we mean by Infographics?

An infographic is a representation of information or data in a graphic format designed to make information eye catching and easily understandable at a glance.

### Why use Infographics?

Not only are they engaging and fun to share, infographics are excellent tools for educating and informing audiences as a visualisation of a story. In many reports, infographics can be used to provide a snapshot of the key information, simplifying complex information into a format that is easy to digest and recall. They enhance text documents with illustrative visuals, condensing long reports in an innovative format which can be easily transferred to presentation slides.

Infographics aren't limited to any field or topic. You can create a visual representation of anything. Whether its findings from a study on the effects of smoking or on the number of businesses in the manufacturing sector, infographics are a popular addition to lengthy documents or presentations that can be aimed at any audience.

### What makes a good infographic?

A good infographic should do two things:

1. **Engage** the viewer
2. **Explain and explore**

So when we view an infographic we should think about

<b>Look and Feel</b>	Where is it on the scale from Dull to Interesting?
<b>Communication</b>	How well does it tell the story? Is it just there for decoration?

## What to consider when designing an Infographic

<b>Audience</b>	Be clear about who you are designing the infographic for.
<b>Format</b>	Consider the output format that you are designing for, is it for the web, for a written report, as a social media infographic. Consider issues relating to accessibility, such as alternative text / other reasonable adjustments
<b>Sketch it out</b>	A successful infographic needs to tell a story - too often they just end up a disparate collection of charts and graphs, with no real narrative. A good place to start is with a conversation, then use pen & paper to sketch out ideas, before moving to the detailed work with your data. Be led by what you want to communicate, not what the software you are using can do.
<b>Be on message</b>	Develop simple and digestible messages to help you tell your story.
<b>Keep it simple</b>	Simplify what you show to maximise the power of the message you want to convey. Develop a consistent visual style.
<b>Be selective</b>	Be selective about what you show. Start by including all data, but be prepared to iteratively lose information as you strip away individual elements. This includes chart junk, elements that clutter the infographic and detract from the story you are trying to tell. Be careful that your selection does not affect the accuracy of what you are presenting by distorting the information presented or seeking to mislead the viewer.
<b>Be consistent</b>	Remember the need for text and visuals to work together to tell a consistent story. This is important for accessibility.
<b>Signpost</b>	Provide signposting to additional relevant information, including where the data can be accessed / downloaded
<b>Test and improve</b>	The important thing is to give it a go. Share what you have produced with others and ask for feedback. Use Show and Tell as a way to build your own confidence and skills in this area.

## Infographics design principles

Some visual principles for designing infographics are given below:

<b>Size and Scale</b>	Size is an effective way of emphasizing visual elements, with larger elements getting more attention than smaller elements. Scale – the size of one object relative to another – is also important.
<b>Colour and Contrast</b>	Bright colours draw more attention than paler colours. Similar colours can be used to group related elements together. How colours are combined can create harmony, or provide contrast.
<b>Typographic Hierarchy</b>	Using different sizes of type and font can emphasise what the important elements are. This helps organise and structure the design, ie, Title, Subtitle, body text.
<b>Spacing</b>	Spacing can help to emphasise and draw the viewer's eye to particular elements.
<b>Proximity</b>	Placing related elements close together suggests a relationship and invites them to be seen as a group.
<b>Negative Space</b>	Effective use of negative empty space can make information easier to digest, and to focus on particular elements.
<b>Alignment</b>	Words are not just scattered randomly. How elements are aligned structures the design and directs the eye.
<b>Rule of Odds</b>	Odd numbered groups create focus. A group of one or three is more striking than a pair. Placing an equal number of elements either side of a central element emphasises the importance of the central element.
<b>Repetition</b>	Repetition creates unity. Repeating the same fonts and styles in a document helps creates a cohesive whole.
<b>Leading Lines</b>	The way that lines are used in an infographic can both direct attention and show movement.
<b>Rule of Thirds</b>	It can be useful to mentally divide the workspace up into a grid ie 3 x 3 which can be used to help lay elements out.
<b>Perspective</b>	The use of perspective can create an illusion of depth. Larger objects are seen as closer than smaller similar objects, and help to focus attention and set objects in context.

## Tools for Creating Infographics

You don't always need specialist tools to create infographics. Common desktop tools - such as MS Word, Powerpoint and Excel – all include drawing options.

There are a number of popular tools for creating infographics which can easily be found online:

- Canva (<https://www.canva.com/create/infographics/>)
- Piktochart (<https://piktochart.com/>)
- Visually (<https://visual.ly/>)
- Venngage (<https://venngage.com/>)
- Visme (<https://www.visme.co/>)
- Infogram (<https://infogram.com>)

There are also many professional packages available which are commonly used for creating infographics. These require greater investment / time to set up:

- Adobe Illustrator
- Inkscape

## Summary

Through explaining and exploring data, and engaging the viewer, infographics are a powerful tool for communicating key messages from research and ensuring that the messages are memorable.

By thinking about what we want to convey, and having a go at creating an infographic for this, we can inspire each other to create more engaging graphics that help us to communicate and tell the story more effectively with our research outputs.

## References

Lulu Pinney, Infographics and Data Visualisation Training Course Materials

12 visual hierarchy principles every non-designer must know

[http://blog.visme.co/visual-hierarchy/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email](http://blog.visme.co/visual-hierarchy/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email)

National Records of Scotland infographics and interactive data visualisations

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/stats-at-a-glance/infographics-and-visualisations>

Analysis Intelligence Research (AIR) Scotland Community Khub Group – Discussion Forum - Show and Tell Infographics

The 6 best tools for creating infographics

<https://www.creativebloq.com/infographic/6-best-tools-creating-infographics-21619252>

