

LBCC Writing Center: Anatomy of a Visual

The best visuals add interest, break up blocks of text, and also add information. Maps, photos of buildings and people, diagrams, charts, and checklists are among the most content rich visuals. Pieces of clip art are usually not as effective as visuals designed specifically for a document.

Look for places where you might be able to clarify information by using a visual (chart, graph, map etc.) Remember when you do include visuals to

- Mention the visual in the text directly before it appears.
- Give the visual a figure number and descriptor, such as “Figure 1: Map of counties in the United States and their political party of choice.”
- Include in-text citation directly after the figure number and description. Include in-text citation if you created a chart using data from another source. Only photographs you took yourself, CAD illustrations you created yourself, or your original drawings can be included without citation.
- Discuss each visual by name after it appears in the text.

The following is an example of citation that would happen beneath the image:

Figure 1: The chart demonstrates the rate of library usage based on client type (Smith, 2010, p. 43).

Note that the visual would be accompanied by a bibliographic entry in the Works Cited, References, or visuals cited page.

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