

## ILLUSTRATED REVIEW

# The Journey to a Successful Illustrated Review

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## Abstract

Illustrated review articles, rooted in scientific rigor, are made up of “capsules” or panels of visuals that together provide an up-to-date overview of a topic. Illustrated reviews aim to provide a more accessible format than traditional written reviews to facilitate more effective knowledge translation and dissemination. However, the novelty of this format can dissuade prospective authors due to uncertainty and lack of comfort. To remedy this uncertainty, we have summarized the journey of developing an illustrated review, from identifying an appropriate topic to submitting the final manuscript for peer review. We highlight the importance of approaching an illustrated review from a storytelling perspective, and encouraging authors to keep their audience in mind when picking a theme or characters. We provide storyboard considerations and simplify graphic design principles to develop an outline and line draft for the illustrated review. We list programs available to authors to demystify creating attractive and engaging scientific visuals. Finally, we provide information on choosing colors or fonts and where to find copyright-free icons, graphics, illustrations, and pictures. This review provides prospective authors with the knowledge, tools, and resources to create an effective illustrated review article. If there is difficulty with the links embedded within the document please download the full PDF.

## KEYWORDS

graphics, hemostasis, illustration, publishing, thrombosis, visualization

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# ILLUSTRATED REVIEWS



## "CAPSULES" OF INFORMATION<sup>1</sup>

using visuals like a comic book or graphical novel

FOR AUTHORS

## USING VISUALS MAKE THEM

### ATTRACTIVE<sup>2</sup>

Visuals can peak interest, helping it stand out from other work.

### ENGAGING

Visuals help keep readers interested in the information.

### ACCESSIBLE

Making science more accessible by distilling complex concepts.

### MEMORABLE<sup>3</sup>

Visual communication is more memorable than written.

### SHAREABLE

Easily shareable in both academic and online scenarios.



# PITCH YOUR IDEA

## IT'S A GOOD IDEA FOR AN ILLUSTRATED REVIEW IF

IT HAS NOT BEEN  
REVIEWED RECENTLY

Ensure the topic has not been reviewed recently or published as an illustrated review with RPTH.

RPTH ILLUSTRATED  
REVIEWS 1-3

IT'S A COMPLEX TOPIC

A topic in thrombosis and hemostasis warranting review.

IT'S BETTER EXPLAINED  
WITH GRAPHICS

The topic can be explained, distilled, and simplified with graphics.

YOU ARE OPEN MINDED

You are interested in trying something new!

EMAIL YOUR PITCH

MAIL TO: ILLUSTRATED  
MATERIALS EDITOR



# DEVELOP YOUR STORY

## APPROACH FROM A STORYTELLING PERSPECTIVE<sup>1-3</sup>

ensure your story has a beginning, middle, and end





# LAY OUT YOUR PANELS

## THE OUTLINE OF YOUR STORY

create your panels (7 x 9.5") and fill them with placeholders

### EACH PANEL SHOULD HAVE A GOAL

How does each panel fit in the story? Write the goal out for each panel.

### INTRODUCE CONCEPTS

Make sure each basic concept is introduced before building on it.

### STORYBOARDING IN SCIENCE!

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN EACH PANEL

List the main components required for the communication goal.

### COMPONENTS

Reference images for how the concept is usually depicted.

### EXISTING GRAPHICS

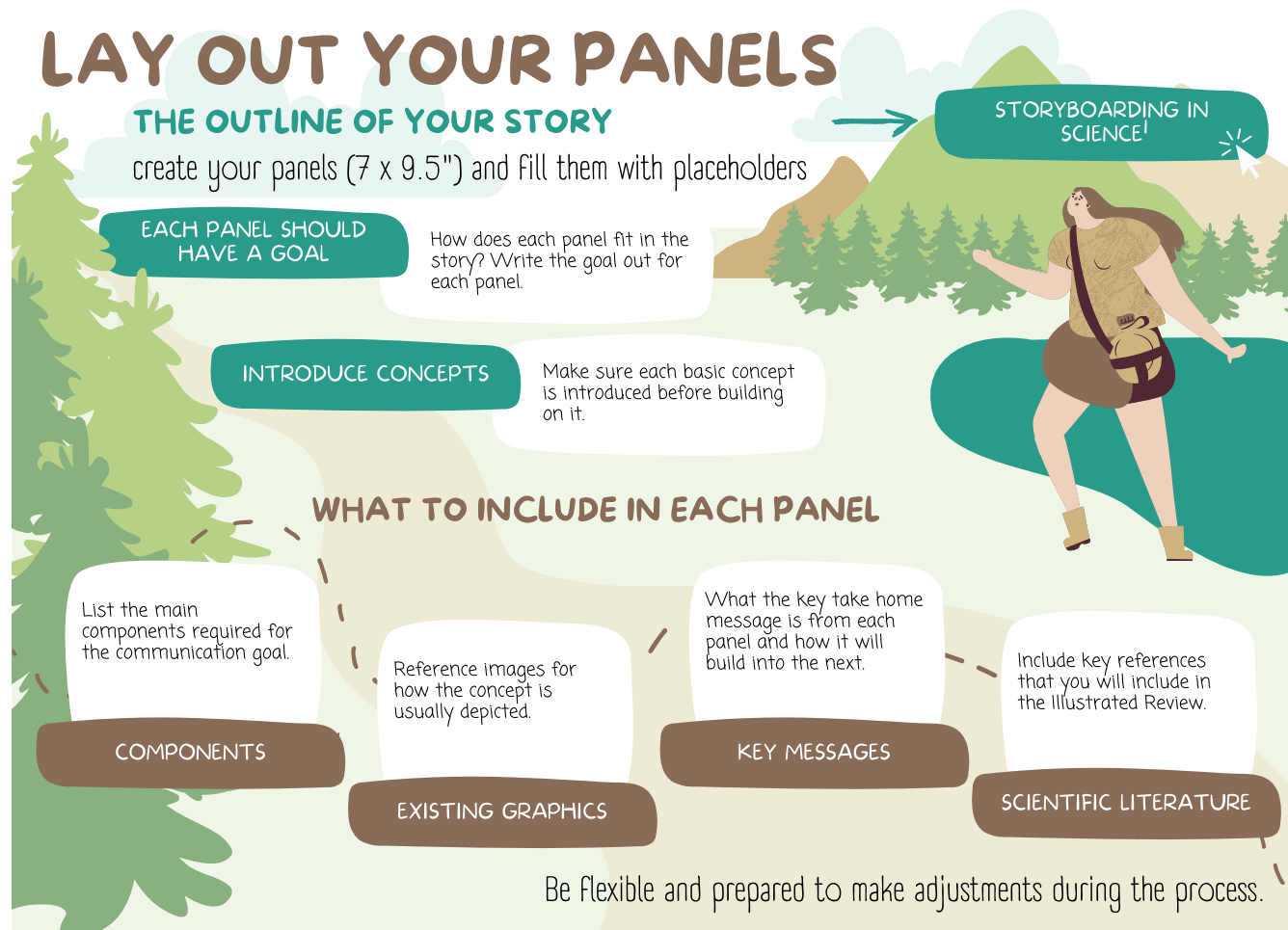
What the key take home message is from each panel and how it will build into the next.

### KEY MESSAGES

Include key references that you will include in the Illustrated Review.

### SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

Be flexible and prepared to make adjustments during the process.



# ORGANIZE YOUR CONTENT

## FOLLOW GRAPHIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### ALIGNMENT

Make sure components line up.

### CONTRAST

To help guide the reader through and highlight what's important.

### BALANCE

Distribute content evenly.

### CONSISTENCY

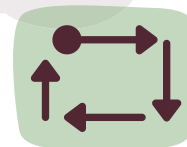
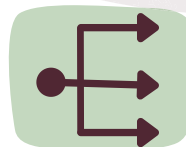
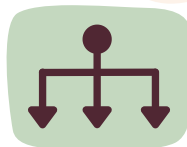
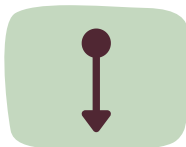
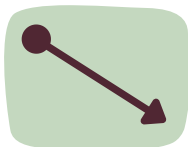
Methods of contrast should stay the same throughout.

## SHOWING DIRECTION

panels should have a flow to them to provide direction

### DIRECTIONAL AIDS

Use headers, numbers, connectors, arrows, boxes, or color gradients to help guide.



# SET THE STAGE

## START WITH A DRAFT

### CREATE A LINE DRAFT

Create a rough sketch of what you want where in each panel.

### EMAIL YOUR OUTLINE

Receive feedback from the editor and an informal expert reviewer on the outline.

## CHOOSE A PROGRAM

### ADOBE SUITE

Vector + Creation-based  
Desktop App

### CANVA

Pixel or Vector + Drag and Drop  
Online Tool

### BIORENDER

Pixel + Drag and Drop  
Online Tool

### POWERPOINT

Pixel + Creation-based  
Desktop App

### INKSCAPE

Vector + Creation-based  
Desktop App

### VECTOR VS PIXEL

Vector = scalable, can increase size without losing quality

Pixel = not scalable, lose quality with size increase  
png > jpg

### CREATION VS DRAG AND DROP

Creation-based = require you to create the graphics

Drag and drop = contain a bank of graphics to choose from



# STYLIZE YOUR CONTENT

## DEVELOP A COLOR SCHEME

### MAIN COLOR

Pick a physiologically representative main color.

### PALETTE

Build a palette with a light/ dark background, and a few highlight colors.

ADOBE COLOR  
WHEEL

CONTRAST CHECKER

## CHOOSE A SANS SERIF FONT

### SANS SERIF

for example:

**Arial**

Seems more modern  
Easier to recognize  
More readable  
Accessible

### SERIF

for example:

**Times**

Seems more professional  
Harder to recognize  
Less readable  
Not accessible

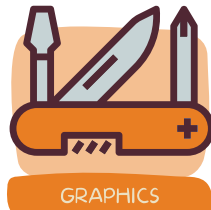
GOOGLE FONTS

## REPLACE PLACEHOLDERS WITH VISUALS using the simplest form that matches your style



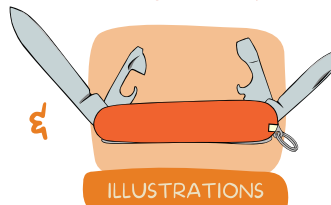
THE NOUN PROJECT

PHYLOPIC

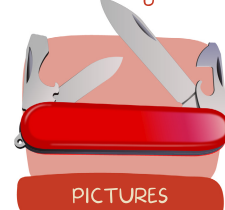


SERVIER ART

BIOICONS



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IMAGE LIBRARY



MED PIX

& confirm the copyright status of any borrowed visual.

# PILOT AND PEER REVIEW

PILOT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE



## RELATIONSHIP DISCLOSURE

Dr Cushman is editor-in-chief and Dr. Sholzberg is an associate editor of *Research and Practice in Thrombosis and Haemostasis (RPTH)*, and they receive honoraria. Sarah Nersesian is the owner of and a scientific illustrator at Designs That Cell.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SN and MS contributed to conceptualizing, writing, and designing article content. MC and AW contributed to conception and design and reviewed drafts of the work and the final article.

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