

Using Graphics



Writing Center

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The purpose of graphics should be **to clarify the ideas** being presented in the paper. Use graphics (sometimes called visuals) for important, directly relevant information that would be hard to explain in written text. Keep graphics as simple as possible. Several questions can guide you in using graphics:

- Is this the best way to present this information?
- Who is my reader and how can I be sure he/she understands my graphics?
- How can I design my graphics to be accurate?
- How can I design my graphics to be most effective?

A **variety of graphics** can be used to clarify ideas:

- **Tables**
- **Figures**
 - Bar graphs
 - Line graphs
 - Charts (pie charts, flow charts, organizational charts)
 - Diagrams, maps and drawings
 - Photographs

Graphics may be **produced in three ways**:

- Copy a graphic you have found in your research
- Design a graphic from data you have gathered
- Create an original graphic

Graphics may be **integrated** into your paper **in three locations**:

- Inserted into the paper **at the point of discussion** (preferred)
- Inserted into the paper **on the succeeding page**
- Inserted into the paper **in an appendix**

Refer to your graphics in the text of your paper. Provide a parenthetical insertion within the text of the paper at the point where you wish the reader to refer to the graphic; e.g.: (see Figure 1) or (see Appendix A).

Wherever way you integrate graphics into the paper, **several steps are required**:

- **Each graphic should be given a figure number**; figures are numbered consecutively throughout the paper; e.g.: Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.
- Figure numbers may be located **above or below the graphic** (instructor preference); be consistent.
- **Each graphic should also include a title or caption** that concisely describes its content; e.g.: Reported Cases of Child Abuse in Michigan, 2006.
- The figure and title may be combined; e.g.: Figure 1. Cost of College Degrees at Michigan Universities.
- **A source citation must be included**; use standard MLA or APA format:
 - e.g.: Source: Smith, 2004
(if the graphic is taken from one of the sources in your references list)
 - or: Source: Class survey of attitudes toward computers
Saginaw Valley State University, November, 2006

Here is an example in APA Style:

Because of its enormous volume and area (see Figure 1), the safety of Lake Michigan for both people and animals has become an area of increasing concern. Studies show that “Levels of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) in Lake Michigan salmon are among the highest ever reported for fish in open waters, providing further evidence that this class of compounds is a ubiquitous environmental threat” (Schaefer, 2001, p. A139). These findings

Figure 1. Map of Lake Michigan and Surrounding States



Source: Michigan Political Map, 2008

have sparked new discussion on ways to repair and maintain this vital and valuable resource.

Graphics are included on the APA References page along with other sources as in the following example:

Sample Reference Page:

References

Michigan political map. (2008). Retrieved January 14, 2008, from [http://www.maps.com/ref_map.aspx?](http://www.maps.com/ref_map.aspx?nav=RM&cid=680,692,769,1155&pid=12179)

[nav=RM&cid=680,692,769,1155&pid=12179](http://www.maps.com/ref_map.aspx?nav=RM&cid=680,692,769,1155&pid=12179)

Schaefer, A. (2001, April 1). Lake Michigan heavily containminated with PBDEs. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 35(7), A139. Retrieved January 4, 2008, from Proquest database.