Top of Form



Bottom of Form

* Unit 4: Using Visuals to Convey Information

Words are not the only way to present and share information with an audience. Technical writing often utilizes visuals to accompany written information and further deliver information to the audience. This unit leads you through the types of visuals available as well as the best practices for using them.

Visuals take many forms; they can be as simple as a photograph of a plant specimen or pie chart breaking down enrollment data or as complex as an embedded video or multi-page, hyperlinked, organizational chart. Visuals must be carefully selected to support the audience’s understanding of the topic.

Visuals, however strong they are on their own, must be integrated into the text of the document. The written word supports the visuals, and the visuals further exemplify the meaning of the text. The two work in tandem to support the main idea of the document.

This unit will also cover the important tools needed to properly label, title, and document visuals used in a given communications context.

**Completing this unit should take you approximately 11 hours.**

* + Upon successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:
    - distinguish between different formats of visuals;
    - understand the use of visuals in contributing to a document's overall purpose;
    - express ethical and legal issues surrounding the use of visuals; and
    - integrate visuals as supports or exemplifications of a document's text.
  + [Writing Activity: Graphics in Technical Writing Assignment](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/assign/view.php?id=5657)

Before reading more about using graphics in technical writing, reflect on your past experiences using them. In a paragraph, discuss a time when you included graphics in a document. Why did you include graphics? Did you create those graphics or did you use graphics from another source? How did those graphics support your document? In another paragraph, discuss a time when you've relied on the graphics included in a document you were reading. What kinds of graphics were included? How did those graphics support your understanding?

* + 4.1: Visuals Based on Numeric Data
    - [David McMurrey's "Tables, Charts, Graphs: Show Me the Data" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5658)

Read this section. Using Excel or another spreadsheet program, create a table that lists the types of visuals and two best practices for using them. Keep this table open and add to it as you work through the other activities in this unit.

* + - [The Open University: "More Working with Charts, Graphs and Tables" URL](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/url/view.php?id=23188)

Review the sections on tables (section 3), bar charts (section 5), and pie charts (section 6). Continue to add to your chart of visuals using the information you find here. You should document more than two best practices for each visual as you get more in depth with the information.

After you have read these sections, complete activities 5, 8, 9, and 12.

* + - [Adam Gaweda's "Creating a Pie Chart in Excel 2013" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5660)

Read the instructions and watch the video. Use Excel or another spreadsheet program to create a pie chart with the following data:

* + - * Blueberries: 23%
      * Strawberries: 18%
      * Raspberries: 56%
      * Gooseberries: 3%
  + 4.2: Other Types of Visuals
    - 4.2.1: Choosing Graphics
      * [Norbert Elliot's "Introduction to Graphics" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5666)

Read this article. If you'd like more information, you may read [this Wikipedia article](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screenshot) or [this brief rundown on capturing screenshots](http://www.danielhoang.com/2010/12/08/how-i-capture-screen-shots/).

After reading, make your own screen captures to walk someone through a simple task you do frequently on the computer. For example, you might use screen captures to document composing an email message, using a specific website, creating an Excel chart, or any other computer task with which you are comfortable. You may need to provide a few lines of written instructions to accompany your visuals. Share your directions with a colleague, family member or friend, and ask them to evaluate the organization of your instructions and graphics. Make sure you keep these images somewhere you can access them later in the course in the process document section. Think of this exercise a rough draft that you will improve later.

* + - * [[https://learn.saylor.org/theme/image.php/saylor/core/1606322651/f/pdf-24](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=5668)US Federal Emergency Management Agency: "Technical Writing" File](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=5668)

Read from the beginning of section 5.8 through the end of unit 6, on pages 62–92. After you have read unit 6, complete the Unit 6 Knowledge Check on pages 93–94.

* + - * [ProsWrite: "Tutorial on Development in Professional Writing: Graphics" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5669)

Watch this video.

* + - * [Writing Activity: Graphics in Documents Assignment](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/assign/view.php?id=5670)

In a paragraph (75–100 words), summarize at least three considerations you must take into account when deciding to add visuals to a document.

* + - 4.2.2: Types of Graphics
      * [David McMurrey's "Graphics: Picture This" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5671)

Read this article. Note how visuals are chosen to represent objects, numbers, concept, or words.

* + - * [Norbert Elliot's "Types of Graphical Illustration in Technical Writing" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5673)

Read this section. After you have finished, add any new types of graphics to your earlier Types of Visuals Chart, along with two tips about best practices for each type.

* + - * [*Business Communication for Success*: "Visual Aids" URL](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/url/view.php?id=5674)

Read this section, which discusses the use of visuals in presentations. Visuals are another important aspect of business communication.

* + - * [Writing Activity: Choosing Graphics Assignment](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/assign/view.php?id=5672)

Find and choose an image from [Google Images](https://images.google.com/). In a paragraph (50–75 words), discuss how you could use this visual to make a point. Would it represent an object, numbers, concept or words? What title would you give this visual? Would any additional labels be needed to make your point clear?

* + - 4.2.3: Using Existing Images: Understanding Copyright
      * [[https://learn.saylor.org/theme/image.php/saylor/core/1606322651/f/pdf-24](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=5676)LearnNC: "Copyright: A Primer" File](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=5676)

No lesson about creating and using graphics would be complete without a short overview of copyright law. Read this article, which provides for an overview of standard copyright protections as well as a discussion of Creative Commons and other open licenses. These licenses allow creators to retain some of their rights while encouraging others to reuse or revise their creations to varying degrees. Did you know that Saylor Academy courses – this one included – use such alternatively-licensed materials in the form of [Open Educational Resources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_educational_resources)?

* + - * [Writing Activity: Content Licenses Assignment](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/assign/view.php?id=5678)

Review sections 6.16 through 6.18 (on pages 90–92) of the [FEMA technical writing course](https://learn.saylor.org/pluginfile.php/16312/mod_assign/intro/FEMA-IS-613-TechnicalWriting.pdf). In a paragraph (approx. 50–75 words), address why content licenses matter and how copyright might affect the decisions you make as a technical writer.

* + 4.3: Multimedia in Technical Writing
    - [E. Jonathan Arnett's "Audiovisual Presentations Made Easy(-ier): Tips for Creating an Effective PowerPoint, Prezi, or Keynote" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5680)

Read this document and develop a presentation to share three things to improve multimedia presentations to a professional audience. Use the slide presentation software of your choice. If you have access to recording software, you might consider recording yourself giving the presentation. Screencast-O-Matic has free recording software you can try. Use the list of qualities in the conclusion of the article to self-assess your presentation. Consider sharing your presentation online to get feedback from colleagues, friends, and family.

* + - [Writing Activity: Audiovisual Elements Assignment](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/assign/view.php?id=5682)

Imagine that you are creating a website, and want to use a tool to voice-over the paragraphs on your personal or professional website.

In a paragraph (50–75 words) explain how the audio/visual would be used and for what audience. What do you think of this merger of audio and visual? What benefits might these kinds of tools offer?

* + 4.4: Integrating Visuals
    - [Norbert Elliot's "Labels, Callouts, Captions and Notes" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5683)

Read this section. Reflect back on the graphics you planned in subunit 4.2. Apply the Five Specific Style Rules to the titles and captions in your document. In a few sentences, explain how you applied these rules to visuals and how using labels and callouts improve your graphics’ ability to communicate to the audience.

* + - [University of Rhode Island, University Libraries: "Citing Correctly and Avoiding Plagiarism: APA Format, 5th Edition" URL](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/url/view.php?id=5684)

Review this page, which covers how to cite images from a website or a database. Cite an image you've found online from for a topic related to your hobby or personal interest using the APA Style Guidelines.

Each academic and professional discipline aligns itself with a specific type of documentation style for research. APA from the American Psychological Association tends be used in business and science. MLA from the Modern Languages Association tends to be used in the humanities. Which documentation style you follow often depends on the style requirements of your organization. Knowledge of both styles will prepare you to be versatile should the need arise.

* + 4.5: Ethics
    - 4.5.1: Data Presentation
      * [National Forum on Education Statistics: "The Forum Guide to Data Ethics Online Course" URL](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/url/view.php?id=5685)

Watch the "Introduction to Data Ethics" presentation and review the three items under "Canon 7: Promote understanding and accurate analysis of data".

* + - * [University of Texas at El Paso: "Master List of Logical Fallacies" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5694)

Review this list of logical fallacies.

* + - * [Boundless: "Logical Fallacies" URL](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/url/view.php?id=5695)

Review the sections of this article on logical fallacies.

* + - * [The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Writing Center: "Logical Fallacies" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5696)

Review this article on logical fallacies. Make a chart of the fallacies that could impact visual representation of information including numeric data. In your chart, note the ways to avoid falling prey to these fallacies.

* + - * [Writing Activity: Data Ethics Assignment](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/assign/view.php?id=5686)

In a paragraph, discuss your experience with seeing data presented. Have you ever looked at statistics or numbers cited in an argument or online source and wondered how true they are? How can you as a writer present data in the most ethical way?

* + - 4.5.2: Photoshop
      * [Ruby Waddell's "The Ethics of Image Manipulation" Page](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=5697)

Read this article and watch the video.

* + - * [Writing Activity: Shaping Information Assignment](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/assign/view.php?id=5698)

In a paragraph, explain what you feel the content creator's role is in the process of shaping the way information is shared. Should the writer or producer be concerned with the "photoshop effect"? Why or why not?

* + Unit 4 Assessment
    - [Unit 4 Writing Self-Assessment: Activity 1 Quiz](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/quiz/view.php?id=7809)

In this assessment, you will produce a table from data presented in prose and be asked a series of questions about them. The sample responses will help you assess your work.

* + - [Unit 4 Writing Self-Assessment: Activity 2 Quiz](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/quiz/view.php?id=7818)

In this assessment, you will produce a presentation slide from information originally in a text format, and use a set of questions to guide your work. The sample responses will help you assess your slide.

* + - [Unit 4 Writing Self-Assessment: Activity 3 Quiz](https://learn.saylor.org/mod/quiz/view.php?id=7819)

In this assessment, you will work with images to supplement text and analyze how images function in a larger communicative context. You will assess your work using a series of questions and sample responses.