

HOW TO CREATE TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables and figures are effective ways of providing information clearly and succinctly. They're mainly used for result and discussion sections, but they can be used anywhere within a report or thesis. Below are a number of points to consider when using and creating tables and figures in your own work.

■ General points to remember

There are a few features that apply to both tables and figures.

- ▶ Always **introduce a table or figure in the main text first**. This allows your reader to know why it's there. However, don't simply state what it shows: fit what it exhibits into your current description, discussion or analysis.
- ▶ As a general rule, you should **capitalize "Table" and "Figure" in your text**. However, if you decide not to, just be consistent.
- ▶ **Place the table or figure as soon after its introduction as possible**. Usually, this will simply be at the end of the paragraph in which it was introduced.
- ▶ If you can't fit the table or figure on the same page as its introduction, or you refer to it again later on, **state the page on which it appears** for clarity e.g., (Figure 3 on page 18).
- ▶ All tables and figures should include a **caption**, which is a brief description of what it shows. This text should make sense on its own and, if you include a list of tables and/or figures, this will be what you use. (This issue is discussed in more detail later on).
- ▶ The tables and figures themselves should also be **fully comprehensive**.
- ▶ Don't forget to **number all your tables and figures**. There are two main ways in which you can do this. The first is consecutively throughout your thesis, i.e., Table 1, Table, 2, Table 3, etc. The second is by chapter, i.e., for Chapter 1, the tables would be labeled as Table 1.1, Table 1.2, Table 1.3, etc., and for Chapter 2, the tables would be labeled as Table 2.1, Table 2.2, Table 2.3, etc. Whichever style you pick, use the same for both your tables and your figures. And don't forget to **double check their numbering is consecutive** when proofreading your work!
- ▶ Where relevant, **specify any measurements**.
- ▶ Use **footnotes** to clarify any points, and also to specify sources if you use particular sources for particular data in the table.
- ▶ If you're stuck on how to present your tables and/or figures, **use past publications** for inspiration.

■ Formatting guidance

Below are a number of basic formatting tips, focusing specifically on font, table and figure captions, and the use of landscape.

- ▶ **Font:**
 - The font you choose to use for tables and figures may differ from the main text, as may the font size.
 - Always choose a legible font, and don't go smaller than 10 point if possible.
- ▶ **Captions:**
 - Table and figure captions should be consistent, i.e., font, font size, punctuation, use of bold and capitalization.
 - Use single spacing if longer than a line.
- ▶ **Landscape pages:**
 - Make sure to keep the margins the same as your portrait pages (especially if you intend on binding your work).
 - You can choose to number the page in the same location as all other pages, or not, leaving it blank, then starting numbering again with the appropriate page number (but, whichever you decide, be consistent).

■ Citing tables and figures

In regard to citing sources for tables and figures, outlined below are the three main situations you may come across:

- ▶ **You created the table or figure yourself using your own data:** you don't need to provide a source.
- ▶ **You took a completed table or figure from another source:** you need to provide the source(s) you used underneath the table or figure, preceded by "Source:"
- ▶ **You used data from another source to create a table or figure, or modified a framework or diagram in some way:** you need to provide the source(s) you used underneath the table or figure, preceded by "Adapted from:"

■ Additional guidance for tables

This guidance is aimed specifically at creating tables.

- ▶ The table caption needs to go **above the table**.
- ▶ If a table goes **over a page**, you should split the table at an appropriate section and repeat the main headings of the table on the next page, as well as the table's caption followed by "**continued**" or "**cont'd**" (the shortened form). Don't forget that you can change the paper layout to landscape if this enables you to fit the table onto one page.

■ Additional guidance for figures

This guidance is aimed specifically at creating figures.

- ▶ Figures include **diagrams, graphs, maps, illustrations, art** and **photographs**.
- ▶ Unlike table captions, a figure caption goes **below the figure**.

- ▶ When discussing a figure in the main text, it's possible to shorten "Figure" to "**Fig.**" But, you shouldn't do this in the caption.
- ▶ When using **graphs**, don't forget to label both axes and include any units.
- ▶ All graph elements must be **legible** (as a rule of thumb, at least 2.5 mm).
- ▶ If using some form of **graphics** or **photographs**, make sure that the image is as clear as possible.
- ▶ As with a table, if a figure goes **over a page**, you should split it at an appropriate section and repeat the figure's caption on the next page, followed by "**continued**" or "**cont'd**" (the shortened form). Don't forget that you can change the paper layout to landscape if this enables you to fit the figure onto one page.

■ Table and figure lists

When you compose a large piece of writing, like a thesis, you'll be expected to list any tables and/or figures you included. These lists are placed before the first chapter. Tables and figures are each listed separately, i.e., "List of tables" and "List of figures". Each table and/or figure is listed chronologically with its caption and the page it appears on, e.g.,

Figure 1. The effect of temperature on the rate of photosynthesis.....4