



Creating and Incorporating Graphics

Graphics fall into two types: tables and figures (photographs, maps, pictorials, graphs, charts, diagrams, etc.). Graphics' functions range from grabbing the reader's attention to supplementing the text to clarify abstract ideas.

Characteristics of Effective Graphics

Purposeful: Only use graphics that supplement your text. Avoid clip art or other visuals that do not match the purpose of your text. Use graphics to:

- I. Demonstrate numerical and logistical information (e.g., a budget or timetable).
- II. Illustrate the steps in a process (e.g., a list of instructions).
- III. Communicate spatial information (e.g., a blueprint or schematic).
- IV. Provide an illustration of a topic discussed in your text (e.g., a photograph).

Simple: Graphics should be simple and easy to read. When you use graphics:

- I. Avoid unnecessary ornamentation or overly complicated graphics.
- II. Avoid using too many colors.

Readable: Graphics should be consistent in form to meet readers' expectations. When you use graphics:

- I. Make graphics large enough so readers can easily read captions, headings, axes, numerical data, etc. Consider placing large graphics in the Appendix.
- II. Title graphics clearly (tables are referred to as Table 1, Table 2, etc. and figures are referred to as Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.).
- III. Use legends, captions, and headings where appropriate.
- IV. Label any columns, rows, and axes your graphic has; also be sure to identify any units of measurement you use.

Incorporating Graphics with Texts

To integrate the graphic with the text, adhere to the following rules:

- I. Position the graphic below or near the text it supplements.
- II. Refer to the graphic by its number and title (e.g., "As Table 1 shows...").
- III. Do not use a graphic without explaining what it shows and how it relates to your text.

Using Graphics Ethically

In order to maintain ethical standards, adhere to the following:

- I. Do not manipulate information, hide data, or use shading or color to misrepresent the entry's importance.
- II. Start both the x and y axes at zero.
- III. Cite graphics that you did not create on your References page.