131 TIPS

GRAPHICS AND ANIMATIONS FOR ELEARNING

THE eLEARNING GUILD

131 TIPS ON GRAPHICS AND ANIMATIONS FOR ELEARNING

INTRODUCTION

Dear Colleagues,

While few of us have been formally trained in creating, modifying, and using graphics and animations, organizations and clients expect instructional designers and developers to produce visually rich and professional-looking learning deliverables—without the benefit of a dedicated illustrator or animator on the project.

Fortunately, with just a little knowledge of visual principles, coupled with the power of modern graphic and animation tools, you can dramatically improve the look and feel of your learning deliverables—without using a dedicated expert. More importantly, by combining visual and instructional principles appropriately, you can ensure your graphics and animations will enhance learning effectiveness rather than just serve as decoration.

To help you on your journey to better-looking learning and more effective visual elements, we've gathered dozens of tips from learning professionals who know the ins and outs of graphics and animations for learning. Among the tipsters are several experts we invited to contribute; you can learn more about them in the next section of this eBook, and we've highlighted their tips throughout the remaining sections. In addition, we solicited tips from *The eLearning Guild's* 57,000+ members, and included their best tips as well.

The tips in this book provide a wide array of advice, and you're bound to find many ideas you can put to work immediately. You'll learn the importance of knowing your audience—including knowing how to meet the needs of learners with disabilities, why visual consistency is important to learning, and when (and when not) to use graphics and animations. You'll learn about basic and advanced graphic and animation tools, how to save time with templates, how to use fonts as graphics, the best file formats for graphics, how to use Flash for animations even if you plan to deliver animations in HTML5, what the "Ken Burns effect" is, and much, much more.
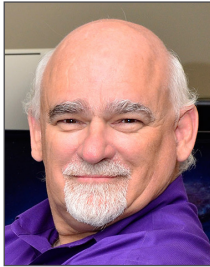
I hope you find many valuable tips in this eBook, and are able to use the advice right away to make your learning deliverables more attractive and useful for your learners. I also hope you consider attending or presenting at an upcoming *eLearning Guild* Online Forum!

Sincerely,

Chris Benz
Director of Online Events, The eLearning Guild

ABOUT OUR FEATURED TIPSTERS

Phil Cowcill, *Coordinator of Mobile Application Development, Canadore College*

Phil Cowcill is the coordinator of mobile application development for Canadore College. Phil started in multimedia development in 1985, when he was part of a team that developed Canada's first Level III interactive videodisc. He has been working full time in the multimedia field since then. In 1995, Canadore College hired Phil to set up, coordinate, and teach the interactive multimedia post-graduate program. Thompson Publishing released Phil's first academic publication in 2004, and Macromedia/ Adobe hired him in 2007 as a quality assurance engineer. Phil also travels and speaks at a variety of educational and multimedia conferences all over North America.

Michael Grant, *Instructional Designer, AICPA*

Michael McKenzie Grant is an instructional designer at the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), where he designs interactive training courses for global users in the corporate, financial, and services sectors. Throughout his career, Michael has helped lead eLearning development teams, and instructionally designed and developed eLearning courses for Fortune 500 companies. He has presented his research on interactive multimedia for educational-reinforcement tools at major conferences, such as the E-Learn World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education. Michael holds an MFA degree.

Krista Hildner, *Mobile App Developer/Faculty, Canadore College*

Krista Hildner is a full-time mobile application developer for Canadore College, with a slant towards building educational applications. When Krista isn't developing mLearning or mobile applications, she teaches part time in the college's mobile application development post-graduate program. She recently led the development of a highly sophisticated financial app, available for both Android tablets and iPads, and is currently part of a team building an extensive eLearning course on financial literacy and charitable donations.
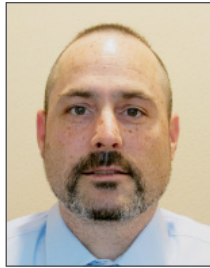
Michael Markey, *Operations Visualization and Content Manager, Transocean*

Michael Markey is the operations visualization and content manager for Transocean. Michael has over 20 years of experience building interactive presentations in the communications and learning industry, and has led award-winning multimedia departments. He has a fine-arts undergraduate degree, a master's degree in adult learning, and will complete his MBA degree at the end of 2013.

Donna Safko, *Owner, Mudpuddle Creations*

Donna Safko is the owner of Mudpuddle Creations. After 20 years in advertising and graphic design, the possibilities of new technology intrigued Donna, so she adapted her skills to include web, video, and mobile development. The combination of graphic design, instructional design, and web development gives her a one-stop-shop skill set. "Know the audience, understand the subject matter, and then find a creative way to engage the two" is her motto for creating eLearning and educational marketing. Donna holds a BS degree in visual communications and an MS degree in instructional technology.

Bianca Woods, *Instructional Designer, BMO Financial Group*

Bianca Woods is an instructional designer with BMO Financial Group, where she designs in-class courses, eLearning, videos, and other media for enterprise-wide leadership training. With degrees in both art education and education-media design and technology, Bianca focuses on creating practical learning experiences that take advantage of the clarity and immersiveness that technology and good design can offer. She has years of experience in education, including designing ethics and legal compliance training for BMO Financial Group, creating inter-professional collaboration content for Training Pirates, and working as a classroom teacher.

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• Increased Skills Transfer with Visuals	• Making 3-D Graphics Using Photoshop
• How to Get PowerPoint to Look Like it's NOT PowerPoint	• Thinking in Pictures: Developing Visual eLearning Solutions
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THIRTY-TWO TIPS ON GRAPHICS, ANIMATIONS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Have you taken the specifics of your audience into account—their needs, preferences, and expectations? Are all your visual elements providing value? When should you animate … or not? And is there a practical time limit for presentations?

Be sure to consider the principles and elements of visual design as you integrate all of the best practices for instructional design strategies in your content explorations. I have seen many well-chunked, sequenced, structured documents that do not align well on the screen or in the document, lack figure/ground balance, and could benefit from a better color palette with some texture to promote variety and/or contrast for added learner emphasis.

Michael Grant

You need to start by considering your audience. What makes up "good design" isn't the same for everyone. That's why it's important to begin any design project by thinking of who the final audience is and what their needs, preferences, expectations, and assumptions are. Let that information guide the graphics and animations you choose to use.

Bianca Woods

We know we always need to match the instructional strategy to the instructional content. This scope extends to selecting the graphic devices used within the program. Declarative knowledge units typically require a different visual presentation than procedural or conceptual units. You must develop a consistent "look and feel" of the program that can accommodate all the planned content types.

Michael Markey

Never forget the alt text in your graphics, and be descriptive. Don't just put a title.

David Cheng, Florida State College at Jacksonville

When it comes to using graphics for eLearning and instructional design, always assess the content before selecting an image. If a graphic or animation will constructively add value to the content without overloading the learner's cognitive process, then including it may be worthwhile. Ask yourself the following questions when choosing graphics and animations:

1. Does the graphic or animation add any instructional value to the content displayed?

2. Is the image relevant to the content?

3. Will the learner need to see a graphical representation to understand the content?

If you answered "yes" to all three, then I highly suggest including a graphic or animation. If you answered "no" to any of the three, think about why you are trying to add a graphic or animation. If you think your content needs to be more engaging, perhaps try to rewrite the material to be more conversational. Sometimes graphics and animation can be distracting if not presented properly.

Bryan Hauf

Never underestimate the power of organization. Whether it's creating a storyboard, sorting through 2-D graphics, or setting up a 3-D scene for animating, it's important to make sure you have organized your work for yourself and other members of your team. Discuss how you want to set up your files before the start of a project; this way the whole team knows where they can find files and they can spend more time getting their work done rather than sifting through disorganized files searching for what they need. Organizing now will also help in the future. Nothing is worse than coming back to a project a couple of months later and not knowing where everything is.

Elizabeth Barger, Designing Digitally

More and more people with disabilities are participating online. Color-blind people may not see things the way you originally intended. Today, there are free resources available online to see how your web presence will look to those who are color-blind.

Carolyn Miller, Maricopa Community Colleges

Save often, and always use version control. There is nothing more terrifying than working on a project for a few hours only to have the program crash and corrupt the file. Whenever I've worked on a project for a certain amount of time, I save; and when I reach a significant point in my animations, I always save a new version thus creating my own type of backup.

Elizabeth Barger, Designing Digitally

Don't animate for animation's sake. Above all, do not animate anything that carries no meaning. You should ban splash animation unless you take the trouble to be sure that each user will see it once and only once. It's fine to put in a (very) short animated transition to draw the eye where it needs to go, but keep it simple and quick. Do not allow any movement on screen that will distract users from what they need to be reading, hearing, or seeing elsewhere on the screen.

Becky Kinney, University of Delaware

Remember the elements of graphic design whenever you're creating graphics for your courses, including text.

1. Line: Use lines to guide the eye, to divide space, or to separate content.

2. Shape: Use shapes to establish layout and patterns, and influence what the mind sees. Instead of starting from a template, use the white space as a canvas and create your environment using shapes.

3. Color: Use tools such as Adobe Kuler (http://kuler.adobe.com/) to see what colors work well together. Color changes moods and evokes emotion, so be purposeful when choosing a scheme. Also use color to make things stand out.

4. Text: Be effective when trying to communicate using text. Choice of font, size, color, alignment, and spacing all come into play when trying to communicate a message using fonts. Don't place text on the screen just because. Defend your graphics at all times. You can also use text to create shapes and images.

5. Texture: Use rich colors and layering to show visual texture. The learners will visually want to grab whatever is on the screen.

Amy McIntosh, BlueCross BlueShield of SC

Optimize for smaller files. Screen-capture software sometimes captures images as BMP. Typically this is a very large file. If you are using Adobe Captivate, you can easily export, convert to PNG, and then import, retaining the desired resolution without the file size associated with some image types.

Antoine Sample, Amazon.com

Keynote can be a great tool for simple animations, and it is a good graphic design tool. I find it necessary to capture the animation by using SnapsPro rather than exporting the movie from Keynote. Then, if you need to do editing, you can easily do it in iMovie.

Maggie Marsh-Nation, eLearning Development and Instructional Design

When chunking information, a title with a modern color and interesting font can often be as effective as a graphic.

Elizabeth Watkin, AB Tech Community College

Don't animate unless you need to. Keep it as simple as possible. Sometimes just separating out the information onto multiple slides can be more effective. I use the analogy that you don't paint your house purple with yellow and green polka dots just because the paint is available. In the same regard, think about the information before you apply animations ... they're rarely necessary. If you do use an animation, usually a simple fade will probably do it for you. In the same vein, use images only when they add important information or make an abstract point more concrete. They are not just for decoration. If the slide is boring, it's because of the content, not because it's missing a picture of a puppy!

John Goldie, Salesforce.com

Using Snagit, create your first screen shot, add a number stamp, and resize the stamp as necessary. In your next screenshot, copy the number stamp from the previous shot and paste it into the new one. With the number stamp selected, click the next numerical value in the number stamp to change the number. This maintains a consistent size for your number stamps across your screenshots.

Garth Shaner, MDA

Storyboards are priceless. The earlier and better you create your storyboard, the more buy-in you'll get. Don't cooperate with the common SME impulse to wait until things have been created before weighing in. Use the storyboard to nail down what will be created and clarify that the time to "know it when you see it" is now, not after it's all created.

Tahiya Marome, Anritsu

Ensure multimedia elements provide value. To consider a multimedia element for inclusion, the element should promote knowledge construction and a deeper understanding of job concepts and job processes. Also ensure that you create context for visualizations. A picture really is worth a thousand words. Animated or annotated diagrams and pictures provide excellent means for learners to build mental images of hard-to-understand, abstract workplace concepts and processes. Diagrams and pictures provide learners a glimpse into the internal workings of things otherwise not perceived by the naked eye. However, as a caution, make sure you incorporate the context for these pictures and diagrams so that workers understand the performance connections.

Linda Waddell, TecKnowledg-e Learning

Watch everything grumomedia (Miguel Hernandez) has posted on YouTube. His tutorial on recording a voice-over using an iPhone and a blanket is a classic (http://bit.ly/1eIxpII). His techniques are minimalistic, low-cost, practical, and effective. Furthermore, he emphasizes what is really important in media production: a good script.

Rick Evans, HP

Video can be a powerful learning tool if used properly. Video can affect several senses simultaneously. It can even motivate learning through emotional channels. Here are three things to keep in mind:

1. Write a script or lesson plan for the video portion and ensure the video content connects with the learning objectives.

2. Know your learning audience well. The content of the video must intrigue learners sufficiently so they pay close attention to what you are presenting. Dialogue, images, and humor must match learner demographics.

3. Video sound quality must be excellent. The picture can take a hit of bad lighting and your learners might still watch, but tainted sound guarantees an abandoned video.

Linda Waddell, TecKnowledg-e Learning

Be careful when using "talking heads." My friend, Harold Stolovitch, always emphasizes, "telling ain't training." He's right. A talking head ain't training, either. If you plan to use a talking head, be sure to engage the learner. The learner should understand the purpose of the talking head. Don't just insert it in your learning material without careful consideration of the desired impact.

1. Limit the duration of the message. No one wants to sit motionless in a classroom with non-stop talking for long periods. Learners in an online environment have the freedom to ignore the message, so keep it short and to the point. If the necessary content is long, consider breaking it into a series of shorter videos.

2. A talking head can add workplace relevance. A talking head can add value if it presents an important element of relevance for actual workplace performance by providing context or validating the importance of the concept. You can increase impact by including text or questions on the screen that lead the talking head into the next topic or by adding other engaging visuals to the video.

3. Use caution when considering an animated cartoon character. If you are considering making the talking head an animated cartoon character, analyze your target audience and the subject matter. The younger, multi-tasking, computer-proficient, gaming generation of today may accept a cartoon character, but other audiences may not. In addition, the serious nature of a subject may dictate that a cartoon character is an inappropriate choice and may lessen credibility for the lesson.

4. Add relevance by showing workplace performance. Seeing is believing, and demonstration videos can be very effective. Consider including video or photo content with a speaker demonstrating actual workplace situations while the speaker continues with the message.

Linda Waddell, TecKnowledg-e Learning

I generally use animated, explanatory videos to present content—typically condensed in a fixed format—in a more engaging way. For example, sometimes I need to explain procedures, and instead of attaching a PDF to the course or creating slides with static information, I use data visualization and storytelling techniques to present complex processes and concepts and make them more memorable for the students. My favorite tool is PowerPoint because it is versatile and very easy to use. If you spend a couple of hours synching up some elements and their animations on the screen, you can get amazing results!

Mayra Villar, freelance instructional designer

Do you have an idea but always need 24 hours to put it together? You can create templates to save the most time. For me, these are mock up 3-D spaces into which I can easily insert some saved vector assets to quickly illustrate a concept. Have two or three similar spaces ready at a time to allow stringing them together for larger projects.

Miki Turtsanyi, 21st *Century Insurance*

Research shows that graphics in learning materials should be as self-explanatory as possible because it's hard for people to simultaneously look at the graphic and read an explanation. If you need an explanation, place it within the graphic and make it as concise (truncated) as possible.

Patti Shank, Learning Peaks and The eLearning Guild

I subscribe to http://PresenterMedia.com for simple and engaging graphics and animation.

Susan Huizenga, WPAA-TV and Media Center

It's been said before and sounds so obvious, but if you can replace text with a meaningful image, then do so. But use an image that really represents the concept and that helps a learner visualize what you are trying to teach them. There is no use drawing a pretty picture for the sake of having graphics; if you do this, you might make your material look pretty (and there is benefit in that because it might motivate learners to use your material), but are you really aiding learning? Graphics that convey meaning help learners who might face a challenge when it comes to translating written text into meaning.

So how do you create meaningful graphics? I believe this is a learned skill; you don't need to be born a graphic artist! Take a piece of paper and a pen or pencil and start sketching the concept as an image. If your first attempt doesn't work, try again. And again. And again. There is magic in sketching with your own hand (as opposed to finding clipart and trying to place it on a screen). But if all else fails, search online for images using keywords that describe your concept (and try all kinds of combinations of keywords) and you will be surprised (and maybe even inspired) at what you find.

Marilyn Flax, CSG International

The design of an eLearning project should be organized and cohesive, meaning there should be a color scheme that is easy on the eyes; bullets and other needed additions should be the same and match the project design. The project should also have an organized flow from beginning to end, with a knowledge check every 5 – 10 slides to keep the viewer engaged. Finally, using stories or scenarios that the viewer can relate to also helps imprint your message on the brain because it creates a feeling he or she experienced while the viewer was learning.

Shannon Couch, Kentucky Labor Cabinet

It is a truism that people will watch anything that moves. You can create movement in a set of still photos by using the Ken Burns effect. The effect, named after the filmmaker who made it famous with his documentary *The Civil War* and other films, takes a still photo and slowly pans across it, zooms in or out, or pans up or down. Most video editors (Windows Movie Maker, iMovie, etc.) have this feature available.

Robert Harris, VirtualSalt

Keep animations, graphics, and content as simple as possible for the participant. Interaction and impactful design are great, but extra bells and whistles are not. As designers, programmers, and ISDs, we tend to push the proverbial envelope and create training that is beautiful, overly interactive, and full of information. Oftentimes this over-the-top creation is not what learners need or like. Remember that the primary objective for adult learners is to gain the knowledge and skills to do what is required of them.

Lisa Keith, Bowen Consulting

I've long been an advocate of combining audio, animation, and questioning when presenting content. Of course, it's work, so you will want to use this method with enduring content.

1. Tackle the audio first. Create the audio script and periodic comprehension and application checks. Don't forget to create answers for your questions. Include your ideas for the visual portion of the presentation. Using a template helps you accomplish this. I use three columns: Screen #, Media/Comments, and Narrative. This document will serve two purposes: both as a control document and as the text version of your presentation. Read the script aloud, and ask others to do the same or listen to you. Edit to make the script tight, clear, and alive. Insert specific instructions for the narrator, though sparingly.

2. Create and edit the audio. I ask a voice actor to read the script while I listen and call for redo's on the spot. I ask the narrator to rehearse the script at least twice, going over pronunciation, strategic pauses, etc. A common problem for non-professional narrators is beginning strong and gradually trailing off until they're difficult to hear. They may also talk too quickly or too slowly, likely both in the same session. Be sure to coach on these issues, and call for a redo when they stray. When multiple sessions are necessary, you want to be sure to use the same recording settings, physical setting (acoustics), and positioning of the microphone. Editing audio using Voice-print is surprisingly easy. Pregnant pauses, too-brief pauses, mistakes, and the like are easy to fix or delete. Just be sure to add silence between takes and sections. You can normalize the volume and other fixes after the fact, but they're no substitute for a well-done initial recording. Editing is also an iterative process; once through is not enough!

3. You've prepared an excellent audio presentation, so you need a visual production to match. Prepare the graphical elements you know you will use, but don't plan everything out. Even when you do, you will come up with some better, more fitting elements during the building process.

4. With attention and focus, our visual system is dominant for most of us. A sea of bullet points just won't do. The key to visual attention is change, and the screen needs to change on a regular basis. As much as possible, you want to create a visual narrative that aids attention and reinforces the audio. This is especially true for younger generations, but applicable to all. Pictorial representations—including mental models and animations—are best, but when the narrative content is not amenable to visual representation, you still need regular variation. Techniques include highlighting or recoloring portions of a still image or graph as the narrative addresses them, using progressive disclosure with bulleted lists, shifting placement on the screen as you introduce new elements, and using quick but obvious transitions.

5. Remember to add comprehension or application questions at semi-regular intervals. Knowing that these are coming adds motivation for learners to pay attention. You're also promoting cognitive processing of the material—essential to learning. Depending on your available technology, your approach will vary. The simplest tactic is to phrase the question, pause, and then answer it. The simple act of asking the question compels listeners to search their minds and primes their attention for the answer. If technology allows, you can pause the action for input from the learner, and follow with the answer, as mentioned, with a written answer, or a suggestion to review the material accompanied by a button to return them to the appropriate spot in the presentation. Captivate and Storyboard allow for these options.

6. One last thing: Keep your presentations short—about five to seven minutes, and no longer than 15 minutes, ever. Internet users have shorter attention spans—that means all of us. You need to divide longer expositions into digestible chunks. This provides for the flexibility we're all after, and it encourages learners to revisit portions of the whole.

Kevin Wilcoxon, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Always use PNG format for images and pictures because of their "transparency" background characteristic. This way, you don't need to crop them when layering them over another image. Using PNGs will give you the power to combine pictures to create a new one that fits your needs.

Elisio Carmona, MyChange

Remember to employ the CRAP (contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity) principles of visual design.

1. Contrast helps to create a focal point for a page; use it to make your training visually appealing.

2. Repetition of specific design elements makes your work look polished and cohesive.

3. Alignment involves placing text and graphics on the page so that they feel "connected" in the learner's mind.

4. Proximity on the screen provides cues to the learner about whether or not items relate to each other.

Richard Butler, AT&T

White space is your friend—less really is more. Use graphics and animations that draw the learner's attention or reinforce an idea. Make sure the visuals are not too small, too large, or too numerous on a page at any given time; this could result in "irrelevant mental load," thus jeopardizing the intended learning outcomes.

Richard Butler, AT&T

SIXTEEN TIPS ON SELECTING GRAPHICS

Finding the right graphics can be time-consuming and frustrating, and mined with the risk of copyright infringement. You not only need to find graphics that support your learning content, but you also need your graphics to be stylistically consistent, appropriate to your audience, and within your budget. Fortunately, there are many affordable stock-image websites with huge selections of ready-to-use graphics for almost every conceivable topic and audience, and you can tweak many of these graphics to produce exactly what you need.

Take care not to violate any usage rights or copyrighted imagery. Just because you can download it from the Internet does not mean you can use it.

Michael Markey

Stock photos can be helpful, but when you use them, it's important to avoid the ones that people have seen time and time again. Since many people will just jump on the first image that works for them in a stock-photo website search, completely skipping the first page of search results can be a good way to find stock images that aren't overused.

Bianca Woods

If you type the word "cutout" with your keyword(s) in a stock-image search, you'll receive images that have a clean white background that allows for efficient rotoscoping or masking. Sometimes, images already masked with a transparent background (saved as a PNG or GIF) might appear—ready for you to use on any background color or pattern of your choice. In Photoshop, if you use the Magic Eraser Tool, you can simply click in the white background area of an "image cutout" and it knocks out the white. You might need to adjust the tolerance setting to get the desired results. To find the Magic Eraser, tap E on your keyboard to select the eraser tool, then click and hold down on the eraser icon in toolbar to choose the Magic Eraser option.

Michael Grant

Understanding your audience is an imperative to achieving adoption of a learning program. Spend the time to appreciate the norms and culture of those who are receiving the learning. Will the audience identify with graphics used in the program? If you are presenting to blue-collar workers but show white-collar metaphors, you may be disconnecting from your audience. If you are creating company-specific training material but use generic industry graphics, you risk sending a message that will be seen as not important or applicable.

Michael Markey

Browse stock images while thinking about cropping, clipping, and combining. Nothing says you need to use an entire image just as you find it. Using a portion of a stock photo is a great way to keep your images unique.

Donna Safko

Stock graphics make it easy to add visuals to a learning program. Whenever using stock graphics, ensure you can present a consistent look throughout the design. Establish a "family" of graphic rules at the beginning to determine what graphics will be acceptable to use.

Michael Markey

Use your keyword to search the web for ideas for graphics. See what other people are using as graphics with that keyword. Then use an appropriate tool to create your custom graphic with similar characteristics.

Wanda Burth, ITSC

Try to get a white background and a simple uncluttered picture or graphic.

Abram Siegel, The Horace Mann Companies

If I am searching for an image on a stock photography site, and I'm not quite finding what I need, I'll look at an image that is close and see what keywords are associated with that image to get ideas about other search terms that might work.

Chris Petrizzo, CLIQ Instructional & Performance Solutions

Use stock photos and vector illustrations whenever possible. Many of the larger, more reputable stock-photo sites also provide free images on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis—so get in the habit of checking sites that offer images that appeal to you, and downloading the free stuff for future use. If you are purchasing stock photos, you may also notice several of the larger sites have the same or very similar images available; do a little comparison shopping between sites to make sure you get the image you want for the best possible price.

Tammara Williams-Dias, University of Oklahoma

Especially if your audience is composed of geographically dispersed people (with different cultural backgrounds), be sensitive to gender, age, religion, and cultural beliefs. A few tips:

1. Keep a balance between male and female images and characters; in the case of scenarios showing one senior and one junior colleague, or one chief and one staff, avoid always using men in the position of power; try to alternate.

2. Avoid selecting images where men or women dress in a way that certain cultures may not accept, and make sure the characters are not wearing any religious symbols.

3. If your audiences come from different areas of the world, select images that well represent each different area and try not to focus only on one.

Fabiana Biasini, FAO

Don't subscribe to a stock-image library? Get creative and schedule a photo shoot! Smartphones have increasingly impressive cameras built in, so why not grab your phone, rally a troop, and capture the shots that help you tell your story?

Stephen Naso, Santander

Use images to draw the eyes where you want them to go.

Stephen Naso, Santander

I use graphics to accomplish two things: 1) communicate or illustrate a concept, and 2) delight and engage the learner. Therefore, when I select graphics, I start by identifying the key information or points I want the learner to take away. Then I select graphics that represent one or more of my bullet points. I try to create my

story with pictures only. Then I show it to a colleague and ask him or her to tell me what the pictures describe. This helps me determine the words needed to complete the story, if I need words at all.

Imani Mance, The Home Depot

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http://PresenterMedia.com has a great selection of graphics, which includes clip art, animated graphics, and PowerPoint tools. All the graphics are customizable—you can adjust the color, shadow, and reflection, and on some, you can even customize the text! The cost for the yearly subscription is very affordable, and if you use graphics as much as I do, you'll get much more than you paid for.

Sandra Snyder, CB&I

When selecting graphics for a training program, I like to always make sure they are relevant to the topic and support the points. I find inspiration by going to Google and simply typing in the topic. Depending on copyright content, I will sometimes use the images I find as inspiration and make my own.

Matt Nelson, Kiewit

LEARNING SOLUTIONS
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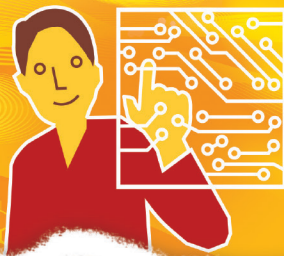
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THIRTY TIPS ON DESIGNING OR MODIFYING GRAPHICS

There are numerous tools available today for designing and modifying graphics, including Illustrator, Photoshop, PowerPoint, and plenty of low-cost and free alternatives. What tools are right for what situations, and how can you get the best out of each of them? From creating responsive images to avoiding lossy compression, these tips will help you create effective images for learning.

It is best practice to use Adobe Illustrator for logos and custom graphics such as infographics. Some instructional designers still struggle with the difference between vector and bitmap or raster graphics. Photoshop is for raster, and pixel-based photographs and images. Illustrator is for vector, based on mathematical formulas, which produces a cleaner, line-based look, depending on the style you desire.

Michael Grant

Never warp an image so it can fit in the space you need it to. Either crop it to the size you need, or replace the image entirely with one that fits the space better.

Bianca Woods

If making images for documentation (print), use TIFFs (Tagged Image File Format). TIFFs can preserve layers that you can use in graphic tools like Photoshop. This makes editing your images afterwards very easy. You can also select the type of compression used within the graphic or leave the compression blank. Most book publishers want their authors to use TIFF images to maintain high-quality images. While the document size is large, porting the document over to a format such as PDF often compresses the images.
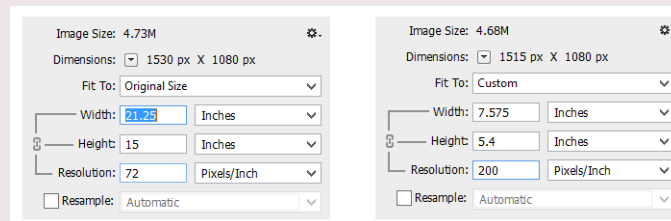
Phil Cowcill and Krista Hildner

To create responsive images, remove all instances of width and height when inserting images into HTML and control image size through CSS: `img {width: 50%;}` will scale the image to half the width of the parent; `img {width: 20em;}` will scale the image with the text size.

Donna Safko

When taking screen captures for print documentation, don't adjust the Pixel Dimension width or height. If you are using a tool like Photoshop, turn off the "Resample Image" option when resizing a graphic. When you don't select Resample Image, the Width and Height under the Pixel Dimension category become read-only. Instead specify the width of the image under the Document Size category. When you import the image into a document, it will come in at the size you specified in Photoshop. The resolution (dots per inch) will also increase, so if you send this document to a good-quality printer, it will print a very sharp image.

Note: The graphic width is 21.25 inches. The physical width is 1530 pixels. With the Resample turned off, you can change the Width or Resolution, but the physical dimensions stay the same. This means you get more pixels per inch.

Phil Cowcill and Krista Hildner

When creating graphics for an eLearning course, you will primarily use PNG or JPEG formats. Use JPEG only with photographs and when you don't need a transparent background. If you are adding text or other artwork to a graphic, use the PNG format. This is because JPEG uses lossy compression, meaning that it removes data from the image to make the file size much smaller. It's this lossy compression that chews up artwork and adds things known as jaggies, blocks of artifacts (noise), or pixelation. PNG has lossless compression, meaning that it removes no data .

Phil Cowcill and Krista Hildner

Use the PNG graphic format for online images. Even though a PNG image file might be larger than a JPEG, the PNG format is engineered for network delivery. A PNG has up to eight passes built within it. Think of having one large image sliced up into eight smaller images. On the Internet, you can deliver multiple smaller files faster than you can one large image.

Phil Cowcill and Krista Hildner

PowerPoint is a much-underrated tool for creating custom graphics for your eLearning projects. The drawing and shape tools, as well as the properties you can set for them, can take care of most standard graphics more quickly and easily than can Photoshop or Illustrator.

Bill Kelleher, Niagara Bottling

When I need clip art, I go to PowerPoint and look for something that is close. Many of PowerPoint's clip-art images are layered-vector images that you can "ungroup" and modify. For example, if there is an image with a splotch background you don't need, you can ungroup (you need to ungroup twice), then delete the splotch. Or, if you need the graphic the way it is, but you need it to match your brand's colors, you can change the fill color of each layer.

Tricia Luke, Omnitracs

Look at a graphic as individual parts. It is hard to find a graphic exactly as you need it. When you view graphics, don't look at them as whole units but as individual parts. A graphic of a person is not one item but many—hat, head, hair, eyes, hands, jacket, etc. A graphic of a child playing in a park can be a tree, a bush, a sand box, a ball, a cloud, a setting sun, etc.

Larena Jackson, WellSpan Health

If a picture or graphic has clear lines and bold coloring, it's easier to alter the colors in Photoshop to match the color scheme of your slides.

Abram Siegel, The Horace Mann Companies

Use the "curve" tool in PowerPoint to trace any graphic using a picture as a base. Color the drawing, right-click it, and save it as a PNG file.

Daniel Albarran, Universidad Mexicana en Linea

If I find a button or other graphic that is close to what I want, but the color is off, I adjust the Hue. This way I don't have to reject a graphic just because it's not the right color.

Chris Petrizzo, CLIQ Instructional & Performance Solutions

Compress, compress, compress! Because people do not optimize images for the web properly, many slide presentations and eLearning products contain unnecessary image data. In Photoshop, select "Save for Web & Devices" and use the provided optimization previews to adjust compression settings without compromising image quality. Remove unneeded image metadata for additional savings in file size. You'd be surprised at how much you can reduce the file sizes (up to 75 percent or more) of your images without compromising image quality or overall resolution. If you do not have access to Photoshop, there are many free tools on the web to assist you. Find them by searching "free image optimizer" or related keywords (example: http://jpeg-optimizer.com/). When your presentation or eLearning product relies on a lot of graphics, the savings in data really add up, generating faster load times and better playback performance for your users. You benefit as well, saving time and reducing the strain on your computer's resources during production every time you preview your project's design or export it to a format for presentation. Sharing drafts and source production files with colleagues becomes less burdensome, and your hard drive or cloud storage will have more room to show for it!

Shawn McGinniss Hunter, Bellevue School of Nursing

Using PowerPoint is a great way to create your own graphics cheaply and without having to have training in vector-drawing programs. This tutorial from Articulate shows you how: http://articulate.com/rapid-elearning/how-to-create-your-own-illustrated-graphics-in-powerpoint/

Elizabeth Watkin, AB Tech Community College

When using graphics in an eLearning course that requires translation, use numbers to point to parts of the graphic and add a legend below. It saves time when porting a module to over a dozen languages. This isn't always user-centric—but sometimes it works depending on the complexity of the content.

Thomas Barritt, Metrix Group

Creating infographics using PowerPoint is not that difficult: http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/34223/5-Infographics-to-Teach-You-How-to-Easily-Create-Infographics-in-PowerPoint-TEMPLATES.aspx

Elizabeth Watkin, AB Tech Community College

Make clip art look less hokey by tinting it black and white.

Elizabeth Watkin, AB Tech Community College

In designing or modifying a picture, a graphic, a web page, or a slide, make sure it is an original photograph, drawing, or design. Unless you have paid for it, obtained a license, or are following the Creative Commons and copyright law, be sure to have a written release for permission and a receipt of payment for the use of the graphic.

Paul Roden, La Salle University

PowerPoint can be a useful tool for easily creating graphics. This tip works in 2010 or higher. First you have to add the Combine tool:

1. Go to the quick-access toolbar (top left of the screen, looks like a down arrow).

2. Click "more commands" in the "Customize Quick Access Toolbar" menu.

3. In the dropdown under "choose commands from," highlight "choose commands not in the ribbon."

4. Select "combine shapes."

5. Click the "Add" button to add the command to the quick-access toolbar.

Once added, you can use the menu items (shape union, shape combine, shape intersect, shape subtract) to combine any two shapes. You must select at least two shapes before you can access the commands. This allows you to create just about anything by combining the available shapes. To export the shape for the use in another program:

1. Right-click the image.

2. Choose "save as picture."

3. Change save type to PNG and save.

You should now have a copy of your image, complete with transparency, ready to use in your project.

Ben Womack, Carolinas Healthcare System

As an instructional designer, I often have great ideas of how to convey a concept visually but zero skill at translating that into a meaningful graphic. My best advice is to hire a skilled graphic designer with a T&D or education background. Don't try to get away with clip art or stock photos. A few well-done graphics won't cost very much and will make a huge difference in the impact of your course.

Kathy Zottmann, BOMI International

1. Doodle on paper as you talk about your subject (your message). Practice on a random "volunteer."

2. Do this over and over, repeatedly. Soon you will get to a point where you feel your spiel is "pretty good."

3. After your spiel is "pretty good," write down your script.

4. Use your smartphone or your scanner to digitize your doodles.

5. Use simple graphics software (Microsoft Paint is sufficient) to manipulate those doodles so you can create "build slides" in PowerPoint or Notepad. You can use build slides like flipbook animations. By the way, as you work with your doodles, you likely will come up with ways to improve your script.

6. Record (audio) your script. Then lay your slides on top of that audio to make your video. (The key difference between animation techniques and "live" movies is: animations start with AUDIO.)

Google the buzzword: SketchNotes. Most of the guidance you will find here is invaluable with regards to creating minimalistic graphics.

Rick Evans, HP

In PowerPoint, locking a shape allows you to draw it an unlimited amount of times without needing to drill back down and make the selection multiple times. In the "Insert" ribbon, select "Shapes" to open the shape-options menu. Right-click on the shape (instead of the usual left-click) and select "Lock Drawing Mode."

Chris Stape, Mission Support Alliance

People learn in different ways. Some people like text, others like videos or diagrams. The role of the designer in eLearning is often to provide an alternative expression of the content or message—through diagrams, animations, or infographics, for example. Try to understand the content as much as possible, and then use that to influence your graphics and to maintain relevance between the graphics and the content. If a graphic is replacing another form of communication (for example, text), then it is okay to be very literal, whereas if a graphic is accompanying another form of communication, it is often best to avoid regurgitating the content and instead present it in a new way.

Chris Morgan, Sprout Labs

My tools of choice for designing or modifying graphics are Visio, OmniGraffle, and FlexiSketch. Visio and OmniGraffle are very useful for designing since I can create through templates or on my own the types of diagrams or models I need for various projects. The elements are always reusable as well as fully transferable to JPEG format. Neither of these applications, however, is flexible enough to use for more fluid design projects. For those I use FlexiSketch, which is great for doing illustrative animations in a sketch format that can not only give a cartoon effect but are also exportable to JPEG format. FlexiSketch provides a large canvas and freehand tools to develop your own graphics. Unfortunately, it is only available on Android devices.

Ronald Dyer, Grenoble Ecole de Management

You can create attractive icons by enlarging Wingdings and Webdings in Microsoft Word, capturing them as a graphic, adding color, and saving them. Using Snagit by TechSmith, for example, enlarge the chosen Wingding to 128 points, snag it from the screen, choose resize image, set resolution to 300 dpi, and image size to 150 pixels high. Use the Fill function or the Color substitute function to add color. Save the icon as a PNG to keep it sharp. The resulting icon will be half an inch high (150/300).

Robert Harris, VirtualSalt

Getting inspiration for designing graphics can come from anywhere: from an email newsletter, a commercial advertisement, a billboard sign, a magazine layout, etc. There are endless opportunities. The key is to always be alert and open to recognize an inspirational design. If something is visually attractive to you, ask yourself

why—what caught your attention? Can I apply this to a learning activity? Can I recreate this as an overarching visual theme? Oftentimes the hardest part is not the creation of the design but where to start. Once you're inspired, the rest is easy.

Kevin Thorn, NuggetHead Studioz

If using characters provided within a development tool, export the graphic and edit it to fit the design of your course so that it does not appear as a "canned" image. For example, put a stethoscope around the neck to make that character a doctor, add a lapel pin with your company's logo, etc.

Jeffery Goldman, Johns Hopkins HealthCare

If you need a custom graphic or illustration, but do not have the artistic skills or the budget to hire a professional, look to talent within your organization or local art school. You may find that people within your own organization have skills and talent you are not aware they have. The guy in finance may be a very talented amateur cartoonist and would be excited to collaborate with you. Also look to local art schools for a student who wants an internship. Your need for custom graphics may end up being an exciting and helpful opportunity for someone. You just need to find that someone.

Jeffery Goldman, Johns Hopkins HealthCare

Subscribe to Tom Kuhlman's *The Rapid eLearning Blog*. Read his posts, and then practice what he teaches. I have learned an incredible amount about creating and editing graphics in PowerPoint from Tom.

Ellen Owen, Hunt & Hunt

NINE TIPS ON DESIGNING ANIMATIONS

Animations catch the eye ... and can tire the learner. What principles and techniques can you use to ensure your animations provide learning value? Read on.

Studying real-world references can really help your timing for animations, especially if you are animating something to mimic or represent the motion pattern of a humanoid (biped) or four-legged (quadruped) animal. Many animators typically watch National Geographic clips, or use video footage they have captured of random people walking at a mall or park. It helps to capture the subtle details of movement.

Michael Grant

Use a vector drawing, and animate by making parts of it appear and disappear. Second, pan along paths and zoom in and out to create a sort of animation effect.

Ritu Vinayak, 361DM

I use CrazyTalk to animate things like statues, animals, and historical figures to talk to the students. I have used CrazyTalk to animate a rubber mannequin head used to train EEG technologists, statues of Heinrick Hertz and Hans Berger, and an emu. It adds some fun to learning. I have used Keynote to animate cartoon sequences in a simple way. I did an ARG with aliens and then one with subatomic people traveling through a human body.

Maggie Marsh-Nation, Alpha eLearning Development and Instructional Design

Don't stay trapped in computer tools. Animations can have a variety of looks, and returning to traditional media for part of the design process can give you lots of ideas.

Tahiya Marome, Anritsu

Import your assets into Flash, Edge Animate, or After Effects from either Illustrator or Photoshop. It makes things move much faster.

Garry McKee, EDMC

Be familiar with both the "nine old men" and the "12 principles of animation." A quick 15-minute review of these will give you a permanent improvement in animation quality.

Garry McKee, EDMC

Whatever you do, don't add animations and sounds just to show off your skills at animations. Only use them occasionally to provide a change of pace. A presentation with every animation available annoys people, and they don't see the real message.

Chris Wright, HSIA-QH

Animations can add value, but they can also distract. Be conscious of when and where you apply animations. If it's an intro splash animation, make sure it's relevant and matches the overall theme and mood of the project. If your animation ties to audio narration, sync the movement about 1/8th to 1/4th of a second prior to the phrase or statement—this allows the animation to appear and settle just as the audio narration begins to prevent attention deficit. Finally, if your animations are in the form of screen transitions, consider forward and backward navigation. It may look effective initially, but if there are activities that navigate back to the same screen several times, do you want or need the same transition each time?

Kevin Thorn, NuggetHead Studioz

A great FREE online animator is http://goanimate.com. I have used it to create a compliance ethics course for my organization. It allows you to use "people" or other characters without needing to find live actors.

Terry Arthur, Rinnai America Corporation

SEVENTEEN TIPS ON FONTS AND COLORS

Beware of Comic Sans! Using a poorly regarded font can cast a shadow over your entire project. And fonts and colors shouldn't just be attractive—they should be understandable to all your learners, including those with visual impairment. And remember: When you emphasize too many things to suggest importance, nothing appears important.

Mixing a large number of wildly different fonts together just looks chaotic. Mixing very similar fonts from the same structure type also looks odd. That's why, when you're starting out, an easy rule is to choose just two fonts for your entire project: a serif and a sans serif. Use one for titles or headings and the other for your body text, and you'll have a safe combination nearly every time.

Bianca Woods

If you are stepping a graphic from 16.7 million colors (24 bits) to 256 colors (8 bits), normally choose the Adaptive option. With the adaptive diffusion, the graphic program will choose the top 256 colors within the image and use that as its limited color palette.
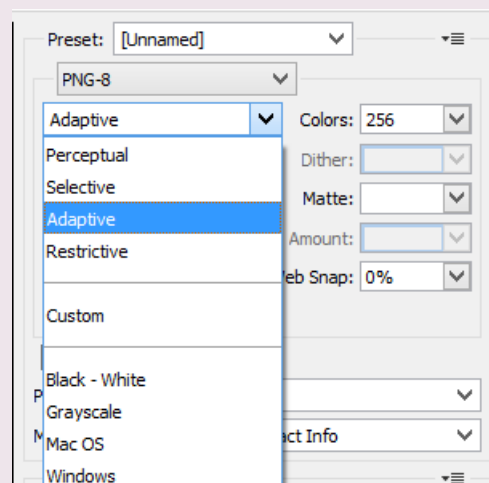
Phil Cowcill and Krista Hildner

Don't worry about "web safe" colors. This 216-color scheme was defined in the mid-1990s to accommodate the emerging VGA display. Computers showing VGA graphics could display a total of 256 colors. They considered the defined 216 col-

ors safe because all the then-current browsers could display these colors, keeping the color scheme consistent. Today, computers and mobile devices are set to over 16 million colors, sometimes even into the billions of colors.

Phil Cowcill and Krista Hildner

Some fonts come with a lot of emotional baggage, and because of this, you'll want to avoid using them. There are two reasons for this. First, there's overexposure. Fonts like Times New Roman and Arial are so ubiquitous that people are tired of seeing them. They seem tired and old to people. The other reason is aesthetics. The design community has deemed some fonts, like Comic Sans and Papyrus, as just plain ugly. That judgment easily passes on to anything you make using them, so it's best to avoid them completely.

Bianca Woods

When designing anything, you need to narrow down the colors you use throughout the piece. Using a bunch of random colors ends up looking messy, which is why good designers choose a color palette early on. A color palette is a small selection of specific colors that you use consistently throughout your entire design. Select a few colors that look good together, all used consistently, and you're set.

Bianca Woods

Do not use more than one or two fonts on the same page. The same rule applies to color. Use color for a purpose. As an instructional designer, I often meet with faculty who like to add emphasis to several items on a page. They do this by adding highlights, boldfacing, and different color text. They rationalize that everything is important. However, when everything is important, then nothing is.

Carolyn Miller, Maricopa Community Colleges

Select one color that should be part of the learning and then use various websites to help create a palette/color scheme. These sites include http://colorschemedesigner.com, http://colorcombos.com, and http://colourlovers.com.

Minna Rehula, HRG North America

Remember, some students have disabilities. Develop for the masses. Avoid colors that color-blind folks cannot see. Keep fonts clean and crisp.

Michele Largman, Maxine Enterprises

For font inspiration, I look at magazine articles, read billboards, and watch the sections between television programs. Then I go to sites like http://fontsquirrel.com and look for the fonts that make the closest match to the ones that got my attention.

Gustavo Arroyo, Institute of Nutrition of Central América and Panama

Ensure you are using a color palette that complements your client's corporate ID.

Paul Stoddart, Peak XV

When starting a new project, which often involves not only eLearning, but Word documents, PowerPoint slides, and more, I always create a single slide (usually in PowerPoint) with swatches of the colors, their RGB and hexadecimal equivalents, and a description of how and where they're used. I post it on the wall near my monitor for easy reference.

Anne Goldenberger, Univar

Use colors and fonts that individuals with and without vision impairments can easily read. If you use shading and transparency, use readability programs to ensure easy viewing of your images.

Lisa Keith, Bowen Consulting

There's some debate across different industry genres about the use of fonts and colors, but here's a good rule of thumb: Two to three total for an entire project is sufficient. There are web design resources that have hundreds of examples of which two fonts (serif and sans serif) go well together. Choose which will be the heading and title fonts and which will be the body font. For color, an odd-number balance is good. Three colors with two shades of blue and one complementary color. Or five colors of different shades of blue and one complementary color. Similar to fonts, choose which will be header colors, borders, etc. With fonts and colors, it's also best to create a style guide for your projects. Two main benefits are: If you ever return to the project you'll know when and why fonts and colors were used, and if you're working with a team, there's no confusion as to where you are to use fonts and colors.

Kevin Thorn, NuggetHead Studioz

When you need to produce learning materials with little or no budget to accomplish the task, try using tools you already have access to. I often use Microsoft convertible character/image fonts to add visual elements to a training document. For example,

start with the number 8 typed in the Times New Roman font. Highlight the number and change the font to Wingdings. The number will convert to an image of a PC mouse (🖱). Now place that image in front of a reference to a hyperlink in your training document. Another example of using Microsoft fonts for learning material is to start with the left parentheses symbol, "(". Highlight the symbol and again change the font to Wingdings. The symbol will convert to an image of a telephone (☎). Now place that image in front of a reference to a contact number in your training document.

Charlotte Morris, Pepco Holdings

Use black text on a white background—I know it may be simple, but it's a tried and true best practice. This will help designers when it comes to selecting images that already have a white background. In addition, it's easier to select a white background when selecting a desired image and making it transparent.

Richard Butler, AT&T

Use a font and/or color on a page that is different from one you have used on previous pages to inform the learner of a "shift" in the training. This could be a simulation, a practice question, or the end of a particular lesson.

Richard Butler, AT&T

Create a dynamic relationship in your headlines! Learn the difference between concordant, conflicting, and contrasting typography.

- A **concordant** relationship occurs when only one type family is used without much variety in the styling, creating a uniform design. This is good for quick readability, but can lend to dull design.

Fonts & **Colors**

- A **conflicting** relationship occurs when multiple typefaces are combined that are similar in size, weight, and form. The eye can tell there's something off in the design without being able to detect the difference easily.

Fonts & Colors

- A **contrasting** relationship occurs when the styles of the fonts are distinctly different from each other. This leads to a more visually appealing and exciting design, drawing your viewers in.

Fonts & **COLORS**

There are a variety of ways to create contrast when it comes to typography beyond the typical sans serif and serif combinations. You can utilize weight (from hairline to **black**), size, color, form (roman vs. *italic*; extended vs. condensed), directional (horizontal vs. vertical), and texture (i.e., tight letterspacing, more or less leading).

Crystal Rose, The eLearning Guild

SIXTEEN TIPS ON TOOLS FOR GRAPHICS

There are a lot of great graphic tools out there—and some of them are absolutely free. No matter what your budget, here are some tools to help you create effective graphics.

If you're unsure of how to start to lay out a project, try using a grid. Doing this is quite simple. Start by breaking the design space out into an even grid (a 3x4 grid is a good place to start). Then fit your design elements into one or more grid cells. This builds a clean and sleek layout that keeps you from having too many or too few design elements in your project.

Bianca Woods

GIMP is a free, open-source, Photoshop-like program that is free to download for Windows, Mac, or Linux operating systems. In my opinion, it can do approximately 85 percent of what Photoshop can do as a graphic or image-manipulation program.

Michael Grant

http://sumopaint.com is a really cool graphics editor for your web browser. You simply load an image into the website interface, edit or manipulate the graphic on the fly, and save in whatever file format you need. It is very quick, and allows you to be a graphics pro on the go, even without your personal computer with all your software tools on it.

Michael Grant

Photoshop Elements can handle pretty much everything I need. Save some money and get Elements instead of the full Photoshop version.

Abram Siegel, The Horace Mann Companies

Be consistent throughout your presentation. Whatever graphics and graphic effects you choose, use them consistently in your presentation unless you have a specific reason to deviate. If using realistic cut-out characters, don't use stock art someplace else. If using realistic photo-quality pictures, don't use clip art—especially on the same slide! If using a reflection effect on your pictures, don't use soft edges for no reason. Don't mix and match Bevel, Cartoon, and inset SmartArt

effects. If using a zoom animation for bullets, don't switch to Fade, Wipe, and Appear; it will make your presentation look like a patchwork quilt. Use your effects purposely and consistently.

Barb Geisler, Zeiders

Go to Floss Manuals (http://flossmanuals.org) for free resources on how to find and use free graphic creators such as Inkscape.

Elizabeth Watkin, AB Tech Community College

I love using Snagit screen capture utility software by TechSmith. I can grab my entire desktop screen image, or just a small part of it. Then I can draw on it, add pre-made symbols, save it in different formats, and use it for course content. It's fast and easy.

Lori Duquette, Lambton College

I'm a big fan of using Snagit for capturing graphics and Photoshop for editing. Snagit provides so many options for capturing screen shots and videos, and includes several nice and easy-to-use effects (such as the page tear) that come in handy. The price is possibly the best part, because you can get it even on a shoestring budget. Photoshop has also come in handy for editing screen shots for software demos. I've often needed to remove employee and/or client names from images, and Photoshop lets me do that and replace them with ease.

Jason Smalley, Central Arizona Project

I prefer Adobe Illustrator for creating and modifying graphics. This is partially because I have been using Illustrator for more than 20 years, but also because I can export a static graphic to almost any graphic standard. I can also convert the native Illustrator files into Flash with Flash Professional.

Rick Davis, Honeywell International

I use Snagit to edit my graphics if they are basic edits (cut something out, crop, edit text, etc.). I especially like how I can use the dropper to copy a color easily.

Melisa Baird, Omnitracs

If you want to add a custom illustration, you can draw one in SketchBook Pro ($4.99) on your iPad by sketching something with your finger and then send it to yourself and import it into your eLearning software or PowerPoint. SketchBook Pro has some cool bells and whistles like allowing layers and emailing out a PSD

file that you can use in Photoshop to create transparent PNG files. And if you're not the best artist, just Google "how to draw [anything]" and you'll almost always find a sample or video tutorial.

Lisa Cummings, Corporate Visions

For quick fixes to a graphic—color adjustment, text, frame crop—I use http://PicMonkey.com. Free. Fast. Easy.

Susan Huizenga, WPAA-TV and Media Center

We use the Bamboo drawing pen and tablet to create our graphics, and then transfer them into Adobe Publisher to add color and make adjustments. We save each graphic as a JPEG and upload it into Articulate Storyline. At this point, we have not created any presentations using the pre-built graphics in Articulate Storyline.

Bailey Anderson, Liberty University

You can create a graphical analysis of words from a text or a custom-generated word cloud using free online tools. Wordle (http://wordle.net), Tagxedo (http://tagxedo.com), and TagCrowd (http://tagcrowd.com) offer flexibility and variety. Another tool for graphical analysis of words is Google's ngram (https://books.google.com/ngrams), which shows the relative frequency of a word or phrase (or several words or phrases) in books during selected time periods.

Robert Harris, VirtualSalt

Graphic-editing tools have come a long way. There are the more advanced and sophisticated tools such as Adobe's Photoshop and Illustrator, but there are very effective free tools on the web today like GIMP and Aviary for editing graphics. Of all the tools available, the newer versions of PowerPoint (2010 and 2013) are extremely effective graphic-editing tools. PowerPoint uses vector shapes, and you can create just about any custom graphic using the library of existing shapes. In addition, Microsoft has added new features to edit photography and add artistic effects.

Kevin Thorn, NuggetHead Studioz

In Photoshop, avoid scaling down images, especially screenshots that contain text elements; it will distort the text. If you need to scale, use the Sharpen filter.

Anirban Das, EI Design

THE eLEARNING GUILD™

Community & Resources for eLearning Professionals

The eLearning Guild is the oldest and most trusted source of information, community, and professional development for eLearning professionals. Build the skills, network, and expertise to propel your career forward by taking advantage of all the *Guild* membership benefits available to you!

Here are just a few member benefits:	Member	Member-Plus	Premium
Conferences *Exclusive discounts on industry-leading events*	20% Discount	20% Discount	One Conference + One Pre-conference Workshop
Conference Archive *Keynote videos, session videos, and handouts*	✔	✔	✔
Online Forums *Two-day online conferences held 10 times a year*	20% Discount	✔	✔
Online Forums Archive *On-demand access to 850-session archive*		✔	✔
Guild Academy *Live, interactive online training courses*	20% Discount	20% Discount	20% Discount
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ELEVEN TIPS ON TOOLS FOR ANIMATIONS

Whether you specialize in complicated animations or simply still photos organized as an animation, these tips will help you polish your moving visuals.

You might find that you need to host your dependent files (edgeanimate_assets) on a server other than where your course will live. It is simple to change the path to your assets in your HTML, but you will find that your down-level-stage poster images no longer work. You need to replace their relative file path, found towards the bottom of the edgePreload.js file, with a full URL.

```
58    dlContent={
59        dom: [
60        {
61            id:'Poster',
62            type:'image',
63            tag:'ing',
64            rect:['0','0','500px','400px','auto','auto'],
65            fill:["rgba(0,0,0,0)",'images/Poster.png','0px','0px']
66        }]};//simpleContent
67
68    })( "EDGE-708794829");
```

Donna Safko

No video camera or video-editing skills? Take a sequence of still photos, input them as layers into Photoshop, and output as a movie. You may be surprised at how few photos you need to create a smooth action. You can even place the still images into sequential slides in PowerPoint with no delay on transition, and output them as a movie.

Donna Safko

Do you need your animation to be accessible and optimized for SEO? Adobe Edge Animate offers several options for output. Look for the checkbox for Static HTML under Web publishing. Checking this will produce a file that shows all the HTML text and tags, making your page easy for screen readers and search engines to read.

Donna Safko

When applying a "push" or "pull" effect to images in Flash, be sure to check the "allow smoothing" box in the bitmap properties (right-click on the bitmap in the library and select properties) to avoid that wavy effect.

Chris Kaplan, GP Strategies

Even though you no longer want to distribute Flash files, Flash is still the best tool for creating frame-by-frame animation. Once you have it, either export as HTML directly from Flash, or convert using Swiffy. If you don't own Flash, it's probably not worth the expense, but you won't need the latest version just for frame-by-frame stuff. Just run your existing SWF through Swiffy. Flash-to-HTML conversion doesn't work very well for sophisticated, interactive stuff involving movie clips, but for pure animation, or animation with simple button interactions, it works fine and is very easy.

Becky Kinney, University of Delaware

I use Adobe Flash to generate animations. Typically, I build a vectored image in Adobe Illustrator and then import the graphic into Flash. I then use motion paths or the bone tool to animate the graphic on a timeline. Admittedly it's more involved than creating a simple GIF using Snagit, but it allows me to embed more components such as web links, text, interactive hotspots, etc.

Scott Boom, SM Energy

http://Sparkol.com's Videoscribe platform provides an inexpensive, comprehensive tool to create whiteboard animations à la RSA Animate.

Daniel Parrotta, Booz Allen Hamilton

iSpring Pro is a great tool for converting PowerPoint animations to Flash-based videos.

Jack Colligan, Pragmatics

A very useful online cartoon-making application is GoAnimate (http://goanimate.com). With this tool, you can make cartoon videos with a variety of characters, using automated text-to-speech voices or by uploading pre-recorded voices. You can manually select shot changes that use various camera angles or set to automatic. Fast, cheap, easy, and effective.

Robert Harris, VirtualSalt

PowerPoint 2010 has a hidden feature that allows you to create a WMV video of your PowerPoint presentation. First, build your slides. Next, optionally choose Insert Audio and narrate each slide. Finally, choose Save As and select Windows Media Video. In a couple of minutes, you'll have a narrated movie. The movie maintains the clarity of the slides, and the audio is built in, making the presentation easily portable or postable to an eLearning course.

Robert Harris, VirtualSalt

There are different forms of animation, ranging from simple annotations to subtle visual effects on screen to full 2-D animation sequences. For the first, most eLearning authoring tools, including PowerPoint, have several animation style effects that are more than sufficient for good visual design. For animation sequences, Adobe Flash is still one of the easiest to use and learn, albeit not intended for mobile delivery. There are newer tools surfacing in the marketplace today that simulate the development environment of Flash, but can output the animation sequences to HTML5. Just like any tool, it's a process of trial and error until you find the tool that best fits your workflow and skill set.

Kevin Thorn, NuggetHead Studioz