Graphics Evaluation

I chose nine photographs, three photo illustrations, one line-art map, and one icon to place in my brochure and online. I shot two photographs, ButtShot1.1 and McCotton3.1, and made one photo illustration and one icon, SockPile4.1C and Good Icon, which were both borne out of need. I recalled just enough about graphic design -- cohesion, color, balance, etc. -- to make both SockPile4.1C and Good Icon, but I opted to use stock photographs and photo illustrations most often in my brochure.

Seven photographs, two photo illustrations, and one line-art map were taken from four online databases, listed here alphabetically:

1. Microsoft Clip Art and Media
2. Texas A&M Agricultural Communications Clip Art Collection
3. Texas A&M Agricultural Communications Image Database
4. USDA Agricultural Research Service Image Gallery

Overall, I chose photographs and photo illustrations for their use of color, particularly primary and secondary colors. Indeed, bright blue, red, yellow, and green were seen in those pictures chosen. I hid an oversized black box and an unassuming, black-and-white photograph behind photographs and photo illustrations, causing their colors to look brighter and livelier. For example, Photograph USDACotton5.1 showed a farming implement, painted both red and yellow, harvesting cotton under a cloudless sky of beautiful blue. Likewise, Photo Illustration SockPile4.1C showed several pairs of trouser socks heaped one on another and backed by blinding white. Nearly all pairs were black, brown, or grey: One, out-of-place pair glowed yellow, drawing all attention to those two socks.

Three photographs and photo illustrations suggested one principle of photography, Center of Interest, which is that object on which your photograph rests. Once, I worked for an old-fashioned, small-town newspaper as an education and government reporter ... and photographer. Weekly, I was chided for not taking photographs with sizable centers of interest. I was told, "Take big pictures!" Here, I tried to shoot or select big pictures. For example, Photograph ButtShot1.1 centered wholly on a dusty, denim backside, which obscured all else in its background. Also, Photograph McCotton3.1 spotlighted a cotton boll, blurring its background. Readers' eyes unthinkingly rested on that boll of cotton.

Seven photographs and photo illustrations showed another principle of photography, Rule of Thirds, which recommends that any object or action in your photograph occur at an intersection of two of four lines drawn to split your photograph into nine squares. In Photo Illustration Money1, one object, a magnifying glass, was placed at the lower left intersection, and another object, cash, was placed at the lower left and upper right intersections. Horizons should occur at either an upper or lower intersection. For example, Photograph USDACotton10.1, which showed rows and rows of cotton stretching onward, placed its horizon across the upper intersections, leading readers' eyes up and onward.

Three photographs, three photo illustrations, one line art map, and one icon denoted yet another principle of photography, Simplicity, which suggests that your photograph be uncluttered and against a solid background. Simplicity pushes your center of interest forward toward your readers. For example, Photograph USDACotton3.1 showed two spools of thread against a black, beaded background, leaving readers' eyes nothing else to see but two spools of bright, white thread.

Six photographs and photo illustrations pointed to yet another principle of photography, Leading Lines, which are objects, some skewed by placement or perspective, that add appeal or lead readers' eyes across your photograph or to your photograph's center of interest. Often, photographers use it to make otherwise dull subjects look more attractive. For example, Photo Illustration Linen1, which showed a white mattress cover from above, used zigzags to add appeal to humdrum household linen. Photograph ACCotton1, which showed rows of cotton plants, used those rows not to add appeal, but to lead readers' eyes from the lower left to the upper right.

Of course, I cropped and resized these photographs and photo illustrations for use in my brochure, but I did keep copies of each in its original size and resolution. I will likely use those copies for my promotional site. I included both big and small copies on an attached CD.
I recommend using online databases of public domain photographs because you often can download higher resolution photographs than those from ordinary sites. Also, public domain databases do not have watermarks obscuring photographs like pay-per-use photography databases.