



Five questions to help present your research, visually.

A free guide by **festoon**

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Introduction

Presenting and explaining your research might be something you do a lot with you those in your field, but when you have to put together a presentation, leaflet or poster together that engages with a broader audience who may not understand anything about your research – everything changes. There are many design decisions to make including – what messages you want to prioritise, what you want people to remember and what action you want them to take. When communicating, either visually or verbally, a clear story is key.

The thought which goes behind a piece of communication is just as important as it's execution: think of it like introducing yourself at a dinner party, you don't start

from the day you were born, you pick out the most important bits relevant to the person you're talking to. It should be the same with your visuals. When you put together a design, whether you're regularly designing power points or have to tackle a poster for the first time, this guide contains a few helpful questions & exercises to ask yourself before switching on that design software:

Keep the answers to these questions for yourself to refer to as a brief. When you're working on your design, keep it in front of you next to the visual you are creating. Frequently check in with it, and ask, is the design giving the right message out?

1 *Who is your audience?*

Consider the research or message you are communicating in the particular context of your audience. What do they need to know? Be as specific as you can be. Consider their daily routines: How do they consume content?

2 *Where are they going to see your designs?*

If you're working on a presentation, that means you have to be snappy, perhaps witty and memorable. If it's in a report context, and you've got a committed audience you have to convince – you may try to be intriguing with a bit more detail. Think about the nature of attention your design will have and work around it. Do you have 20 seconds or 20 minutes of their attention?

3 *What is your tone of voice?*

Consider how you want to be heard, and the tone of voice you want to use. If the tone of voice is urgent, the design should be snappy, bold and to the point. If the tone of voice is informative and educational, it should be approachable and appealing, so the view wants to take look in more detail.

4 What are you trying to tell them?

Clarify your message and your strategy for communicating it. Here are a few examples of approaches to delivering different messages.

- A single insight from your research

When communicating insights, it's important to illustrate the context of your insight, and then explain the insight, its implications and how it works. When tackling a project like this, it's useful to break the content into visual categories such as stages, types, connections etc. Once you've considered the categorisation of your content, design one section would look with the consideration of rolling it out across the other pieces of content in the same category.

- The bigger picture: An introduction to your research within its field

Not only would you explain how your own research works, but you must frame it around how the field of research works. Visually this would perhaps be approached to show your place in the bigger picture really emphasising your significance.

- A perspective piece

If you're putting a perspective across, it's always good to start by looking at the other perspectives. Think about how these could be illustrated. When explaining different

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perspectives, potentially along with facts, it's important to show context such as alternate opinions and significant events or influences. Distinguish these context categories visually from the opinion you are putting across. This could be done with color, scale or illustrations.

Exercise

If you're trying to communicate a lot of information about a large research study or area, it's extra important to be clear and concise. This exercise can help boil it down:

1. Say it out loud, record yourself, again and again until you get it right. Saying it out loud allows you to hear what sounds right and engaging, even if you're not using a voice over or doing a presentation, it's a really useful method to cut the fluff.
2. Try and make your description as visually descriptive as possible. Think, how would this look if I was asking an artist to paint it, or in your case, putting graphics to it.
3. Now separate out your 60 second script into a table, where you can describe how each bit would look. And there's your powerpoint.

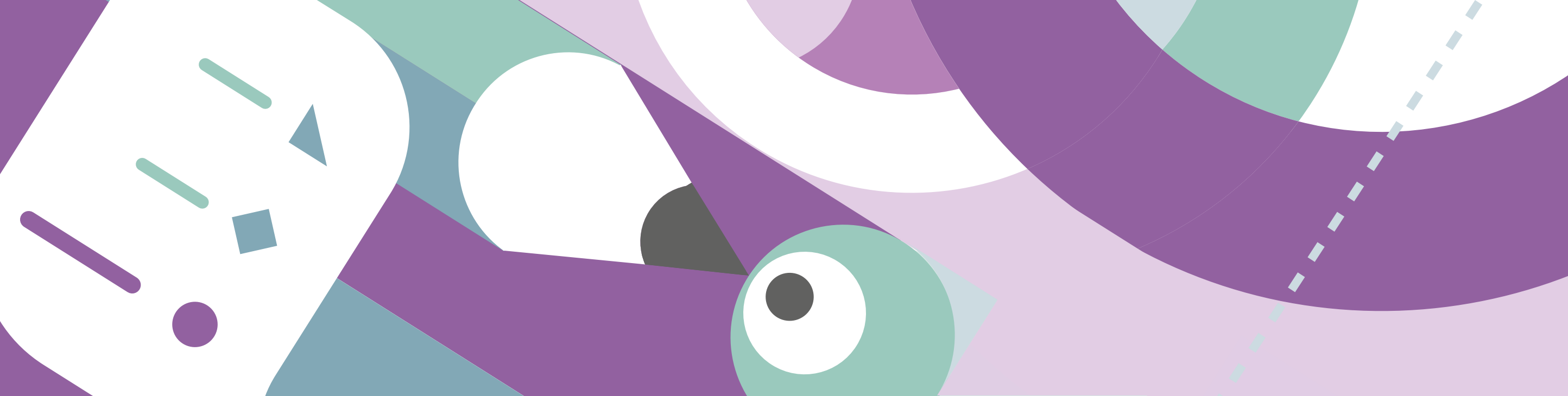
5 *What is their visual language?*

What type of visuals are likely to engage with your audience? If they are policy makers, your design is likely to be very evidence & stats driven. It might be therefore, that an infographic approach is the best one to take to get your message across.

If they are more likely to be emotionally engaged in your research, for example, communicating a psychology study to a group of teenagers – using a photography driven approach on a social media channel may be a better option.

Top Tip:

Looking at the literature that your target audience read, whether it's blogs or specialist publications can be a great way to find their visual language quickly. You'll also get a good idea of how brands and organisations talk to these audiences, which may give you a few more ideas. The YouGov profiler tool can be a great way of getting an idea of what brands and visual language your target audience speak. Check it out at: <https://yougov.co.uk/profiler>



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This short guide was bought to you by **Festoon**, the Graphic Design studio **celebrating and supporting research**. We work with research based projects to deliver a range of design work.

We're interested in working on projects with research at their core.

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