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WRITTEN BY SHANNON JOHNSON & KEITH FRANKEL

Shannon is an Inbound Marketing Manager at HubSpot. She works closely with the agency sales team to ensure the educational resources HubSpot publishes meet the needs of agency marketers. She's an Arizonan-turned-Bostonian, a dog lover, and an ASU alum who likes to dabble in digital photography.

Keith leads a group of creatives and designers on HubSpot's Brand & Buzz team. He likes Subway sandwiches.

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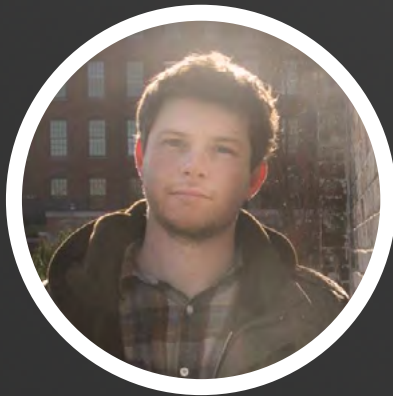
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@IIIIISMITHIIIII

DESIGNED BY JON SMITH

Jon Smith is a designer on the Brand & Buzz team at HubSpot. As a multi-disciplinary designer, his skills range from web and print design to UX and UI work. He's always trying to help grow the perception of the brand by delighting fellow Inbound marketers with memorable, engaging experiences.

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INTRODUCTION:
Why Visual Communication Should
Matter More to Marketers.

Marketers have to start pretending they have 3 seconds or less to catch someone's eye if they want to get an idea across. It's as simple as this: if you can't win your prospects' attention, you can't convert them into customers.

We live in an age of information overload. "Every two days we create as much information as we did from the dawn of civilization up until 2003," according to former Google CEO, Eric Schmidt. In 2011, there were over one TRILLION pages on the internet. 1,000,000,000,000! Trying to comprehend how much information that is is like trying to comprehend how big the universe is.

As wonderful as it is having so much information at our fingertips, humans can only consume so much at a given time. We have multiple inboxes overflowing with email, several social networks flooded with real time updates, and one or more mobile devices buzzing and beeping with even more messages. It's

no wonder our attention spans for one piece of information is shrinking. To truly cut through the clutter, it's more important than ever for marketers to create web content that's both useful and aesthetically pleasing.

The rapidly growing user bases of photo-centric sites like Instagram and Pinterest, and the recent photo-centric redesign of Facebook's news feed are just two of many indicators that consumers are gravitating toward visual content that conveys an idea and sparks an emotional response fast. Even our own research shows that photos generate 53% more likes than the average post.

If you want to create quality photos, images, charts, graphs, infographics, and other visual representations of data your customers and prospects actually want to consume, keep reading to glean the tips, design basics, and easy-to-use tools that will empower everyone on your marketing team to do so.

WHY MOST MARKETERS STRUGGLE TO CREATE GREAT VISUAL CONTENT.

Let's first address a few reasons why creating images, snapping photos and pumping out sticky presentations has become so challenging for marketers. After that, we promise we'll zoom in on some practical tips and tools to get you and your marketing team creating visual content.

Firstly, compelling visual content today has to be less about showcasing product features, for example, and more about appealing to the viewer's lifestyle, values, and desires -- especially if it's going to be shared on social media channels. Photography needs to be less staged and more editorial in style: it needs to engender an emotional response. Don't believe us? Try sharing a stock photo on Facebook and see the lack of interaction you'll get. Post a photo of your customer service team doing cartwheels in the grass on a sunny Friday afternoon, and you might get a reaction. The marketers on the front lines of social channels should be sharing these kinds of moments, but more often than not, they're not designers or photographers.

Not every company has a photographer or designer in house, either. Maybe you don't have the resources to invest in one or more people with visual chops. Even the companies that do have design or photography resources struggle to scale the production of visual content because these resources are usually tied up in other projects deemed more important than social media content creation. The task of creating enough visuals to permeate numerous social news feeds falls onto the shoulders of non-designers on the marketing team.
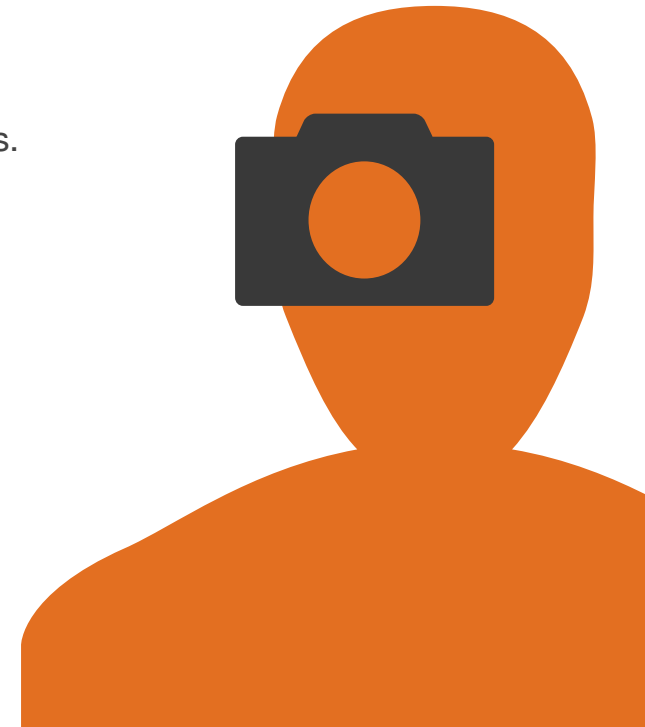
There's also the challenge of collecting all of your company's visual assets in one place so that your social media marketing team can access, modify and couple them with status updates, blog posts, or other pieces of ready-to-share content. Even if your company has some form of collective photo or image library, it's most likely populated with product photos, images from marketing campaigns, or stock photos. Why isn't this ideal? Because the images that thrive in social networks -- that get shared and commented on in social channels -- are the exact opposite of what most companies have at their disposal.

In today's real-time world, marketers have to be agile. They can't be waiting around for resources to appear from thin air to get content created. Although designers definitely know design best and they're great to have around, perhaps it's time for you and your marketing team to take visual content creation into your own hands. In the following chapters, we'll prepare you to do just that.

# 5 TYPES OF VISUAL CONTENT TO CREATE AND SHARE ON BLOGS AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

1 Videos

Although the focus of this ebook is on imagery, we won't deny that great video is an effective way to tell a story. Take a look at our resource kit on How to Use Online Video for Marketing if you want more help with video creation. You might also find the information on Twitter's new short-form video creation app, Vine, useful. You can learn more about it in our recent ebook, How to Attract Customers with Twitter & Vine.

2 Photos

Great photos evoke emotions and tell stories, and storytelling is crucial to the social success of your content. Think about how you can give your audience a behind-the-scenes look into your company's day to day, and how to translate what your brand represents visually. Do you have a picture of your first office? Or do you have photos from when you upgraded from that first office to some swankier digs? You could show that before and after process in photos to tell the story of an important, bitter-sweet milestone in your company's history. Or maybe your staff does something fun together to unwind --

capture that moment to help differentiate yourself as more than just any old company.

Whatever you decide to capture, be sure to care about quality photography. Focus on posting images with good production value for maximum impact. Take a look at the Nasty Gal Pinterest page for a glimpse of what high quality looks like.
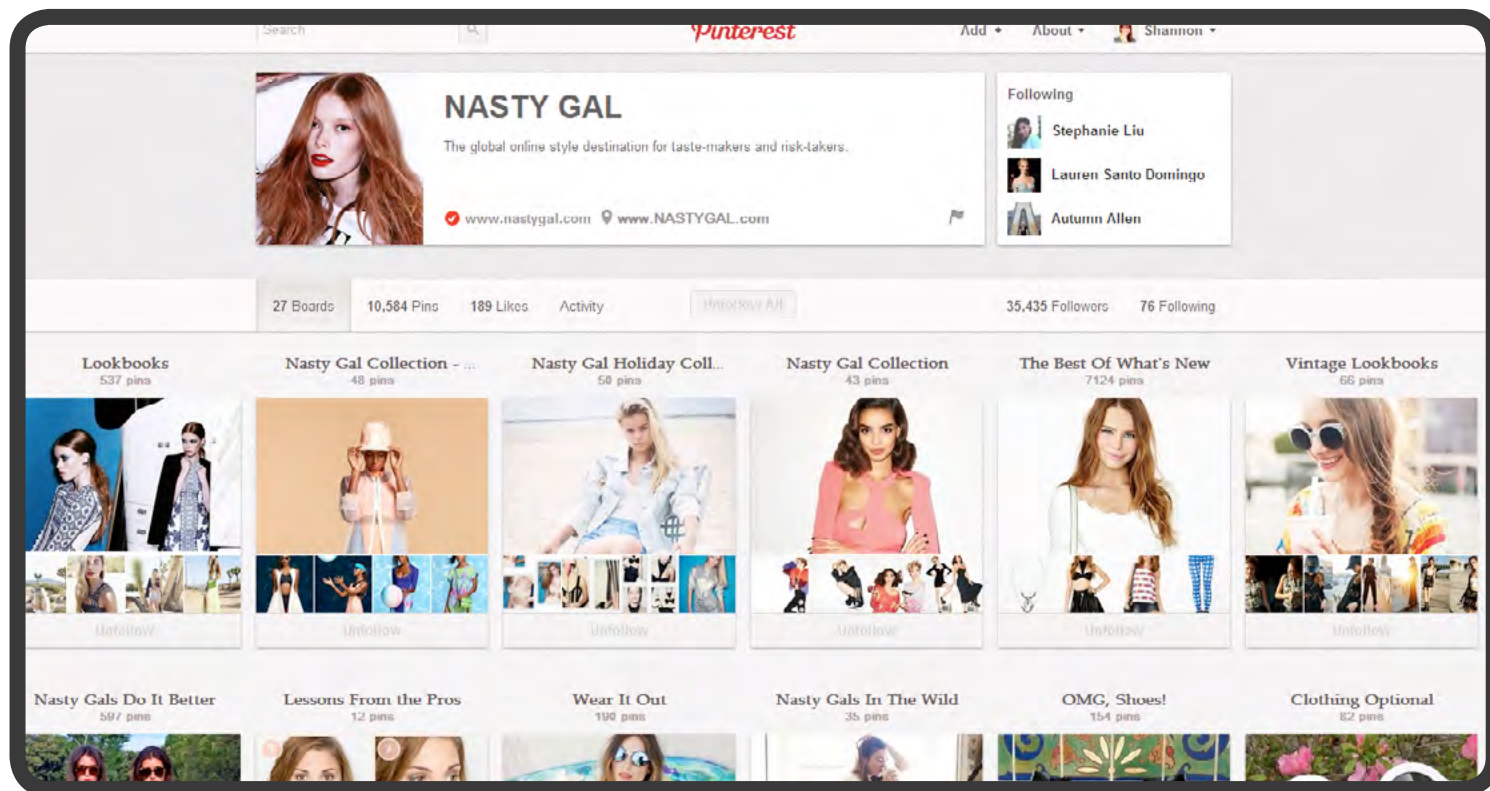
3 Images

Not every image has to be a photo. Images with overlaid text, illustrations, or screenshots are other forms of visuals that can easily be shared on various social media channels. Sharpie's Instagram account is jam-packed with illustrations that aren't just pleasing to the eye -- they showcase different ways to use their products.
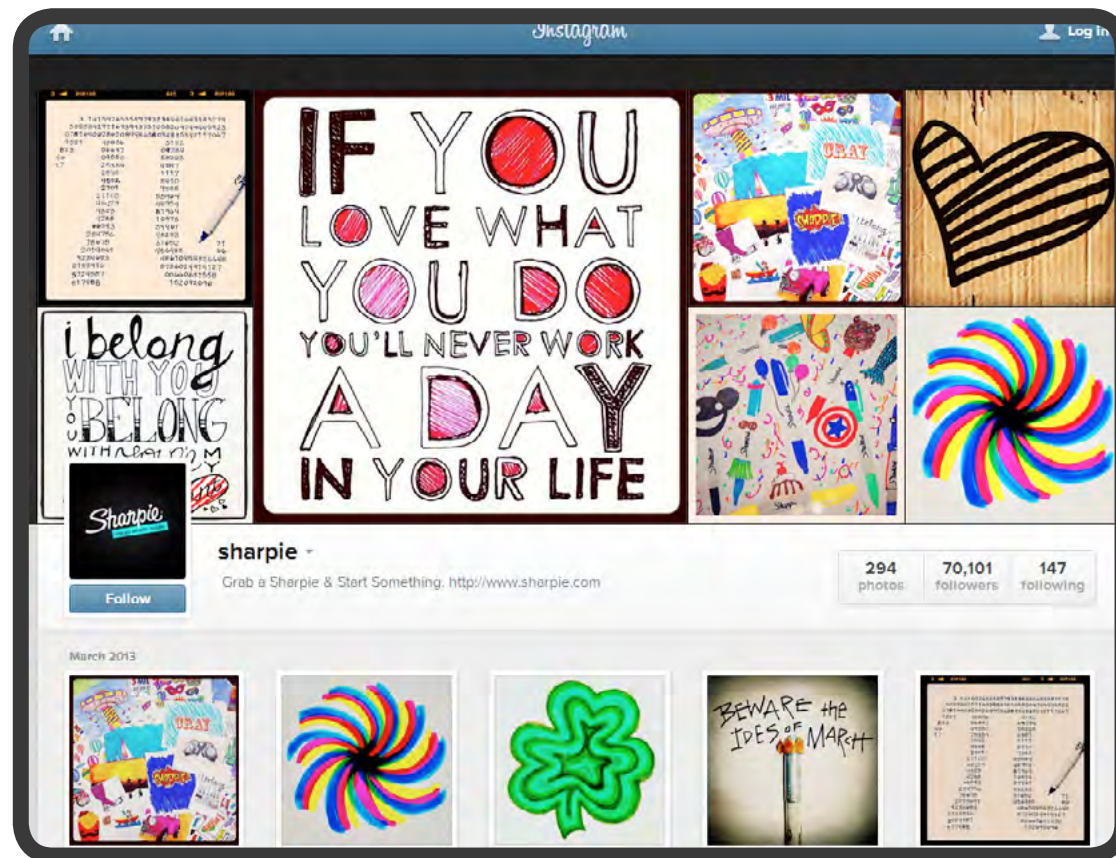
4 Infographics

One of the best ways to help your audience absorb a lot of data points at once is to present them all in a graphic that more easily guides the eye than a giant block of text.

Need an example? Take a peek at this data-packed infographic about The Shift to Visual Social Media. And if you want to make your own, make sure you choose a topic that your target audience would find valuable, download our five free infographic templates, and make sure the final product encompasses these ten traits.

5 Presentations or Slideshows

Remarkable presentations convey educational information succinctly, so if your company is trying to establish itself as an industry thought leader, presentations shouldn't be overlooked. Presentations are also another great way to break away from heavy text found in ebooks and whitepapers. Quick tips, examples, images and data can easily and effectively be formatted into a series of slides that become even easier to share. Upload a PowerPoint presentation to a site like SlideShare, and consider embedding it into a blog post for additional exposure.

Want to know someone who's done SlideShare well? Martin Weigel from Wieden + Kennedy. Check out the presentation he put together to "drop bombs on marketing BS."
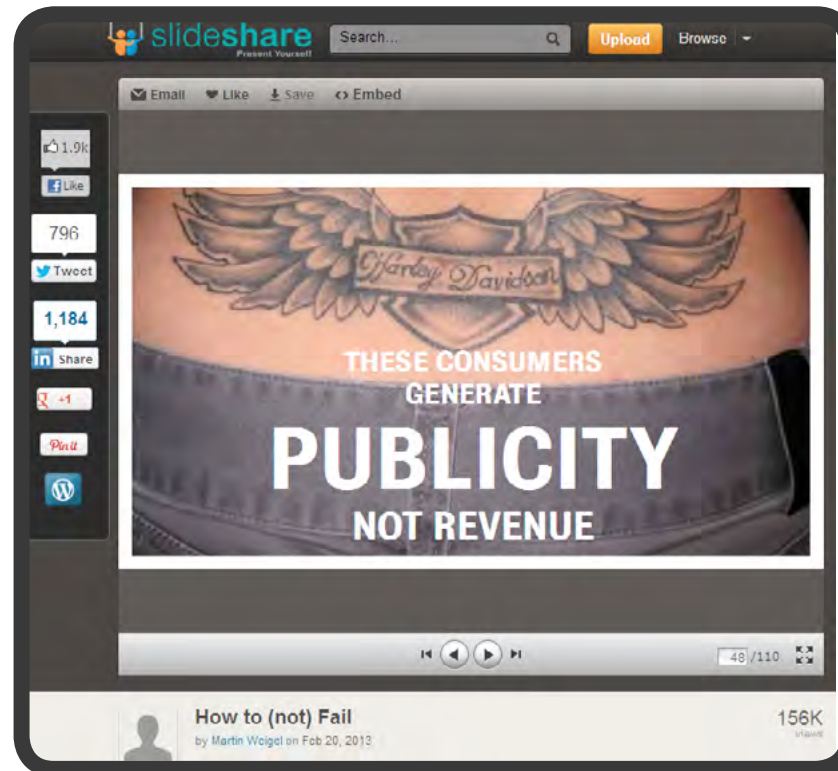
Now that we've covered the essential visual content types, let's dive into the basic principles of great design so you can be sure you're creating stuff that will attract -- not repel -- the eyeballs you want.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: 10 COMMANDMENTS OF DO-IT-YOURSELF DESIGN.

If you're going to try to get somewhere walking in the shoes of a designer, it's helpful to have a compass. That's where the following 10 Commandments of Do-It-Yourself Design come in.

1 Thou Shalt Understand Thy Content's Purpose.

It's impossible to know how to design your content without first knowing what you're trying to accomplish.

The first thing any content creator – from novice copywriter to advanced designer – needs to do in order to ensure the s/he creates a successful piece of content is determine what needs to be achieved by creating said content. Content creation – and design, more specifically – is first and foremost a job of solving problems. Designers identify a gap or need, brainstorm how to fill that gap, create the content to satisfy that need, and then send it out into the world for others to enjoy.

So, to think like a designer, get good at identifying and understanding the core problem or need. By taking the time to carefully consider the need, ask the relevant questions, compile the requirements, and determine the success metrics, you can significantly improve your chances of creating content that blows viewers and readers away. Just remember: it never hurts to know more information, and you'll thank yourself later for collecting it all up front. In fact, don't be surprised if in the end you replace your original solution with one that is more successful in satisfying your goals.

2 Thou Shalt Establish a Hierarchy.

Once you understand what you are trying to achieve, and have brainstormed some solutions, you can begin considering exactly how you are going to go about putting it all together. Understanding the importance of your pieces of content – both in and of themselves and in relation to one another – will not only build the framework from which you can begin to make design decisions, but will also ensure that you present your information in an easily digestible manner – which is exactly what good design is all about.

You do this by creating an information hierarchy, which involves determining the relative importance of all your written and visual elements in order to prioritize them. Begin this process by looking at your content at a macro level; consider all of the required copy, calls-to-action, links, and any other written or visual elements that need to be included in the final deliverable. Evaluate how they each compare in terms of their importance and ability to help you accomplish your goal. Then, let your information hierarchy be your guide to simple, elegant and more effective design.

3 Thou Shalt Respect Simplicity.

More often than not, less is more. You've heard it a million times: keep it simple, stupid. Cliché or not, this couldn't hold more true for design. Unfortunately, there is a terrible misconception that good design is flashy, ornate, loud or otherwise "eye-catching." Don't believe it for a second.

Design is not art. Yes, you can appreciate and respect it in the same way you do works of art (perhaps even more). In the end, though, design serves a very different and distinct role. Rather than focusing primarily on form or expression (as is often the case with art), the primary function of design is the exact opposite – to support function.

When making your design decisions, always keep in mind that the goal of design is to support the function or purpose of your content with form. For non-designers, the best way to ensure that you do this is to simply try not to do too much. Avoid actively trying to make your design unnecessarily ornamental. The content should always be the focus, not the design. Good design shouldn't be obvious. In fact, it's often completely invisible.

This Facebook page cover photo for Mad Men is a great example of keeping things simple. The black and white photos of the characters give you a glimpse into their personalities, while the red text breaks the monochromatic color scheme to make the only three words in the image stand out.

This Facebook page cover photo, on the other hand, is luckily not a real one (thank goodness). But it's nevertheless a perfect example of visual chaos. There are too many arrows, too many images, and too many calls-to-action competing for your attention.

4 Thou Shalt Keep it Legible**.**

By now, you should be noticing a common theme among these commandments; i.e. simplicity and clarity are key -- whether creating an image for a Facebook post or laying out an entire ebook. One thing that is commonly overlooked when thinking about design, though, is the fact that your text itself can create its own visual noise. If it can't or won't be read, then why bother including it at all?

To avoid confusion among readers or viewers, there are common sense (and commonly ignored) solutions to increasing legibility, such as avoiding placing light text on a light background or dark text on a dark background. However, the real pitfalls of using text incorrectly don't deal with the placement at all, but rather the amount of it.

Marketers and content creators love their words, and for good reason; they're the tools they most use to communicate. But when it comes to creating well designed content, this is a bad thing. Take a moment to consider if there are unnecessary words you can delete.

Writing concisely reduces the visual noise of your content and ensures that only the critical or most important content remains. Finally, don't worry if you start feeling too delete-happy. Just remember Steve Krug's Third Law of Usability: Get rid of half the words on each page, then get rid of half of what's left.
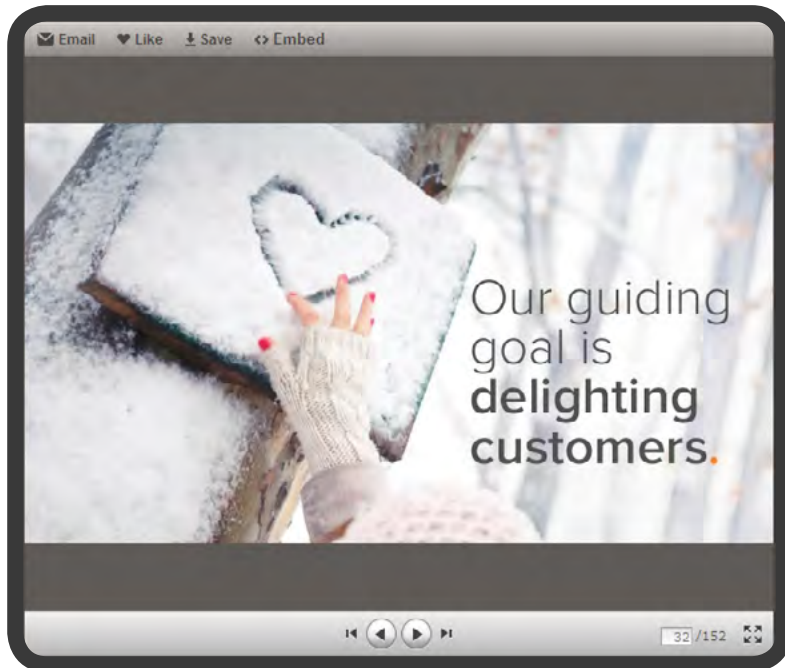
Culture Code: Creating A Lovable Company -- a presentation compiled by HubSpot co-founder, Dharmesh Shah -- keeps wording legible by using few words and dark text over a light background.
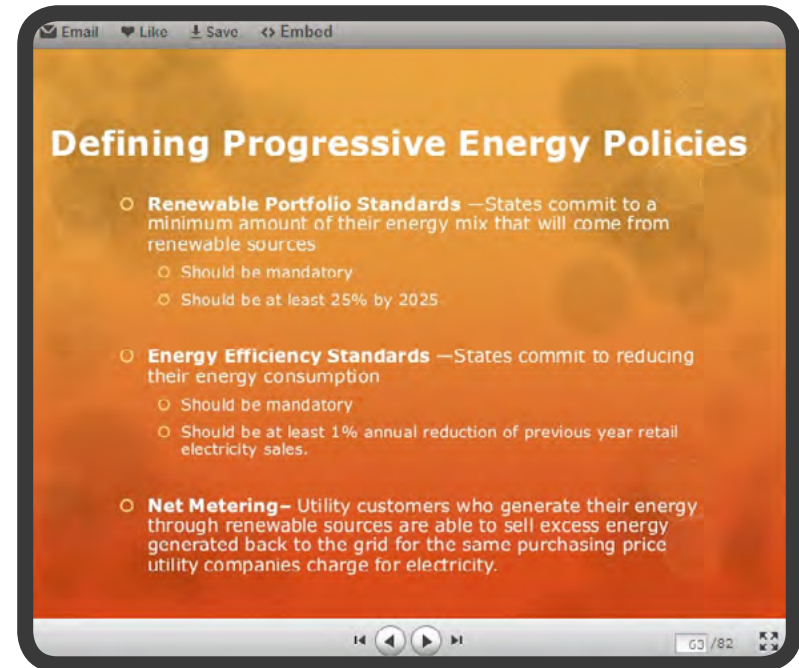
On the other hand, this presentation by the NAACP on Environmental Climate Justice exemplifies visual noise caused by far too much text on one slide.

5 Thou Shalt Provide Adequate Spacing.

Allow the visual and written elements in your design to have a little personal space. Call it "margins," "padding," or "proximity" -- we mean the same thing here. Whether designer or non-designer, it's easy to tell when spacing isn't quite right.

Negative space (space not occupied by any visual or written elements) is okay. In fact, it can be great. By allowing yourself a bit more breathing room, you ensure that the design appears clean and clear. More importantly, you increase the impact of your most important bits of information, such as headlines or CTAs. Follow these steps to ensure you have enough space: first, arrange your content according to the information hierarchy you established earlier. Then, consider how the spacing should complement that hierarchy. Most importantly, make sure your spacing is consistent. Margins should be the same width and height, and leading (the amount of space between two lines of text) should be the same for all similar types of text.

Finally, if the volume of text in your ebook or presentation requires you to reduce your spacing to the point that everything feels cramped, either move some of the information or remove it altogether. Take a PowerPoint presentation, for example. It is better to have 50 slides – each with one important bit of information – than it is to have five slides, each packed with 10 equally important bits of information.
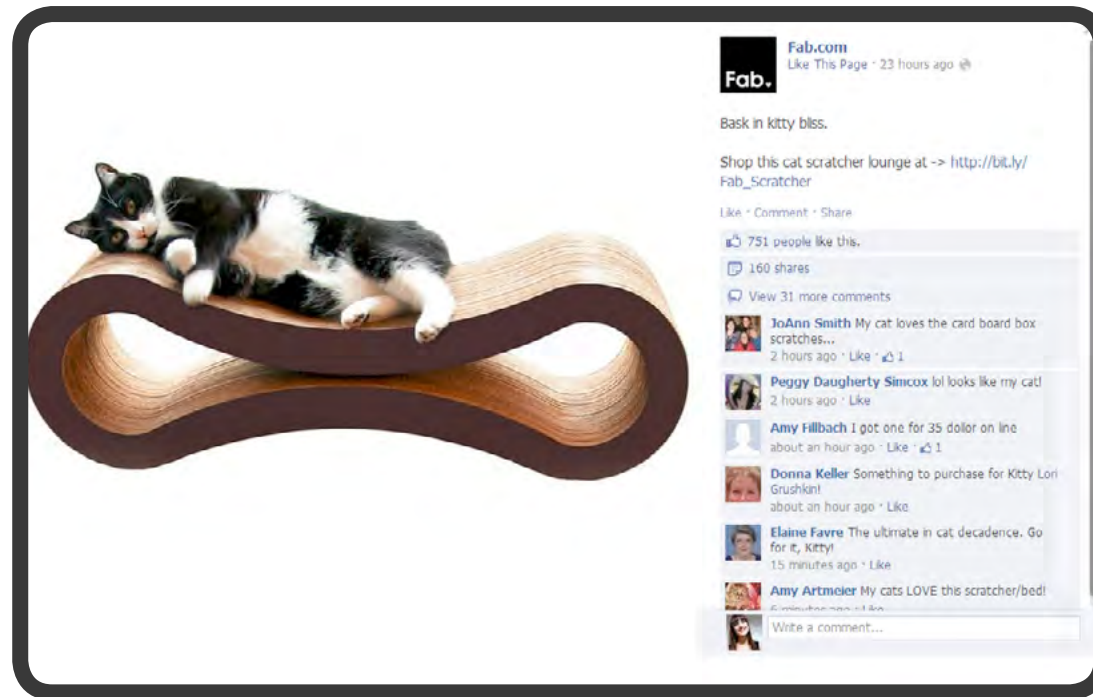
White space works really well in this image. Why? Because it looks like the cat is floating, only further emphasizing the comfort a cat might experience while lying on this "cat scratcher lounge" that Fab.com has for sale.

Even though this Facebook post received a lot of interaction in the form shares, likes and comments, it's not aesthetically pleasing. There's too much text crammed into the image, which makes the viewer have to work a little harder to read it all. Since the text is centered, there would ideally be equal spacing on all sides of the copy.

6 Thou Shalt Align Thy Elements.

Similar to spacing, alignment is a concept that everyone understands and – once pointed out – is rarely ever a problem again. When laying out your visual and written information, make sure that all of the elements are positioned in a balanced relation to one another. Always position your design elements to sit on the same line. Although there are exceptions, it's better to err on the side of caution with alignment as a non-designer.

Alignment will ensure your design is clean, without creating any unnecessary tension or focal points. There are times when more advanced designers will consciously arrange certain elements so that they sit outside of the standard grid system. The purpose of this is to create a tension point, calling attention to the visual element that is disrupting the linear alignment. For non-designers, this should be resisted, or at the most employed rarely. Non-designers who focus on aligning their written and visual elements in a very simple, clean way will vastly improve the quality of their content.

Achievers, the creators of a SlideShare presentation about "Why Managing Sucks," made sure all text in this slide was equally aligned from the left, right, top and bottom.
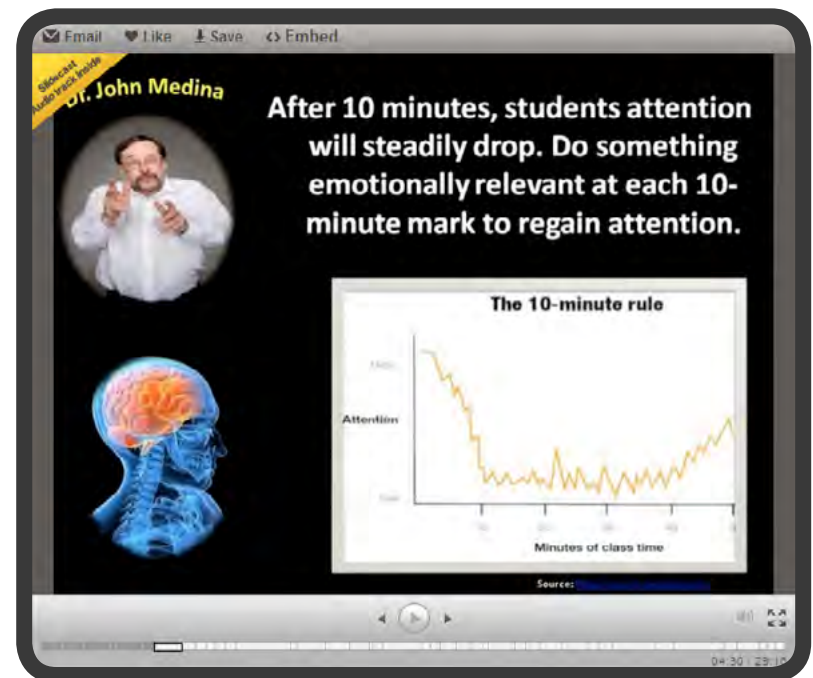
On the other hand, in this SlideShare presentation on "10 Secrets to Great Teaching," none of the objects on this slide fall on the same line. The top image on the left is closer to the edge of the slide than the one below it. And, without adding meaning, all but the first line of the paragraph are aligned with each other.

7 Thou Shalt Coordinate Thy Colors.

One of the first things we learn as children are the colors of the rainbow. You'd think spending our entire lives living in a world of color would make color easy to understand, even for non-designers. Wrong. The tendency is to try to do too much to make a design more eye-catching, resulting in nothing more than an eyesore.

To avoid this, the first thing you should consider is the kind of feeling you want your content to elicit. If you're aiming to present a more humanist or energetic tone, you should choose a warm color, such as orange, yellow, or red. If you want your content to give off a calmer, more professional feel, choose a cool color, such as purple, blue, or green. Choosing colors that align with the tone you're going for will create a sense of harmony in your design. Likewise, an excessive use of both warm and cool colors will create a muddled, confusing appearance.

Additionally, be mindful of the connotation associated with certain colors. Typically, red has a negative connotation. It's usually associated with cancellation or error. In contrast, green has a very positive connotation, often associated with success or progression. Aligning the purpose of your content with a color having a similar connotation can be a great way to choose which colors to include in your design.

Lastly, don't forget that any images you use contain their own color, all of which need to be considered when deciding which colors to use.

The presentation we mentioned earlier on "Why Management Sucks" is also a great example of color coordination coupled with using color for its connotative meaning. The slide before this one makes a positive recommendation for managers, so it uses a warmer color for the background. The slide that follows (shown here) uses red for its negative connotation to further imply that bosses should avoid managing by walking around.

Forget about the old fashioned Word Art used in the title for just a split second, and focus on the purple instead. This presentation fails to coordinate the color of "Let's Eat Sushi" with both the images of sushi and the background. Sure doesn't make sushi look too appetizing now, does it?

8 Thou Shalt Not Overuse Drop Shadows.

It would be impossible to write a helpful DIY guide to design without including at least some mention of the infamous drop shadow -- oft overused shadows added to text or images to add depth or distinction. The same way non-photographers add a filter such as Sepia to make their photograph "look better," non-designers love to add drop shadows to their designs. The fact is, though, drop shadows don't make every design better. If that was the case, professional designers would use them everywhere. However, they don't. Rather, successful designers understand that every effect serves a particular purpose and should only be used when that specific purpose is beneficial.

The purpose of a drop shadow is to add distinction to visual or written information by creating depth and bringing the affected information to the forefront. This is a great result, and often exactly what you want or need to do to certain elements from time to time. However, overusing the effect has the exact opposite effect. If you think back to our second Commandment regarding creating a hierarchy, you'll recall that we need to prioritize which bits of information need to hold the most weight. If you're adding an effect such as the drop shadow to every written or visual element, then you're actually accomplishing the exact opposite goal, i.e. giving distinction to no one particular bit of information. The takeaway, then, is this: effects are great when used with purpose, but don't use them just for the sake of using them.

When we write new ebooks or create new templates to help make the lives of marketers much, much easier, we create additional images to use for promoting them. Here, you see one of those images used in one of our Facebook posts. We used drop shadows to make it appear as if the ebook is standing up and substantial in size. We used drop shadow on the one-sheeter placed next to the ebook to make it look paper-like and printable -- all to help viewers better understand what they'll get after downloading.

The two images on this presentation slide convey the same thing (people using computers to learn), so there isn't a need for both. Despite their lack of importance, each image is given additional (but unequal) emphasis using two different styles of drop shadows. Not so easy on the eyes, is it?

9 Thou Shalt Strive for Consistency.

Simply put, if two or more design elements serve the same function, make sure they look and act the same. On a very high level, the same aesthetic, tone, and messaging should permeate all facets of the brand. On a more granular level, all visual or written elements within an ebook serving the same function should have the same look and feel.

When it comes to designing specific content, consistency involves using the same fonts and font sizes for text of the same kind. Make sure that actionable items, such   as links or calls-to-action, all share a similar color and appearance; align your margins so that are all the same width and height; etc.

The important thing about consistency is that you consider it at all. Remember, good design tends to disappear. If you pay close attention and focus on maintaining consistency, there is a greater chance of this happening since everything will just seem to "fit."

In this ebook about managing a Facebook page for nonprofits, every screenshot is given the same shadow effect, every header is formatted exactly the same, all body copy is formatted exactly the same, and so forth.

These two slides in the same presentation have quotes, but the quotes are formatted completely differently. One is formatted like a slide title, whereas the other is framed like a college diploma. The two quotes serve the same function, but they're formatted entirely differently, giving the framed quote unequal emphasis.

10 Thou Shalt Harmonize Visual and Verbal.

The last Commandment for do-it-yourself design involves synthesizing both written and visual elements. For most non-designers, content creation typically revolves almost entirely around writing copy. Naturally, then, added visual elements are more of an afterthought, seeking simply break up the monotony of text or page layout. The best content, though, is created when both text and visuals are combined to tell the story and present the information in a more powerful, more engaging, and ultimately more successful way than either visual or verbal could do alone.

Avoid this by planning ahead. Whether writing ebooks, checklists, tweets or emails, copywriters should already be considering how they can express that information visually. This doesn't mean identifying the concepts worthy of bold or enlarged lettering; it means identifying where visual elements could completely replace large selections of copy to tell the same story in a significantly more memorable, less time consuming way.

By finding the sweet spot between visual and verbal storytelling and being cognizant of the 9 previous commandments of DIY design, even non-designers can create designs that are memorable, impactful, and most of all, successful.
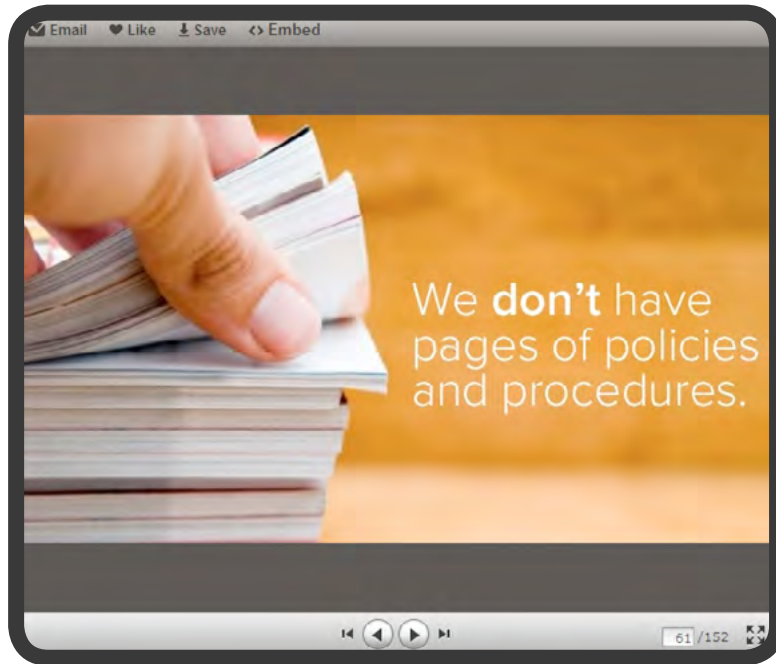
In the HubSpot culture presentation used in an earlier example, there are numerous slides that demonstrate verbal and visual harmony. In this one, the image and words accompany one another with purpose: the image of pages highlight how too many policies and procedures may go unread, which supports words stating that we don't use them. The words are legible and have enough spacing around them to make consumption easy on the viewer.

Here's a perfect example of lack of verbal and visual harmony. The first slide of this SlideShare presentation unnecessarily repeats the name of this Netherlands-based university medical center, causing text to overlap, which de-emphasizes the actual presentation title. And do you have any idea what that orange frog is doing there? Neither do we.

20 EASY AND FREE TOOLS TO CREATE AMAZING VISUALS ON A BUDGET AND WITHOUT PHOTOSHOP.

Although Photoshop and other programs in the Adobe Creative Suite are incredibly powerful tools used by the vast majority of designers, they're not so easy and free; they take a long time to learn.

Luckily there's a way to do everything from choosing a color palette to editing photos to annotating screenshots using the following assortment of tools.

Tools for Choosing Colors and Fonts.

If you don't know much about web color, you might want to spend some time exploring this cheat sheet and Web-Colors-Explained -- a handy website we found that will teach you the difference between the RGB and CMYK color systems. You might also want to brush up on your basic HTML skills so you can learn how to use a HEX code (a 6-character alpha-numerical code that represents a color such as #FF0000). These HEX codes come in handy whether you're working on a website, designing an ebook or manipulating an image in photo editing software.

With the basics of color and HEX codes covered, you can now begin exploring some tools that help you pick the right ones to incorporate into your designs. Go ahead and:

Peruse DesignSeeds for bold and seasonally relevant color palettes inspired by photos.

Use **Color Scheme Designer** to pick one key color, and view various schemes of your choosing -- monochromatic, triad, analogous, complementary and more.

Browse **colors**, **palettes** and **patterns** on **COLOURLovers** or create your very own. Upload a photo and generate color palette based on it using the **PHOTOCOPA** tool.
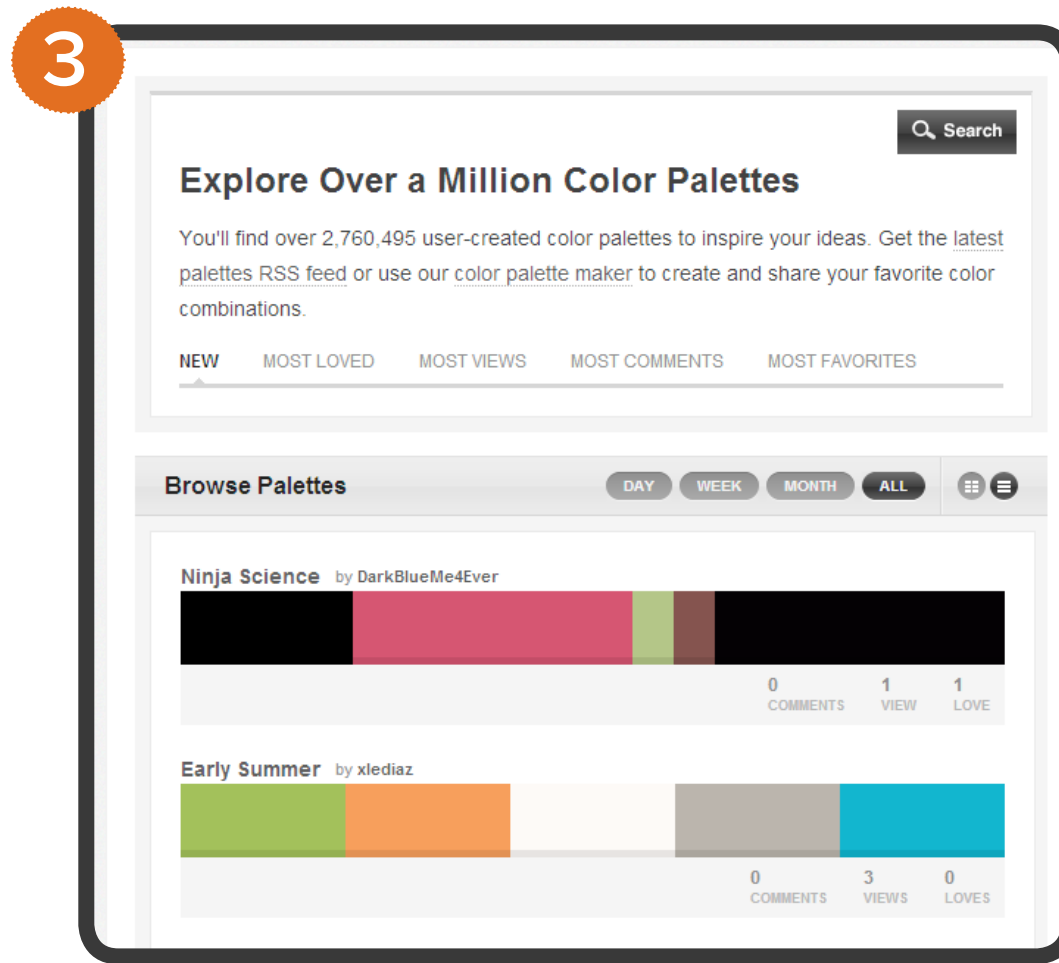
Check out Google Web Fonts, a directory of almost 600 fonts that are ready to use on your website.
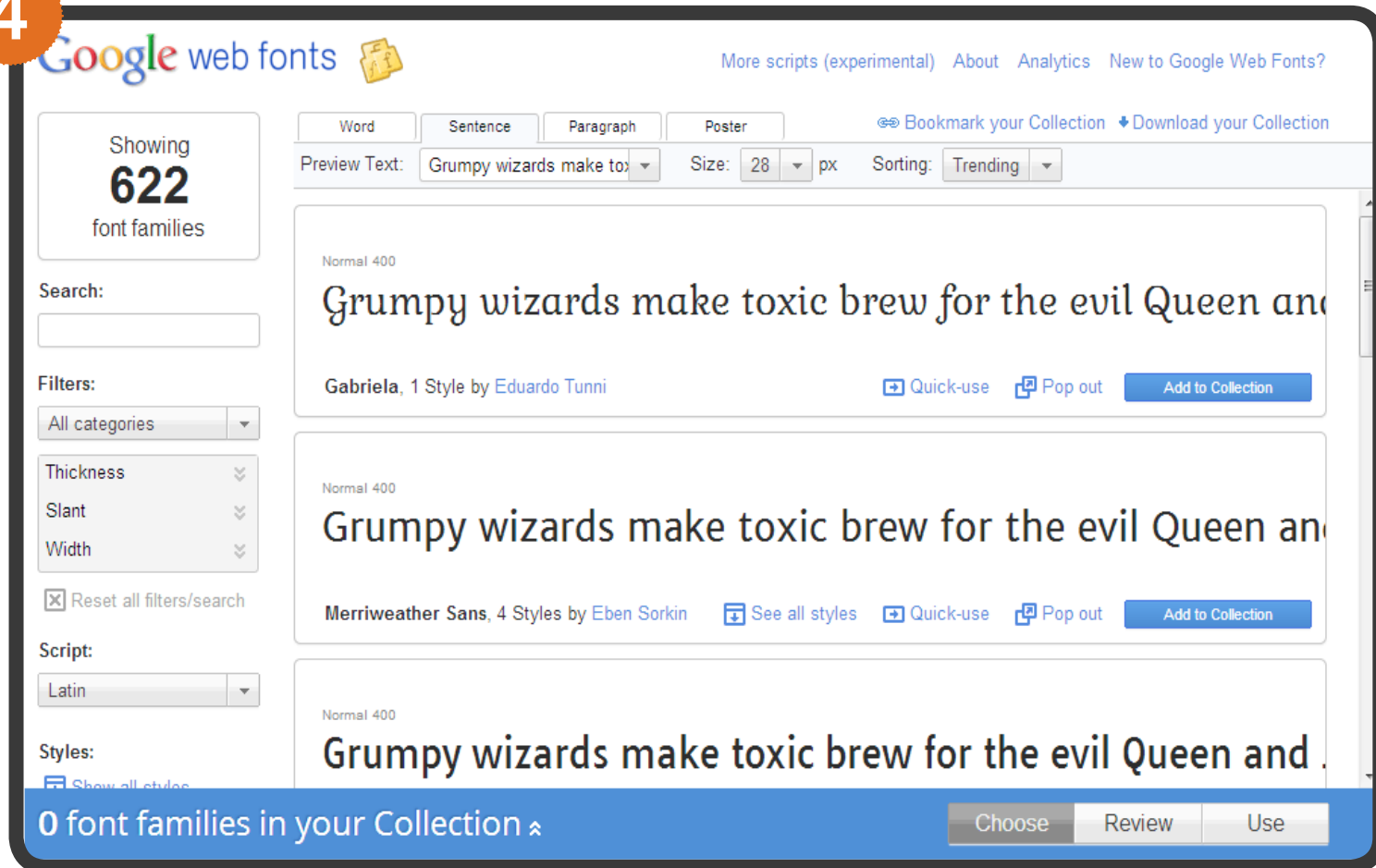
Tools for Creating or Editing Your Own Visual Content.

Sometimes design involves editing photos and images. Sometimes you just need a high quality screen-shot to include in your PowerPoint presentation. Sometimes you need a good photo editor on your smartphone to improve your Instagram uploads. This is where you'll find the tools that do all of the above.

To save yourself a lot of frustration, make sure you know the image sizing and resolution requirements for the desired publishing channel. For example, you may need to resize an image you first used on your blog to include in a Facebook post. This sizing cheat sheet will help.

Create, edit or manipulate an image using Photoshop-like editors like Pixlr or Sumopaint.
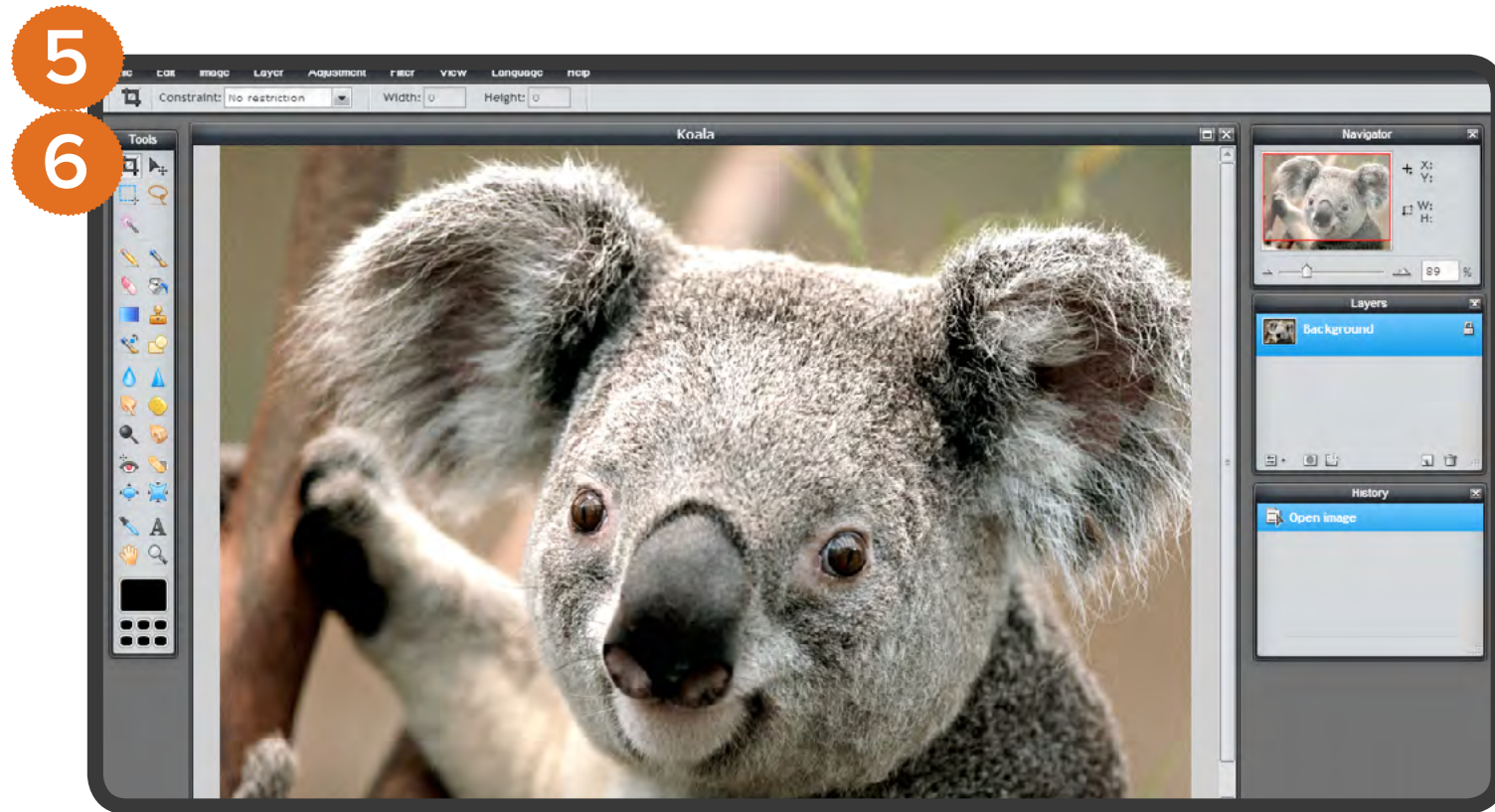
Take a screenshot of something on your computer screen, and annotate it with text, shapes, and objects using Jing or Evernote's Skitch.

Modify photos or create memes with the Google+ Photo Editor **(you have to have a Google+ account to do this).**
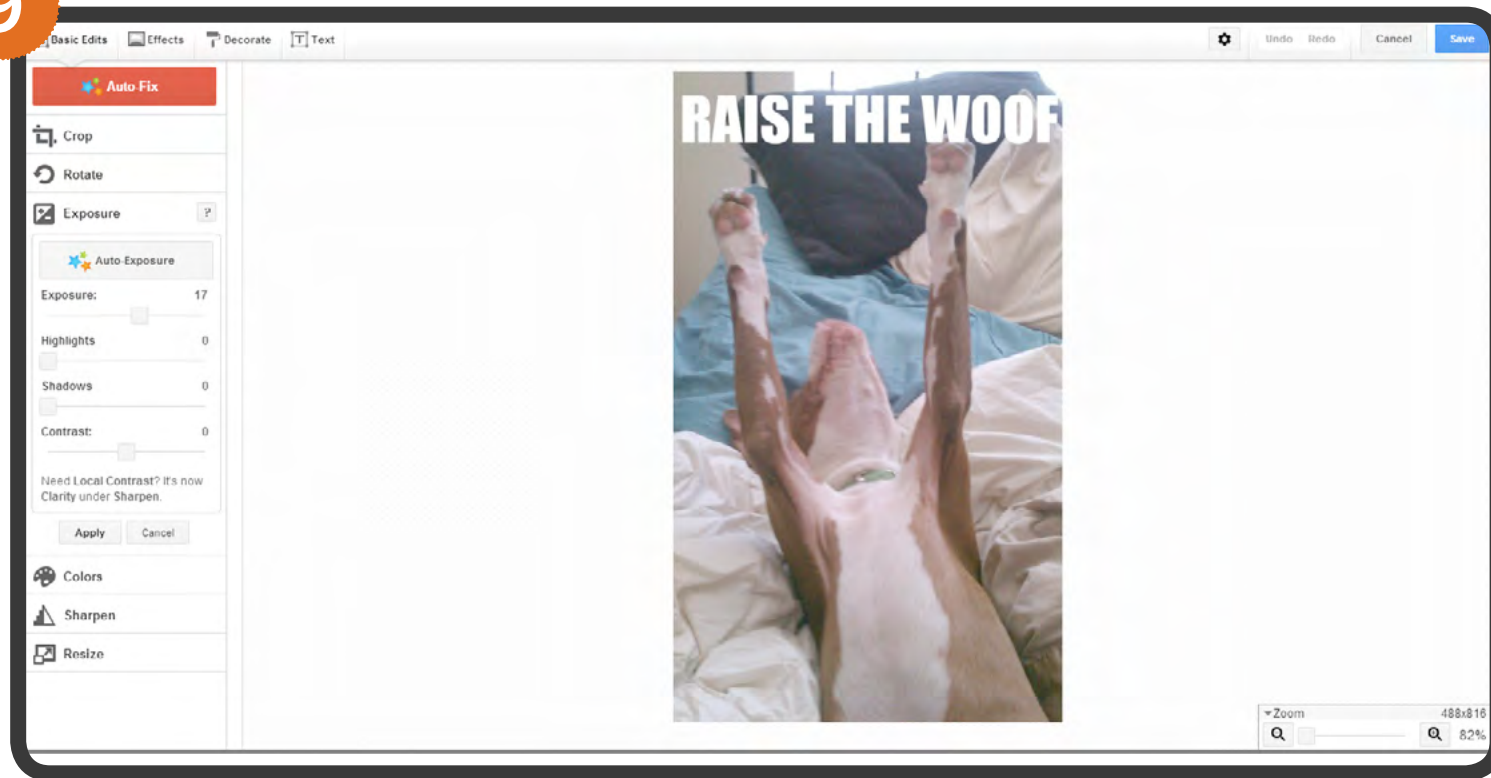
Create a reusable PowerPoint template with several simple backgrounds that you can easily layer text on top of, then save as a JPEG.
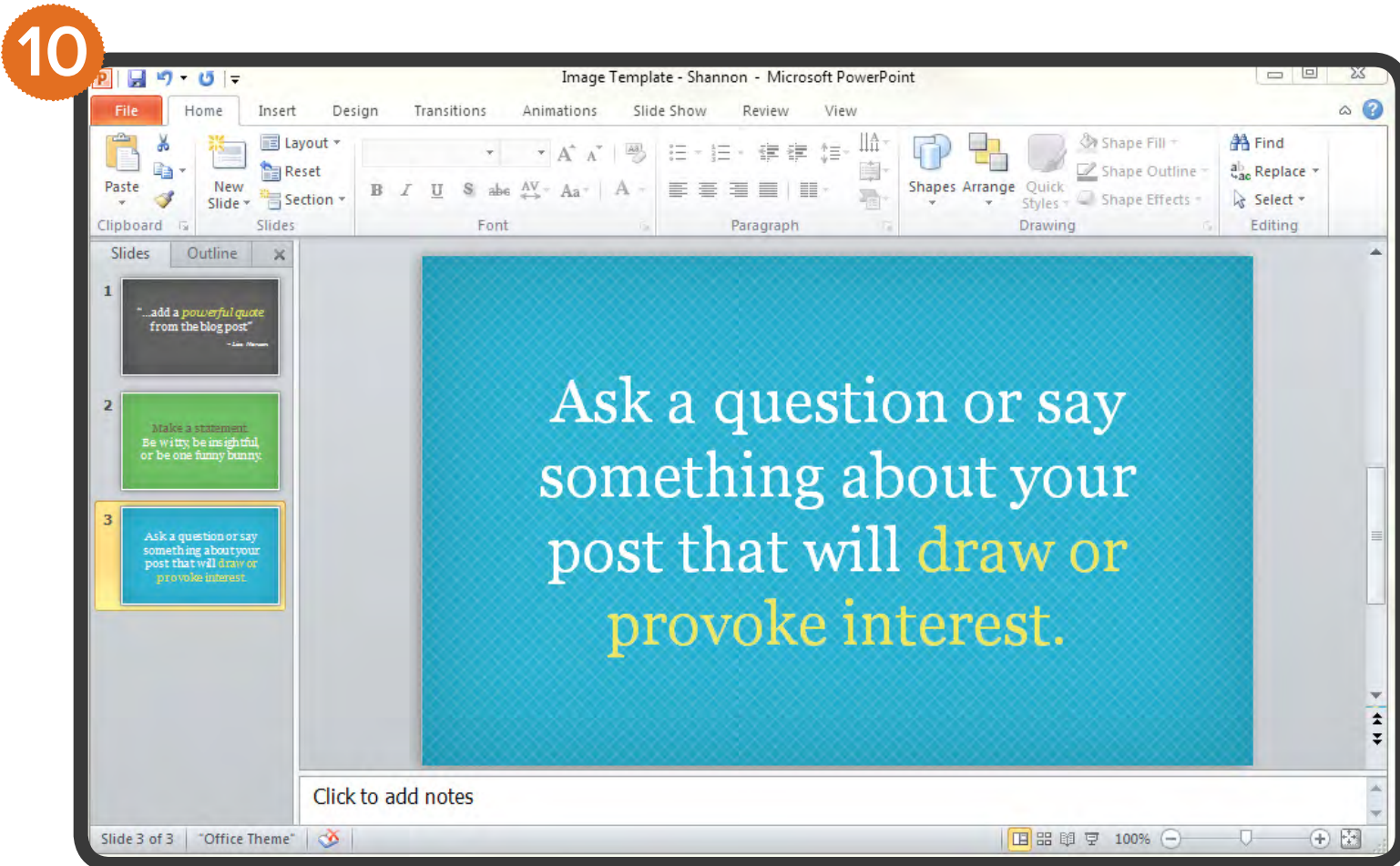
Create infographics in PowerPoint.
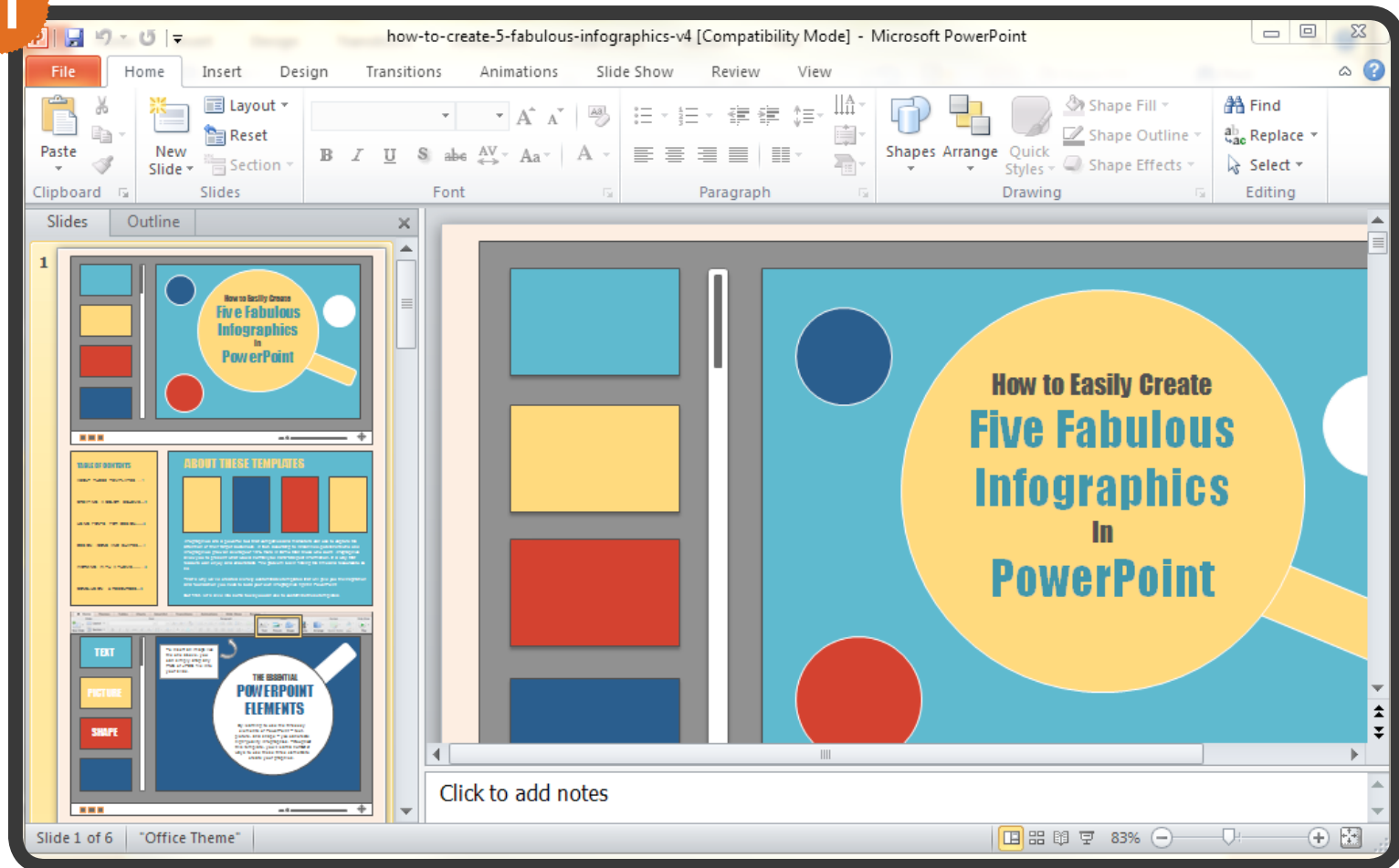
Snap and edit photos with one or more of these mobile apps.
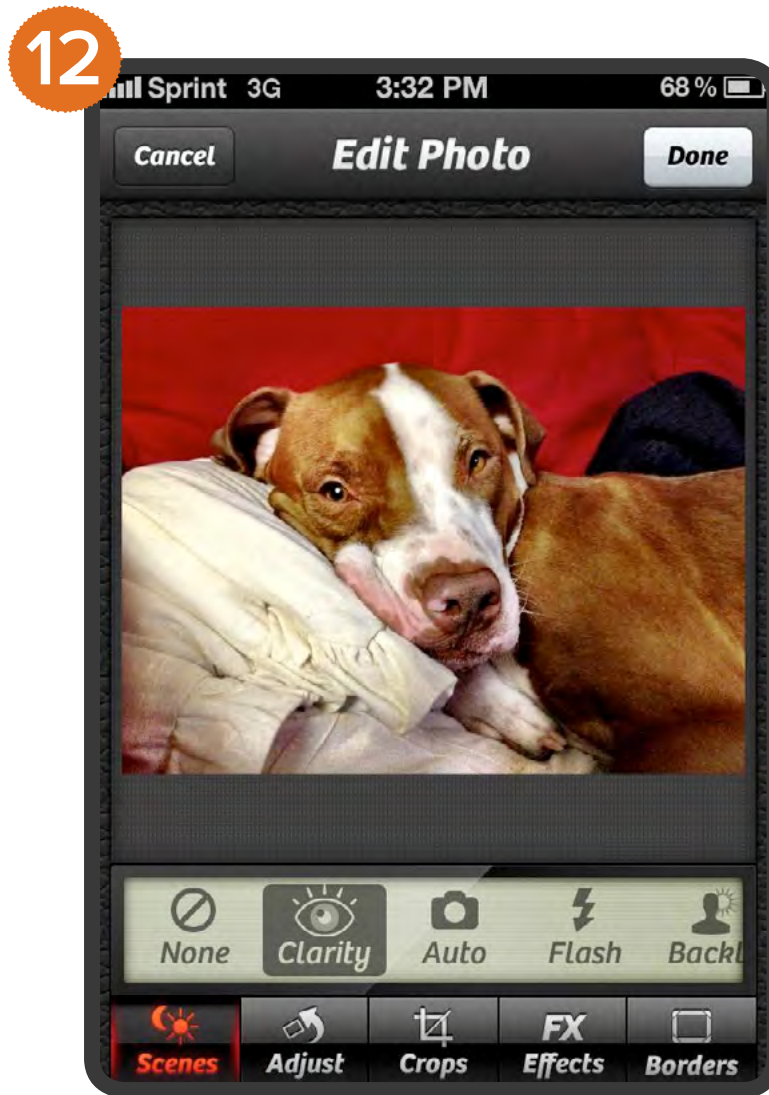
Snap and add effects to photos using Instagram, Facebook Camera, or Flickr Mobile.

Create a word cloud with Wordle.net.
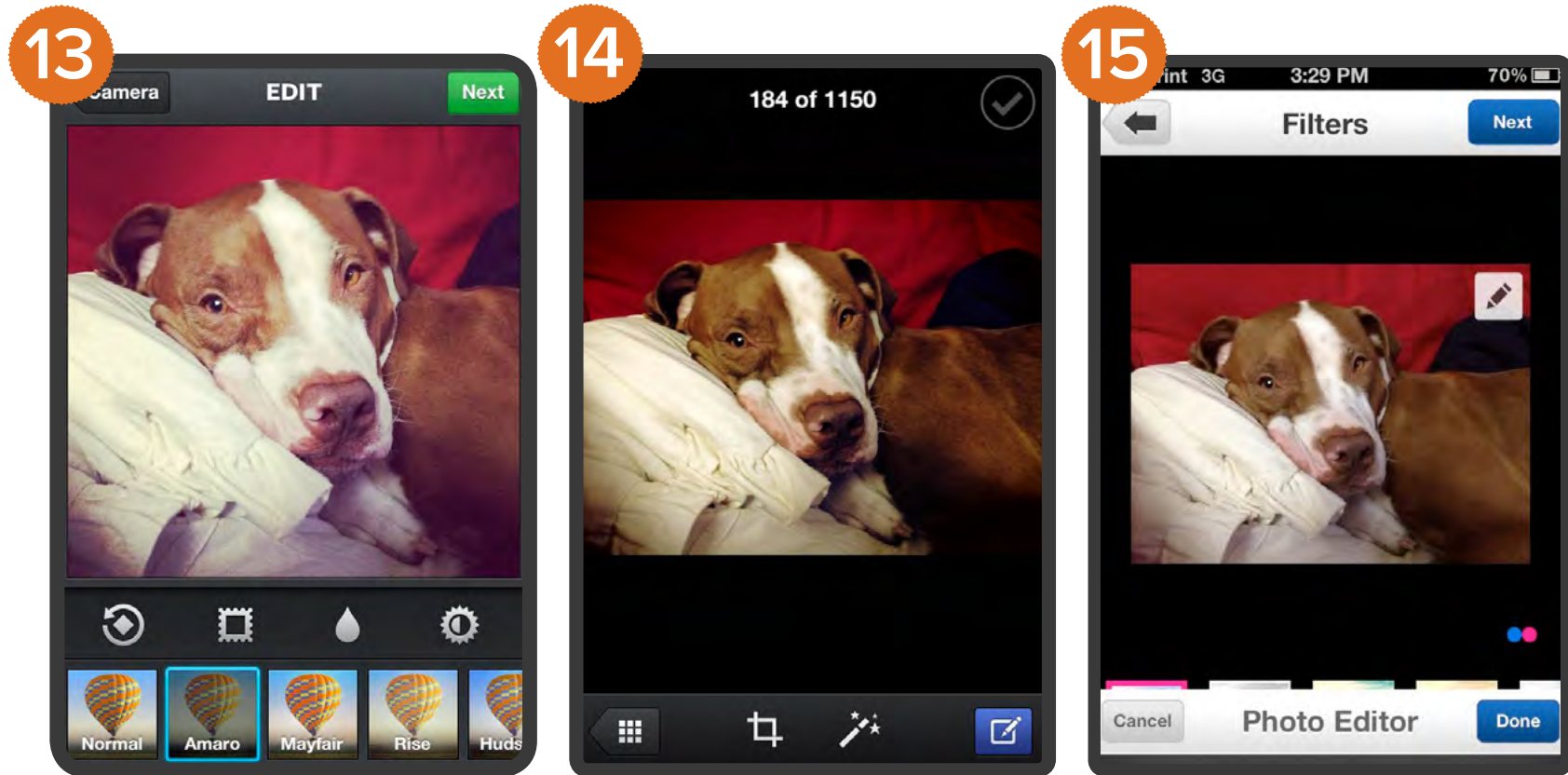
Tools for Finding and Reusing Third Party Visual Content.

Not every piece of visual content has to be created from scratch. As a non-designer doing design, your job is complicated enough. Use the following resources to find and reuse content that's already been created by others.
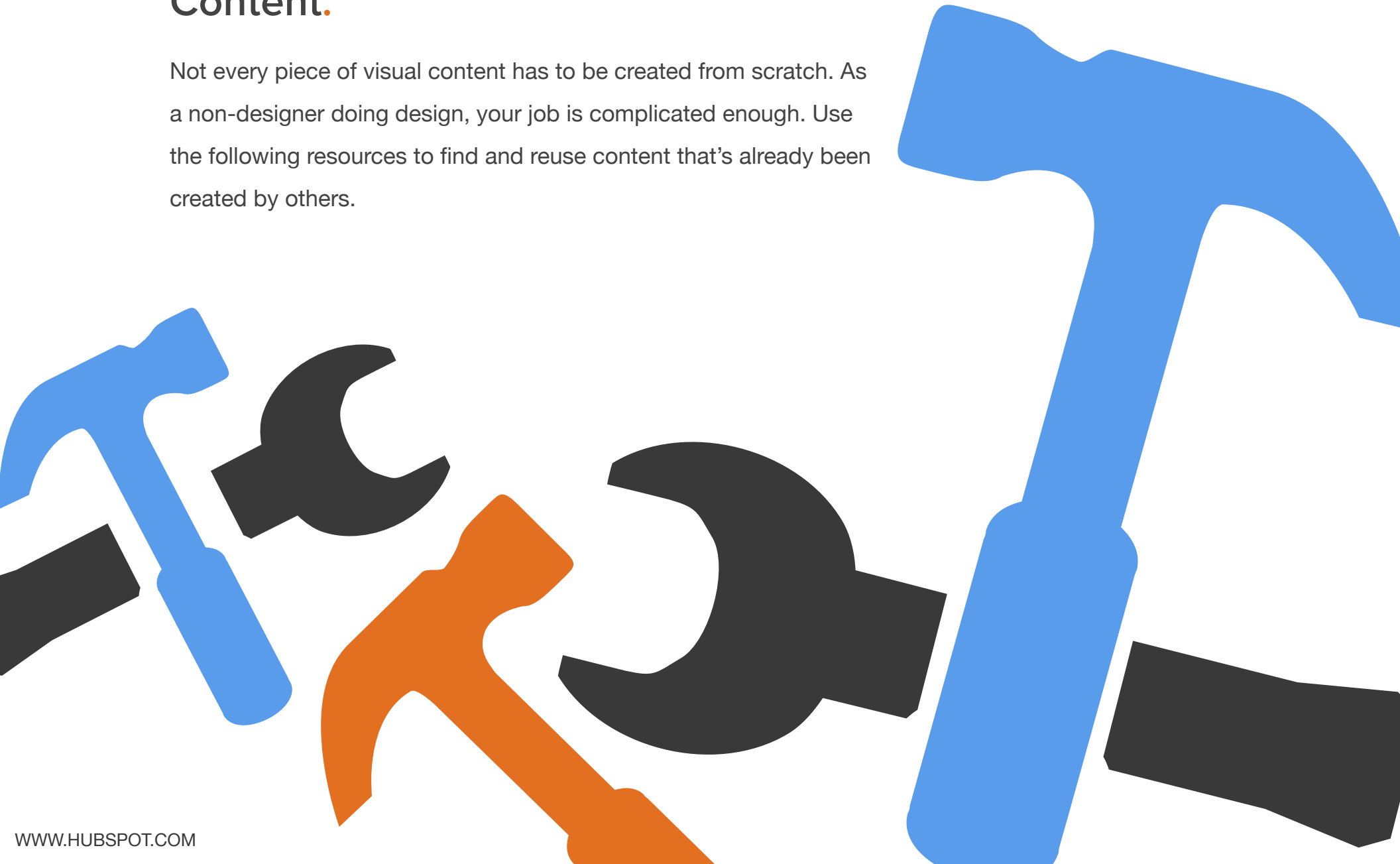
Search Creative Commons for **photos and images** to borrow, alter and attribute.
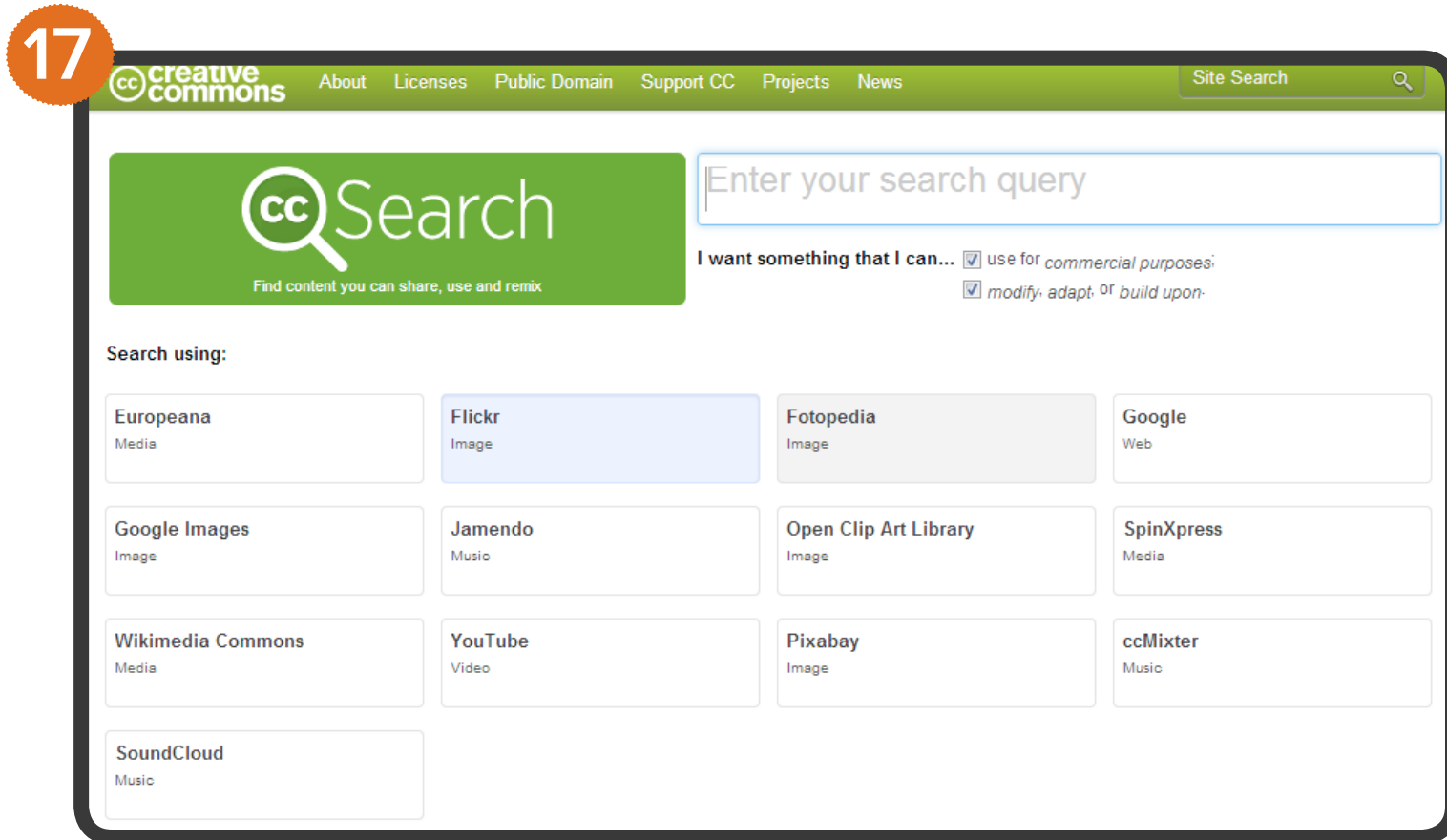
Host a user-generated photo contest on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook or all of the above, and use those images in your next wave of designs.

Use the **IcoMoon app** to find downloadable icons and navigation buttons instead of recreating your own**.**

Borrow wallpapers, icons, and vector graphics from Vecteezy.
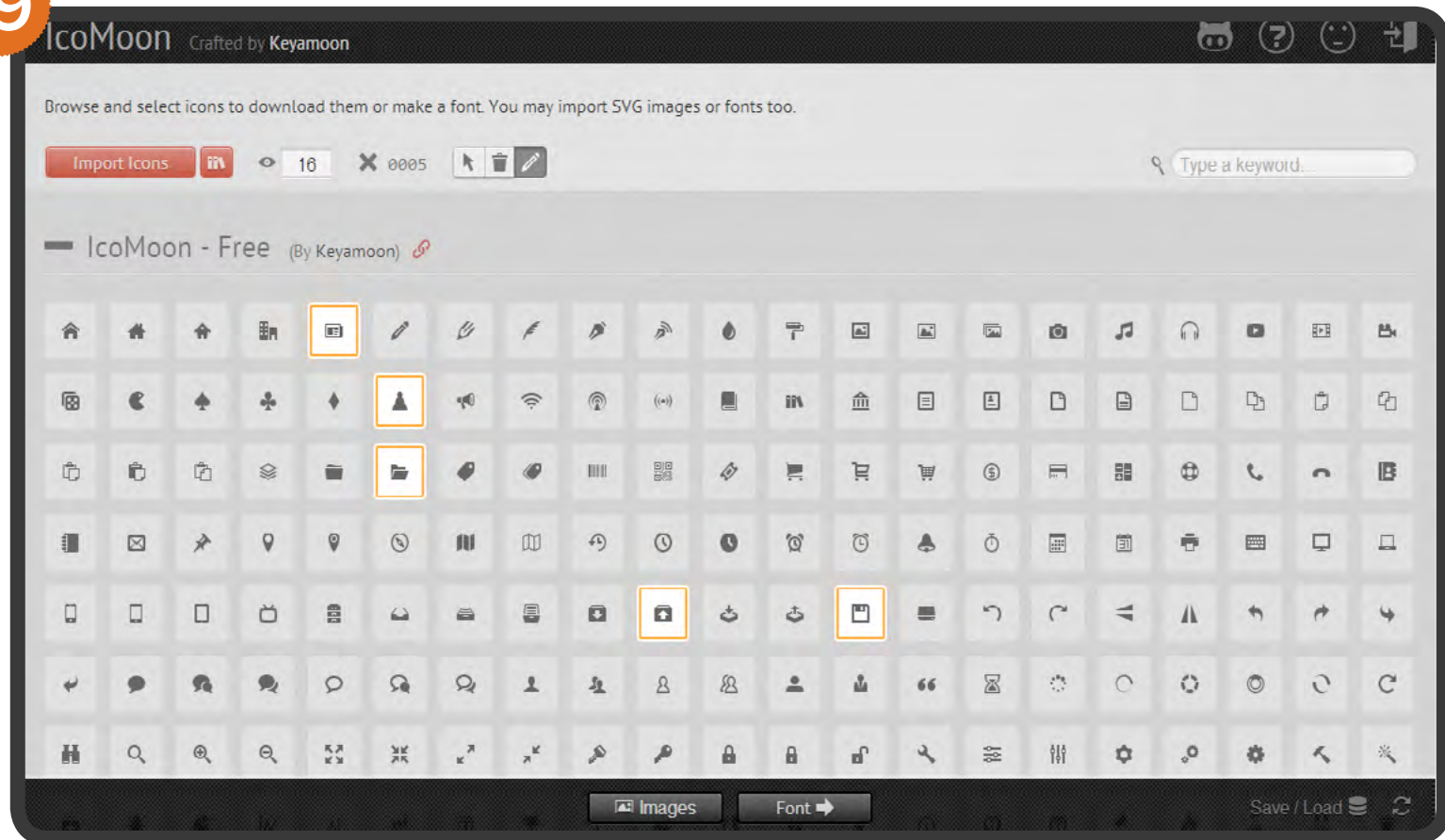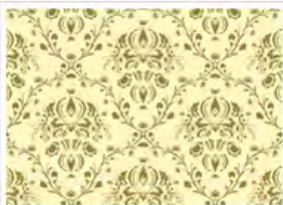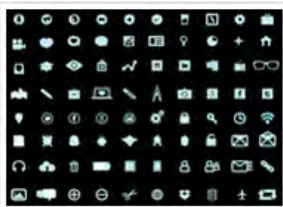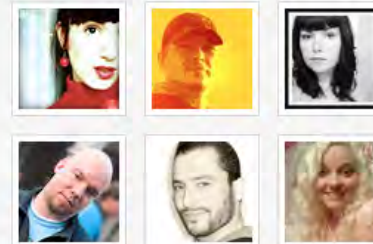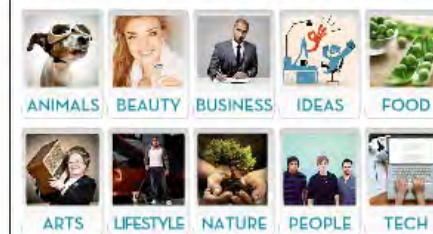
CONCLUSION.

Now that you've learned the 10 Commandments of DIY Design and have a toolset to put those commandments into good use, you should feel both inspired and prepared to go take your own visual designs to the next level.

- Get your social media and content teams ramped up on the basics of DIY design.

- Go turn existing pieces of written content into presentations. Break up text with meaningful visuals.

- Make sure your social media content calendar always has a healthy dose of visuals lined up, and start creating images specifically for your audiences on Facebook, Pinterest and other social channels.

- Experiment with letting just your visuals do the talking (ex: post a photo with overlaid text to your company Facebook page and monitor interaction rates).

- Work with your team to designate a shared folder to use as your company's ever-growing image library.

- And, of course, track your results.

Still have questions? Check out some of the additional reading in the Additional Resources that follow. Now, what will you create?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.

- [Why Marketers Should Invest in Visual Content Creation](#)

- [19 Reasons You Should Include Visual Content in Your Marketing [Data]](#)

- [How to Breathe New Life Into Your Marketing with Visual Content](#)

- [Photos on Facebook Generate 53% More Likes than The Average Post](#)

- [6 Creative Ways to Make Content More Visual](#)

- [13 Free Design Tools for a Visual Marketer on a Budget](#)

- [How to Create Top-Notch Visual Content in PowerPoint [Tutorial]](#)

- [The Marketer's Scoop on Instagram and How to Use It](#)

- [How to Engage Facebook Fans with Images](#)

- [The Complete Social Media [Image] Sizing Cheat Sheet by LunaMetrics](#)

- [6 Ways Social Media Marketers Should Capitalize on the Visual Content Revolution [INFOGRAPHIC]](#)

- [5 Infographics to Teach You How to Easily Create Infographics in PowerPoint [+ Templates]](#)

- [How the New Facebook News Feed Changes Your Content Strategy](#)

- [How to Optimize and Measure Your Pinterest Business Account for Marketing Success](#)

- [Typographical Twins: 20 Perfect Font Pairings](#)

- [The Art of Color Coordination [Infographic]](#)

- [Drop-Shadows and Gradients: Be Consistent in Your Visual Metaphors](#)

- [Understanding Visual Hierarchy in Web Design](#)

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Now that you know how to create all kinds of fantastic visuals, you've got to go share them with the world! Sign up for a free 30-day trial of our social media tools to create, schedule and send posts; track interactions with customers and prospects; and measure your growth.

START YOUR FREE 30-DAY TRIAL.

HTTP://BITLY.COM/HS-FREE-SOCIAL-TOOL

DESIGN IT YOURSELF

THE MARKETER'S CRASH COURSE
IN VISUAL CONTENT CREATION

Do-It-Yourself Design Evaluation Checklist

So you've designed something, but you're not sure you've followed the 10 Commandments we told you about. Use this **printable** checklist to mark what you've done right so you can go back and fix what you missed. Once all checkboxes are marked complete, you're ready to publish!

1. THOU SHALT UNDERSTAND THY CONTENT'S PURPOSE

· I know the answer to these questions:

- · Why are we creating this?
- · Who are we creating this for?
- · What need will this fulfill?
- · When are we creating this?
- · Where will we publish this?
- · How will we measure this?

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

2. THOU SHALT ESTABLISH A HIERARCHY

· I made a list of all the key messages this piece of content should convey to the viewer.

· I prioritized them based on importance by assigning them values (1-10).

· Once the design was complete, I determined the final product visually conveyed the same order of importance.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

3. THOU SHALT RESPECT SIMPLICITY

· My design is not too ornate or flashy.

· I've eliminated all images and graphics that do not support the content's purpose.

· My design makes the content easier to consume.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

4. THOU SHALT KEEP IT LEGIBLE

· The color of text is not too light or too dark on top of the background color I chose.

· I can read everything; no images or other objects in my design obscure the text in some way.

· I don't have too much text crammed into a small space.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

5. THOU SHALT PROVIDE ADEQUATE SPACING

· I have equal margins around my content.

· All elements within my design are not too close to one another.

· The negative (white) space in my design helps draw attention to the most important pieces of information I established in my hierarchy (e.g.. titles or headings).

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

6. THOU SHALT ALIGN ELEMENTS

· All of the elements are positioned in a balanced relation to one another.

· Any elements that sit side by side are placed on the same line.

· If I've disrupted linear alignment. It's for the purpose of drawing attention to a key piece of information established in my hierarchy.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

7. THOU SHALT COORDINATE COLOR

· I considered what feeling I want to viewer to feel when choosing my color scheme.

· I was mindful of the connotations associated with the colors I chose.

· I coordinated colors with any photos I included in my design.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

8. THOU SHALT NOT OVERUSE DROP SHADOWS

· I've applied the drop shadow effect sparingly.

· I've applied a drop shadow only to pieces of information that deserve to be given depth and distinction.

· Every drop shadow applied was done with purpose.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

9. THOU SHALT STRIVE FOR CONSISTENCY

· My color scheme is consistent throughout the entire piece of content.

· All visual or written elements that serve the same function have the same look and feel.

· Margins, titles, headers, links, calls-to-action, photos, and images are formatted the same as their counterparts.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐

10. THOU SHALT HARMONIZE VISUAL AND VERBAL

· My images complement my words and vice versa.

· I've considered illustrating a concept to eliminate the need for words.

· My words and visuals do a better job telling a story when used together than either could do alone.

Yes ☐ *No* ☐