

# Functions and Features of Lucidchart Software

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Lucidchart is a web-based software application used for designing and drawing. You can use it to create diagrams, graphics, flowcharts, mind maps, and mockups. This description of the software will highlight some of its significant functions and features. In the modern workplace, simple yet effective software that facilitates visual design (and allows for remote collaboration) is an important tool. Using such visual software for planning can be critical (Strohmeier, 2011).

Lucidchart looks similar to other programs for digital drawing and design and contains many common tools and functions (Figure 1). It remains one of the most popular applications of its kind due to various useful functions and capabilities. The strength of Lucidchart comes from a focus on drawing tools, customized libraries, and collaborative capabilities.

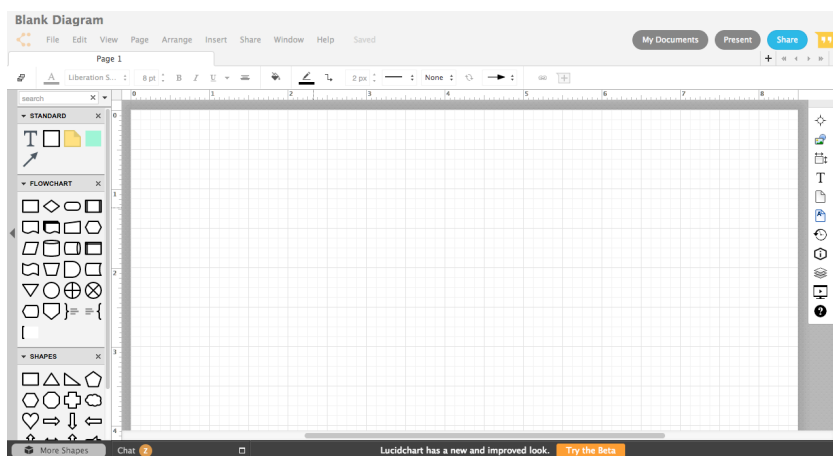


Figure 1. The default Lucidchart interface

## The Lucidchart Interface

Basic features include:

- a gridded background as the default canvas
- “drag and drop” lines and shapes on the left
- adjustable variables on the top toolbar
- additional tools and settings on the right

## Drawing tools

In Lucidchart, you will create most of your content with various lines and shapes. There are many lines and shapes available, including common components such as rectangles, circles, triangles and arrows. There are also less common but still useful components such as other polygons, dotted lines, and brackets. To put one of these elements on the canvas, find and select it from the inventory on the left of the interface, click it, drag it, and place it in the desired location on the canvas. You can always move a component if you put it in an incorrect or undesired location on the canvas.

Lucidchart excels in making graphics such as flowcharts and schematics. You can easily move components around on the canvas and they will align with the grid or with other components to maintain a precise and organized graphic. For example, if you draw a line between two components, the line will connect to a logical point on the target component, such as a center or midpoint. After you place a component on the canvas, you can still customize a variety of features.

You can further customize additional features of the components with ease. Using the toolbar along the top of the canvas, you can adjust the thickness of a line, the color of a line or shape, the color fill or shading of a shape, the transparency of an element, and so on.

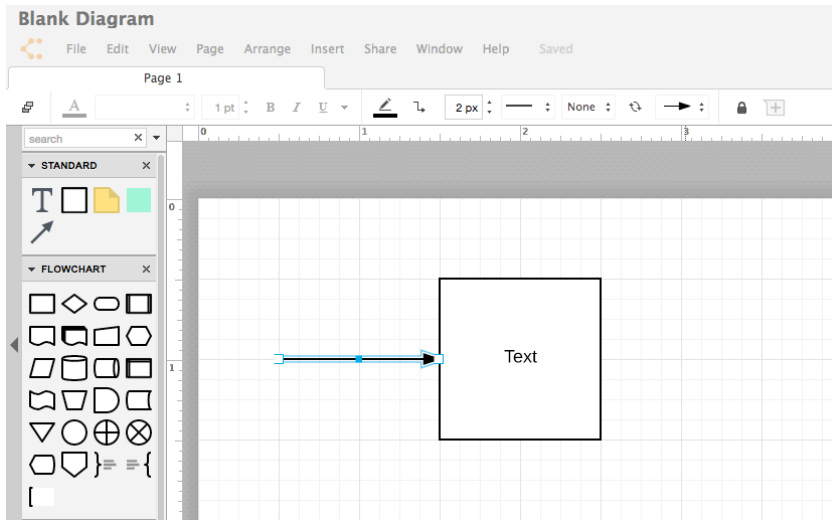


Figure 2. An example of shape and line

### Drawing Tools

In this example, several variables have been adjusted:

- a line has been stylized as an arrow (highlighted in blue)
- the arrow has been connected to the middle of a square
- the square shape has a solid white fill (with text inside as well)

## Customized libraries

The inventory of shapes and lines to the left of the canvas is the default library in Lucidchart. These elements are what you need to create your own graphics from scratch. However, if you would like to start with a specific template or an outline, you can access the expanded library. You can browse these preexisting templates and arrangements, which are importable and customizable, by clicking on **More Shapes** at the bottom of the inventory on the left side of the interface. Examples include floorplans, data flowcharts, mockups for user interaction design on a digital device (Figure 3), and many stencils and templates for various purposes and scenarios.

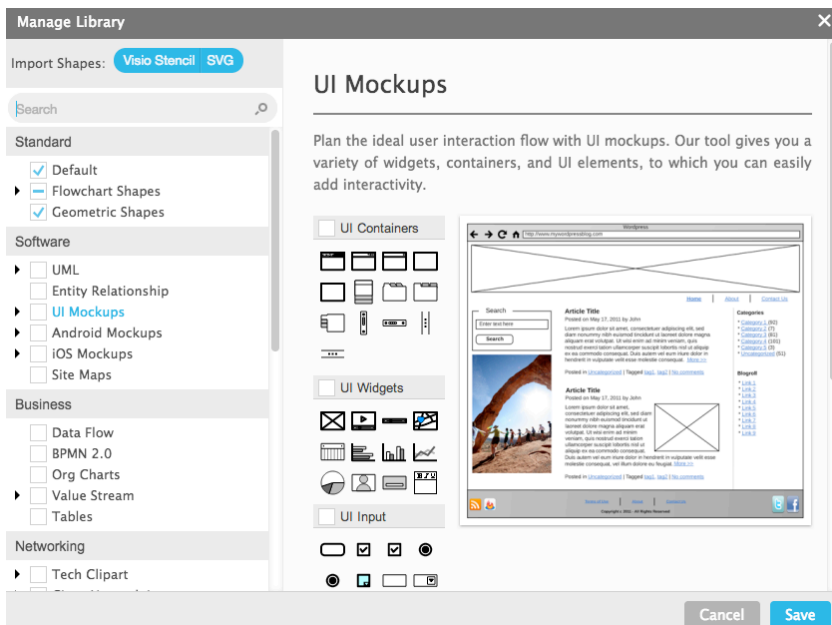


Figure 3. An example of a user interaction mockup ready for use

### Customized Libraries

You can browse through sets of elements to add to the default inventory, thus creating and managing a customized library. Among many possibilities, you could specifically look for:

- the right set of elements for the right purpose, e.g. business
- elements to complement a graphic otherwise made from the default library

## Collaborative capabilities

With just the drawing tools and the libraries, Lucidchart would be a useful piece of software but not very different from programs such as Adobe Illustrator or OmniGraffle. Lucidchart is popular and effective because it is web-based. This allows you to share a work in progress or a finished graphic with a colleague or an administrator (Figure 4). This function is similar to that of Google Docs. Those with editing privileges can work with the original creator to collaborate.

This level of collaboration is crucial in today's networked world. Two users can collaborate remotely with Lucidchart; the program also has an embedded chat function (Figure 5) so that collaborators can discuss potential ideas or discuss the pros and cons of an existing graphic. Any graphic, whether created by a single user or a team, can be shared with more audiences, saved in various file formats, or published to social media—all very useful capabilities (Broida, 2008).

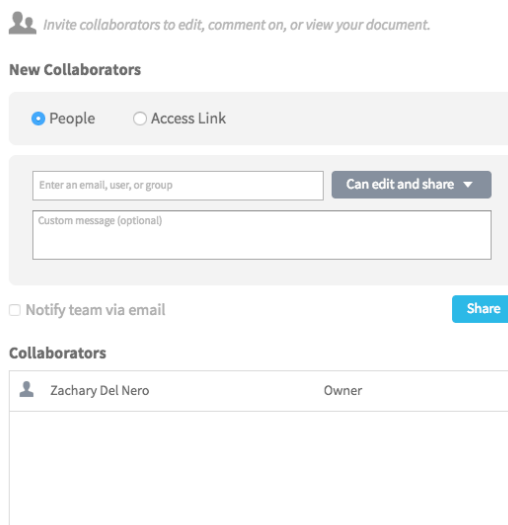


Figure 4. Sharing settings and preferences

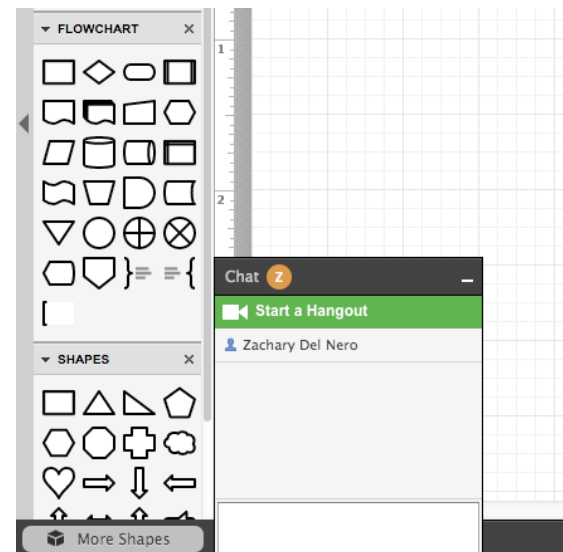


Figure 5. The embedded chat function

## Lucidchart from start to finish

Lucidchart has an interface and layout similar to other design and drawing software applications. It allows you to quickly create lines and shapes and to adjust the stylistic appearance of these components. The gridded canvas makes sure that elements stay aligned. Lucidchart allows you to import templates, to create a customized library of elements, to collaborate with others, and to share and publish graphics.

## Sources

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