# Images in eLearning - 6 Best Practices to Choose Images for your eLearning Course (Sep 15)

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We all acknowledge the power that lies in images. The question how can you be sure that you choose the right images for your eLearning course? In this article, I'll share 6 best practices to choose images in eLearning so that you can make sure the pictures you select in your next image search are ideal for your eLearning deliverable.



**6 Best Practices to Choose Images in eLearning**

I will not share the cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words; you already know this. I will point out, however, that every picture hides a story behind it. As eLearning professionals we use **storytelling** all the time; we try to find ways to share the stories behind our **eLearning content** in order to **engage** and captivate our audiences. **Images** do exactly that; they tell stories, often in milliseconds. The more impressive, detailed, and lively is an image, the more effective it gets. This is why pictures can be very powerful tools in the right hands; and this is why it takes time to find the right images for any eLearning deliverable. But what does "right" mean? In this article, I'll share 6 best practices to choose images in eLearning so that you can make sure that the pictures you select for your eLearning courses support your online content, engage your learners, and, indeed, tell the right story every time.

1. **Think relevance.**
   Starting an image search looking for inspiration is rarely effective; most of the time is confusing and highly time consuming. Before you begin your search you need to have a specific idea about what you're looking for. Your goal is to find an image which is relevant both to your topic and your **audience**. For example, let's say that you need to illustrate low performance in the sales department; a picture showing a grocer sleeping behind his bench wouldn't be relevant, would it? On the contrary, it would distract your audience, in this case sales professionals. Knowing who your learners are is extremely important for choosing images in eLearning, especially when content **localization** is involved. Make sure that, before you begin your image search, you have **analyzed your audience** and gathered all necessary information about them, such as their educational and professional backgrounds, their ages, their cultural characteristics, and so on.

2. **Check whether your images reinforce your message.**
   An irrelevant picture distracts, confuses, and even annoys your audience, and so does a "weak" image. Remember that you are not looking for **stock images** just to fill space. Images need to support your text and convey the message you are trying to get across; they are there to help learners grasp a concept when they read the eLearning content and they cannot understand it. Ideally, even learners who don't read the content should be able to easily get the idea by looking at the supporting images. In other words, if the images you select don't transmit the right message, it might be a good idea not to include them in your eLearning course. Ask yourself whether the picture that grabbed your attention during your search not only makes sense to your learners, but also conveys the impression you want. If the answer is "yes", you're heading in the right direction. If the answer is "no" or "I'm not sure", keep looking.

3. **Look for images that evoke emotions.**
   Effective visuals address people's **emotions** and invoke excitement. If you want your learners to **remember** the image you picked, get them interested or make them **laugh**! Your main goal is to connect with your audience; to engage them. Evoking their emotions is one of the best ways to do that, and the right image is the perfect tool. To ensure that you choose the right "emotionally-charged" picture, that is, to avoid being over the top, melodramatic or, in some cases, even offensive, use the data from analyzing your audience: What are their learning preferences and needs? The more you know about your learners, the more able you will be to choose effective images and evoke the right kind of emotions.

4. **Use your images consistently.**
   A professional looking eLearning course has a consistent look and feel; this means that all visuals need to be consistent throughout the eLearning course. For instance, mixing clip art, vector images, and photographs is not a good idea; try to focus on one style of images. Consistency helps learners concentrate and makes it easier for them to connect with your online content, whereas a random combination of different visual styles is distracting and obstructs the learning process.

5. **Know that size matters.**
   And by "size" we mean "resolution". Think of image resolution as image quality; the lower the resolution, the lower the quality of your images. High resolution means that the picture is clear, sharp, and all its details become visible. You don't want to select a great looking image and no one to be able to appreciate its beauty, do you? On the other hand, you cannot include very high resolution pictures in your eLearning course, as they become too heavy to open quickly. This is why you need to always make sure that the size of your images is correct. Resize them before you add them to your eLearning course to ensure that they are big enough to draw attention and build an immediate connection with the viewers, but not as big as to frustrate learners by slowing down the loading process.

6. **Beware of copyright issues.**
   Last but certainly not least, make sure you respect copyright law. If the pictures you use are not from an authorized source, you disobey the policies and guidelines of the marketplace and this may lead to legal conflicts. Almost every picture out there is an original work and there are different kinds of rights attached to them; consider choosing royalty free images, which come with least amount of restrictions and for which you will need to pay only once to use them as many times as you want. Otherwise, you are only allowed to use the image for a limited time and renew the license after a specified period of time. In any case, always make sure that you have purchased the images you use before you send your eLearning product to your client, to avoid unpleasant surprises.