

# CREATING FIGURES AND TABLES IN APA: THE BASICS

## Why use figures and tables in your assignments?

Figures and tables are generally used to communicate detailed and complex information in research manuscripts. They usually present the author's original work in visual forms; the reader can readily extract meaningful and relevant information. The material in figures and tables should:

- be specifically relevant to the thesis
- be easily understood
- be introduced, explained and explored in the body of the paper
- provide new and essential information to understanding the paper
- be presented according to APA guidelines (or according to the style guidelines of the publication it is intended for)

## What is a figure?

A figure communicates information in visual form. Figures can include graphs, maps, charts, illustrations, and photographs. They can also be representations of theories, and sampling compositions in studies.

## How to present a figure.

Consider the following aspects when presenting figures in APA style:

- It is numbered according to APA (Figure 1.)
- The title is concise and explanatory
- The display is clear, concise, and consistent
- The contents are clearly labelled within the display
- An explanation of the contents is provided below the display and includes any citation in APA style for figures.



## When to include a figure.

Consider the following factors before including a figure:

- Figures add substantive information that would not be easily communicated effectively in text.
- Figures communicate essential information in concise visual format.
- Figures are not used as decorative accompaniments to information already provided in the text.
- Including a figure rather than a table is based on which format is most communicatively effective and appropriate.
- What type of figure best communicates the information: graph, map, chart, photograph?

## Checklist

### Content

Is the display necessary or could it be adequately communicated in text?

What value does the display add to understanding the line of argument?

Is all the information in the display essential and relevant to its communicative purpose?

### Style

Is the display located in the relevant section of the paper: the body, appendix or supplemental materials options?

Does the display follow logically from the text before it?

Does the display follow APA presentation principles for this type of figure or table?

Is the figure or table labelled according to APA guidelines for this type of display?

Have you obtained written permission to include copyright material (reproduced or adapted) and acknowledged the source?

Have you acknowledged and referenced relevant sources of the graphical information in the notes below the display?

Have you checked the APA guidelines for using figures and tables? The resource below is a pocket style guide to APA.

### Useful Resource

American Psychological Association, (2002). *Concise Rules of APA Style*. Washington, DC 20002: American Psychological Association.

## What is a table?

A table contains data organised into more accessible forms than text. Tables make the communication of large quantities of quantitative and/or complex data more accessible. Tables communicate raw data in clear and meaningful ways; relationships between data are easily recognised. They are formatted in columns and rows.

## How to present a table

The basic components of a standard table in APA style include: table number (Table 1.), table title (concise and informative), labelled columns and rows, content data, and a table note placed below the table.

Non-standard forms of tables may communicate some types of data more effectively; these require careful labelling for communicative clarity.

## When to include a table

Tables organise large quantities of data so that comparisons can be made between categories of data.

The data validates the points being made and the conclusions being drawn. Tables that are not directly relevant to the line of argument or hypotheses can be placed in the appendices or online supplemental archive.

## Other Resources

Purdue online writing lab [APA Tables and Figures // Purdue Writing Lab](#); this web page includes general guidelines for creating figures and tables APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition style; it also includes more specific details about creating tables, and provides examples.

Purdue online writing lab: [Tables, Figures, and Equations // Purdue Writing Lab](#); this web page includes more specific details about creating tables, figures, and equations in APA 7<sup>th</sup> style, their purpose, and provides examples.

For a detailed resource on creating and presenting tables see the following: Adelheid, A. M., & Pexman, N. & P., (2010). *Presenting your findings*. Washington, DC 20002: American Psychological Association.

Table tips from the APA website: <http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2009/11/table>