

SECTION THREE

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

If you asked me to pick the one thing in this book that would have the most impact on your grade it would be the contents of this section. In most academic disciplines there is a way of summarising information in the form of a picture, diagram, graph, figure or table.

For convenience, for the rest of this section I will use the term “figure” to refer to the broad range of data summary techniques that includes pictures, diagrams, figures, graphs and tables. From a formatting point of view they have many features in common.

Pictures and tables have a number of advantages:

- They are a way to break up monotonous pages of densely packed text – in other words create the white space we talked about in the section on appearance.
- If you have a preference for processing information in a visual way (more about information processing styles overleaf) you will probably be able to express yourself well using diagrams. Even if you are not a visual information processor, the person grading your article might be and they will be delighted to see information presented in a more visual way.
- If you look at your collection of example review articles you will find that in most academic disciplines review articles make extensive use of diagrams, figures, graphs and tables. If you are going to model these articles then you must use pictures too.

The chapters in this section will look at what to include when drawing a graph, the importance of referring to a figure in the text of the review, and some of the technical aspects of getting graphics, tables etc. into word processor documents. All pictures, diagrams, graphs, figures and tables should have a title and a legend. We will talk about figure titles and legends in one of the chapters.

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