

10 Dos and Don'ts for Creating Infographics

Simply calling something an infographic does not make it so. Here are our top 10 dos and don'ts for creating beautiful, effective infographics.

1. Don't forget to cite your sources.

If you don't cite your sources, you're not making an infographic. You're making a poster with some stuff on it that may or may not be true. No matter how well-designed it is, if it doesn't cite sources, so there's no way to fact-check this information.

2. Do add links to your sources as well as citations wherever possible.

Make it easy for your reader to fact-check your information by including links to your sources, as well as citations. Readers will have questions: Compared to what? What methods were used to determine this? Leading the curious reader to the source allows them to find answers.

3. Don't rely on iconography to convey an idea.

This is especially true for graphics that are meant for broad audiences. Icons that make perfect sense to you may read like nonsense to someone else. You only have a few seconds to capture and keep a reader's attention. If they can't get the overall gist of what you're trying to convey because you're relying on icons, they're very likely to just move on to the next thing on their reading list.

4. Do keep graphical elements simple — avoid chart junk.

Think about readability. Creating a bar chart where the bars are icons or shapes is distracting from the data. So is an image imposed on the background of the chart. Taken along with a lack of clear labeling and the inconsistency in data points, a simple bar chart's data can be difficult to read and understand.

5. Do consider color theory.

There are a whole host of reasons why you might want to consider color theory when designing an infographic. There's aesthetics: you want your work to look nice. Also consider that colors have meaning. We're familiar with this from elections, where red represents one party and blue the other on charts and graphs. Color-coding is a common mechanism in our world. Maps and stoplights are both commonly color-coded objects. Also consider that certain colors carry certain meanings in different parts of the world. Same for certain color combinations: in the

United States, red and green together indicate the holiday season, orange and black belong to Halloween, and red and yellow might remind you of your favorite fast-food restaurant.

6. Don't forget about colorblindness!

When choosing your color palettes, don't forget that not everybody sees color the same way. There are different types of colorblindness: some affect the hues people can see, but others cause trouble with the perception of saturation as well as hue. That lovely blue gradient you've chosen to represent your data may read like sludge to someone who's colorblind.

7. Do use online tools for color palettes.

Need a little help picking a colorblind-safe palette, or any palette in general? There are several online tools that can help you choose appropriate, aesthetically pleasing colors. Samantha Zhang at Graphiq has a [great post](#) that nails the considerations you should take into account when designing a color palette, and suggests tools for designing yours. [ColorBrewer](#) is one of our favorites.

8. Do create a narrative.

Infographics take data points and use them to tell a story – but it's very easy to forget to actually craft that story once you get into the nuts and bolts of design. Sketch out your narrative first: what point are you trying to make, and what data can you use to support it?

9. Don't include every single piece of information.

Once you've decided what your point is, don't feel compelled to include all the data you possess to support that idea. An infographic is not a comprehensive research paper or investigative report. This goes back to readability and attention span. Choose your supporting arguments wisely, and leave out any information that is irrelevant.

10. Do remember to edit visually.

So you've cleaned up your chart junk, considered your color palette, added your source, and reduced data noise. Great job! Now go back one more time and take a look at the text on your page. Where can you tighten up the copy and labels, to reduce text and let the graphics tell the story?

Go forth and create infographics. If you want a little more guidance, here are a pair of resources for building infographics and data visualizations:

- [Recommended Reading for Infographics](#)
- [Dataviz Checklist](#)

And if you want to see more of what NOT to do, take a look at [WTF Visualizations](#).