Visual abstract design resources
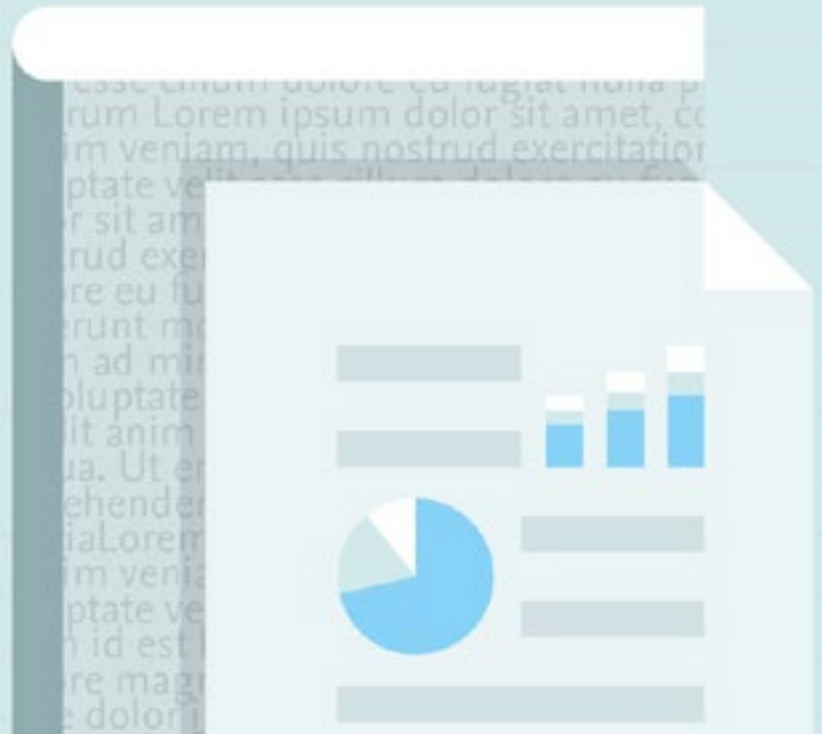
By **Researcher Academy**
November, 2022

Author: Lipsa Panda
Communications Manager, Elsevier

Share this article on

🐦 📘 in ✉️

"Feeling overwhelmed by the idea of creating a visual abstract?"
We understand, and we don't want you to sift through a sea of websites in search of the best resource.

In this resource list, we bring together our top picks, as well as a curated list for each category of resource. Most of the websites in our collection offer some resources for free or can be subscribed to for a small fee. We've also including a reading list for authors who would like to dig a little deeper into the details.

Our top picks!

Designing software

Are you a creative researcher who wants to design your own graphics? If purchasing a license for Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop is outside your budget, you can try free and open-source software such as Inkscape and GIMP. While Inkscape, like Illustrator, is vector-based software, GIMP, like Photoshop, is raster-based software. At the end of this resources list, you'll find links to YouTube training videos for both options.

Mind the GRAPH

If you do not want to design your graphics from scratch using graphic design software, Mind the Graph online infographic maker for researchers and scientists can assist you in creating visual abstracts, posters, and even slides. You can use it for free and access all the galleries of scientifically accurate illustrations. You will, however, need to upgrade if you want to use your graphics in publications and formal communications without citing Mind the Graph. Look for the student subscription that costs only $7 per month.

ELSEVIER

Canva

[Canva](#) is another fantastic tool for those with no design experience. With access to hundreds of design templates and free graphics, you can create stunning visual content for free. The workspace's simple drag-and-drop functionality makes it a very user-friendly tool.

Adobe colour

Even for an experienced designer, selecting the right set of colours is difficult. [Adobe Color](#) is a great website that allows you to choose colours from the colour wheel, extract colours from a picture, create your own colour palette, or simply borrow from current trends. To download or save your palette, you must have an Adobe account. If you do not want to sign up, you can simply copy and paste the HEX code into your platform.

Coolors.co

Aside from creating a perfect palette, [Coolors.co](#) also offers free tools for checking contrast, creating a gradient, bulk converting images to JPG, PNG, and GIF, and much more. Subscription removes advertisements and generates more than 5 colour palettes.

Noun project

The [Noun Project](#) has icons in a variety of styles for almost anything you can think of. You can find these icons using a keyword search and download them in PNG or SVG format. You can also customize the colour of the icons before downloading! One of the most significant advantages is that you can choose icons from a single creator, ensuring that your graphic style is consistent throughout your visual abstract.

Flaticon

[Flaticon](#) is another massive database for free customized icons and stickers. With a free subscription, you can collect nearly 150 non-premium icons in a single day. When using these for any purpose, you must give credit to the site or the author.

Google Fonts

Fonts are also protected by copyright! [Google Fonts](#) is the place to go if you want to use free fonts without giving credit. You can also test and search fonts for use in over 135 languages. What else is on offer? There are free icons, knowledge resources, and guides for using icons and fonts in CSS.

Visual abstract Primer by Dr Andrew M Ibrahim

We can't end our list of favourite picks without mentioning Dr. Andrew Ibrahim's [Visual Abstract Primer](#). This document covers the fundamentals of visual abstract, from conceptualization to design, and includes a resource list. An absolute must-read!

In the age of social media, the field of visualization has expanded tremendously. It is impossible to list all useful resources in one place, so we have limited our list to a few websites and tools for each resource category to help you get started.

If you want to explore beyond our top picks, check out the detailed list from each category below and let us know which one you prefer.

ELSEVIER

Visual abstract
resource categories

Colour advice and inspiration

COLORBREWER 2.0
color advice for cartography

Color Palettes

Converting Colors

Grabient

HTML COLORS

back to categories

Graphics and icons

freepik

Vecteezy

ICONS8

Freebiesbug

Pexels

Font Awesome

freeicons.io

back to categories

ELSEVIER

Visual maker

bioRender	Tidbit	Ai
Ps	back to categories	

Tutorials and videos

1. DrawBioMed
2. DrawBioMed videos: Graphical Abstract in Powerpoint
3. Free software for making graphical abstracts
4. A very quick video demo on laying out a visual abstract in PowerPoint
5. How to make a visual abstract (YouTube lecture by Professor Andrew Ibrahim)
6. Easy steps to make Graphical Abstract for Elsevier journal on Powerpoint
7. BioRender Graphical Abstracts Webinar
8. How to Make Graphical Abstracts in Adobe Illustrator with Free Templates
9. Inkscape Course for ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS. Quickstart in under 1 hour
10. How to use GIMP - Beginner Tutorial

back to categories

ELSEVIER

Reading guidelines

Visual abstract

1. Graphical Abstracts – Tools and Resources by Elsevier
2. Using graphical abstracts to enrich and expand the reach of your research by Elsevier
3. Visual Abstracts: a stimulating way of opening up your research to new audiences
4. How social media can help societies and journals extend their reach
5. Visual Abstracts: Redesigning the Landscape of Research Dissemination (Research article)
6. Promoting your research using infographics and visual abstracts (Research article)
7. CDC information on visual abstracts
8. Cell Press Graphical Abstract guidelines

Design basics

1. Visual Hierarchy: Organizing content to follow natural eye movement patterns
2. Color Theory 101: A Complete Guide to Color Wheels & Color Schemes
3. Wonderful resources to master color theory
4. Twitter thread for icons, type, colour, and designing on powerpoint

ELSEVIER