A photograph of three business professionals in an office setting, overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. A woman on the left is smiling and holding a pen over a document. A man in the center is looking at the document. Another man on the right is partially visible, also smiling. The background shows office desks and glass partitions.

# Simple Graphic Design Tips and Tricks



# Simple Graphic Design Tips and Tricks

Being able to put together engaging visual imagery for your website, social media, emails and infographics is a great way of capturing the attention of your customers and consumers.

Whilst there are many great agencies out there that can help you with your work, there are now also numerous websites that let you easily design high quality content yourself. Many of these have ready-made templates for different uses and formats – including the correct dimension for different social media posts – so it has never been simpler to catch your audience’s eye!

This guide contains some basic guidelines for you to follow to help you start creating your business’ own graphic designs.



# Planning your work

Before beginning a design piece, you should know who your audience is and what type of message you want them to take away.

Begin by sketching out a simple draft by hand so that you have a reference point.

Different types of content are used for different reasons and you should ensure that your design and purpose are always aligned.

One of the most important elements of design – no matter what the medium – is that you maintain **consistency**.

This covers the style, types of images used, the colours, fonts, sizing, placement – anything that is included in your design.

If your company has visual/design/branding guidelines, make sure that you know them and always adhere to them.

If these have not yet been developed, now is the time to do so.

Make sure that your branding is used across your designs.

Again, consistency is key here.

Ensure that the correct version is being used and that the logo or branding is being put in the right place and in the precise dimensions.

# Graphic Design Elements

Good Graphic Design is built on a number of elements. With a little bit of practice, you will find that putting together a good design – whether it be a poster, social media post or email banner – can be done by yourself.

## Colour

Colour choice is extremely important

- Your branding will often dictate the colours used but also be mindful of the psychology of colour and what emotions they can make people feel
- Again, specific preferred colours can be included in your guidelines via RGB or Hex codes – make sure you are using the right shade

## Size and Scale

Size and scale are critical

- How objects appear relative to each other will tell the viewer what is important
- This can help set the hierarchy of the design

## Proximity

Proximity of features helps build relationships between them

- Objects do not necessarily have to be beside each other
- Proximity can be built using visual connections of size, colour or font, for example

## Contrast

Contrast can help you tell your story

- It can guide the viewer's attention to the most important features of the design
- Contrast can be established with size, different colours, gradients of a colour, visual weight, density etc.

## Balance

Balance is established by the weight of each element of the design

- Whilst this doesn't necessarily have to be symmetrical, be aware of where you are placing elements on the design and how they interact

## Negative Space

Make use of negative space to highlight your key features

- Leaving space blank can guide the viewer's eye to a certain area
- You can also form shapes using this negative space

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## Lines and Shapes

Lines and shapes are key elements of design

- These can be used to frame an image, connect different objects, connote direction or separate the image into different parts
- Lines can also help dictate the alignment and break the image up like paragraphs on a page
- Shapes can be used to highlight certain areas of the image or particular objects and, like colours, different shapes can evoke different feelings
- For example, squares can imply strong and secure whereas circles make us think of whole or complete

## Icons and Illustrations

The use of simple icons and illustrations can make a massive difference to your design

- These can help break up the use of text or photo images
- Icons can be particularly good for indicating what the viewer should be thinking about your product
- A sun icon, for example, may make them feel warmth or happiness, whilst a ball or a pair of runners may tell them this is something they can enjoy while staying active
- They can also act as engaging bullet points

## Images

What sort of photo imagery should be used?

- If you want your product or a person, for example, to be the main subject of the design, this should be to the fore
- Any other features such as text or icons should appear around this
- Avoid the over-use of generic stock images – your work should be as authentic as possible and include as many of your own images
- If you want the image to be a background, make use of landscapes or something without an overly-dominant feature
- Similarly, you may want to use plain coloured or textured backgrounds

# Graphic Design:

## Website Suggestions

The following is a short list of websites that offer easy-to-use graphic design features, suitable for beginners.

Take your time and experiment to see which you feel most comfortable with and suits your needs best.

All three options have free and paid versions, with different levels of features available. See their websites for comparisons.



**Canva** is an online graphic design platform that allows you to create social media images, presentations, posters and other visuals.

It features a bank of stock photos and images, as well as allowing you to upload and edit your own using the templates, fonts, icons and other features available.



**Easil** is an online graphic design tool. It features professionally designed, fully customisable templates for use across various different mediums.

Easil is easy to use and can help you create designs for posters, flyers, social media etc.



**PicMonkey** is an online photo editing and graphic design platform. It can be accessed through a browser or phone app. It offers graphic design and photo editing tools, as well as templates for use across different streams.

PicMonkey also has a cloud-based storage system and the option to integrate brand colours, fonts, logos etc.

# Stock Images:

## Website Suggestions

Stock images can be a good way to find something to include to enhance your own work, especially if you are not able to take a photo yourself.

Whilst the suggestions here offer use for free (whether it requires credit or not), always be aware of the exact licence for any image you use and whether it can be used commercially, publicly etc.



**Pixabay** is an online community of creatives, sharing copyright free images and videos.

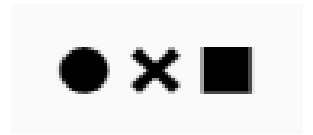
All contents are released under the Pixabay Licence, which makes them safe to use without asking for permission or giving credit to the artist – even for commercial purposes.



**Pexels** provides high quality and completely free stock photos and videos licenced under the Pexels licence.

All photos are tagged, searchable and also easy to find through the discover pages.

Pexels content can be used for commercial purposes for free, according to the licence set out on the website.



**The Noun Project** is an online collection of almost 3 million icons that can be used to help visually communicate your message.

The Free version allows you to use icons with attribution to the creator.

NounPro costs \$39.99 per year and allows for use without attribution, as well as the ability to customise the colour.

# Find out more

This guidebook should act as a very brief introduction to the world of graphic design.

We have also listed some resources we have found to be useful, that may help you delve a bit deeper in and expand your skills!

## [Canva](#)

[A step-by-step guide to designing from scratch](#)

## [Medium](#)

[10 Basic Principles of Graphic Design](#)

## [Shillington](#)

[5 Basic Principles of Graphic Design](#)

## [Visme](#)

[What Makes Good Design? Basic Elements and Principles](#)