

KT Tip Sheet: Elements of an Infographic or Data Visualization

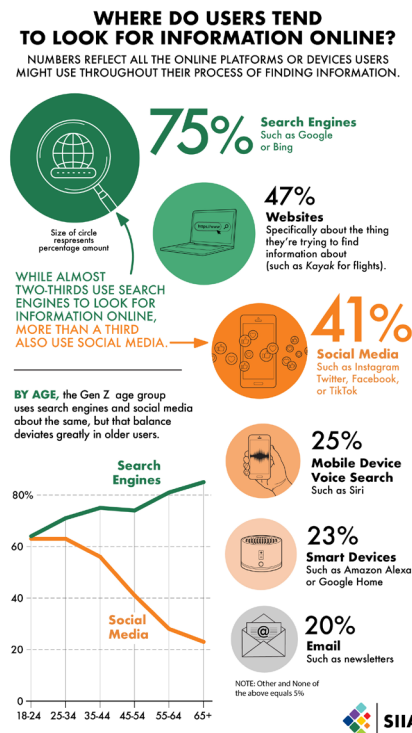
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What Is an Infographic or Data Visualization?

An infographic (short for informational graphic) or data visualization is any visual display intended to reveal evidence, making information visible. The content can be informative text to be illustrated, or numbers to be represented in a chart or map form. Usually, infographics have an illustrated component, sometimes accompanied with charts or maps, while a data visualization consists of only charts and/or maps.

Both should...

- **Use the right type of chart**
Use the correct chart form to most easily read the content.
- **Attract readers' attention**
Be visually interesting without letting creativity get in the way of ease of reading.
- **Don't frustrate readers**
Use chart forms and designs that users are familiar with, and make the design easy to follow.



- **Show the right amount of data**

Use enough content to communicate your message, and don't include any content that gets in the way of that.

Elements of a Graphic

An infographic (short for informational graphic) or data visualization is any visual display intended to reveal evidence, making the invisible visible. The content can be informative text to be illustrated, or numbers.

- **Main Headline**

Usually appears at the top left or centered, uses the largest text size (over 16 pt.), and quickly and creatively explains what the graphic is about.

- **Main Introduction**

Two to three sentences (usually 12–14 pt. size) that explains the main point/takeaway of the graphic without duplicating exactly what is referenced anywhere else.

- **Body**

The graphic forms or illustrations used in the infographic.

- **Labels**

9-10 pt. text that points to parts of the chart/map.

- **Sources**

State in 7 pt. size where the information comes from so readers know that it is factual. You don't need to include full URLs (unless your brand identity requires it), just the names of organizations, book or report titles, and authors. Titles of books and reports should be italicized. List them all one after the other, separated by commas. If one of the sources already has a comma in it, then separate them by semicolons.

- **Credit**

Name of designer who created the graphic, usually accompanied by their organization's name, in 7 pt. size. For example: Graphic by Jane Doe, Organization.

And if needed:

- **Legend or Key**

For maps and charts that require it. Try to keep the number of items listed to no more than 6. If you need to reduce the number, combine some in an "other" category if possible.

- **Subheads**

For headers (10-12 pt.) over each individual chart/map within an overall grouping of graphics. See infographic on page 3 for example.

- **Sub-Intros**

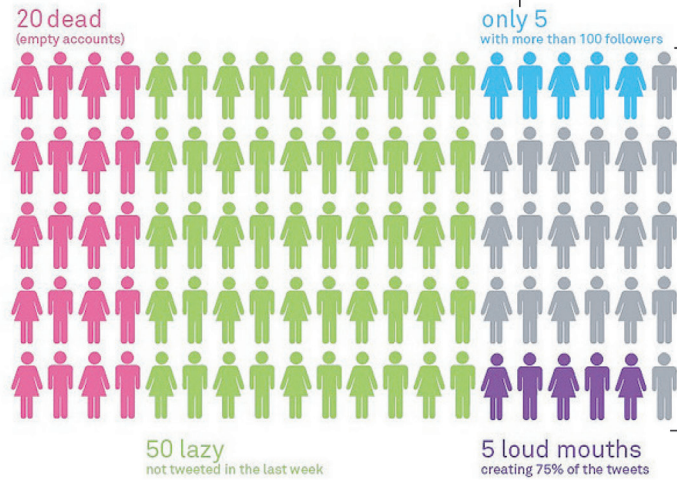
More narrowly written text for each individual graphic, again explaining the main point/takeaway. See infographic on page 3 for example.

Headline

Lead-in/Intro

Let's Not Get Too Excited...
If the Twitter community was 100 people...

Label



Body

Source(s)

source: tyson.com/inside/twitter [via rohithargava.typepad.com]

David McCandless // www.visualizedthebook.com // v1.2

Credit(s)

IMPORTANT NOTE

Suggestions for size and placement mentioned above are best practices for infographic design. It is best to have a set brand identity in place so that artists don't have to spend too much time thinking about what fonts to use and how to use them. Let them focus on visualizing the data and content, establishing your brand, and keeping the visualizations consistent.

Main Headline

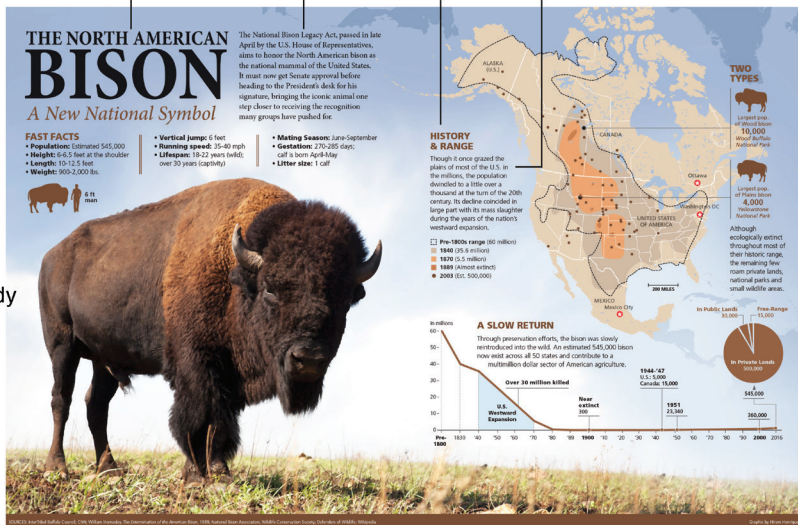
Main Intro

Subheadlines

Sub-Intros

Body

Body



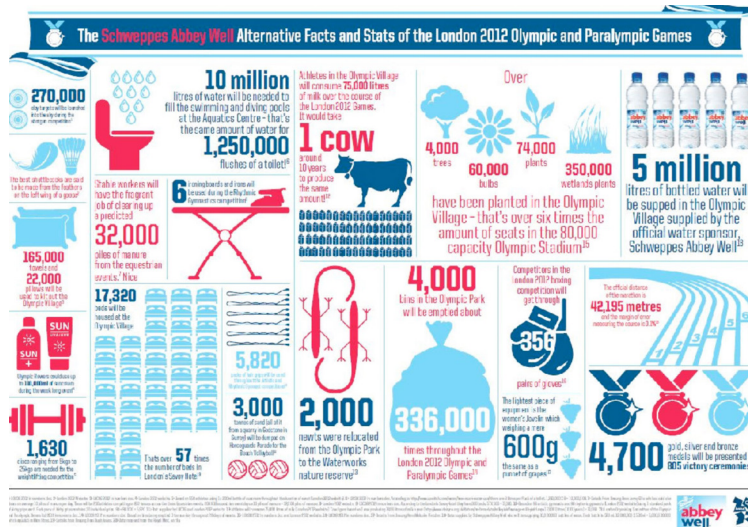
Sources

Credit

Avoid Data Dumps

The graphic below is an example of a *data dump*, where all the graphics grouped together are roughly the same size, there isn't a dominant element, and the different graphics are not placed, aligned, or spaced apart in any logical progression.

Creating this type of design may confuse or frustrate the reader, make it difficult to access the main point/takeaway, and prevent the reader from getting through the entire design.



Understand Your Audience

The complexity of your infographic or data visualization should be based on your audience's experience.

For example, if you audience is used to dense graphics with many different graphic forms in one design and using forms that are more sophisticated than basic bar, pie, and line charts, then it is reasonable to take that approach.

But if they are not used to dense graphics, then stick to your basic graphic forms and keep your designs simple, without too many elements.

It is important to educate your readers about other graphic forms. Therefore you should slowly introduce more complex graphics from time to time to get them familiar with more advanced graphics you may need to create in the future. Some in-depth stories require more complex infographics.

Other Important Factors

- If you need a Spanish version of your graphic, Spanish translations are usually longer.

- Not all Spanish/Latino cultures speak the same dialect of Spanish, so use phrases that are common across all dialects of the language as much as possible.
- Scientific words may need to be replaced by more common ones.

Tools of the Trade

Although artists and designers have their own preferences for software, some common ones include the following:

THE ADOBE SUITE

- **Adobe Illustrator**

The go-to software for print charts, maps, and vector illustrations. It is limited to 9 forms of charts, but experienced designers can create more starting with these 9 forms of charts.

- **Adobe InDesign**

Used for publication design such as fliers, fact sheets, brochures, and reports. Most of the elements of 508 compliance such as tagging and alt text is performed with InDesign.

- **Adobe Photoshop**

For photo retouching, color correcting, sizing, silhouetting, photo collages, and photo illustrations.

- **Adobe Acrobat**

Used for print setup and 508 compliance, especially for numbering the order of elements.

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