CITING TABLES AND FIGURES IN TECHNICAL REPORTS

Every figure and table (“visual”) included in a report must also be referenced in the body of the text.

The first (introductory) in-text reference to any visual included in a report should come before the visual’s placement in the report; typically, the introductory reference occurs in the text discussion immediately preceding the visual.

If for some reason the figure or table must be separated from the first in-text reference by more than one paragraph (for example, if it won’t fit below the text on the same page or is a full-page visual), it may be helpful to include the visual’s location in your reference. Subsequent (backward) references to a visual that has already been introduced need not specify the visual’s location.

The introductory reference should clarify the visual’s function in the report and the significance of the visually represented information.

Examples of in-text table/figure citations:
- Table 1 lists the project benefits for the various stakeholders: company, clients, and suppliers.
- Improving the planning process has several advantages to both the company and its customers (Table 1).
- As shown in Table 1, implementation of the proposed process improvements will benefit not only the firm but also its clients.
- As shown in Table 1 on the following page, implementation of the proposed process improvements will benefit not only the company but also its customers.
- Figure 3 depicts the company’s current recycling waste stream.
- With only minor design changes, the efficiency of the pumping mechanism can be significantly improved (Fig. 4).
- As shown in Fig. 5 below, the proposed design changes will increase product efficiency and decrease manufacturing costs.

Note: The word “Figure” must be spelled out only at the start of a sentence. Otherwise, OK to use “Fig.”

TABLE & FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure captions always go below the corresponding figure. Table captions typically go above the corresponding table.

Captions should be self-standing. Whether written as phrases or sentences, they should contain enough detail to clarify the purpose/point of the corresponding visual.

If the visual contains copyrighted information and/or ideas that have been borrowed from another source, be sure to cite the source in the caption and include it in your bibliography—same as for borrowed information in the report text. With ASME and other number-reference systems, you can simply include the source number in brackets along with the page number of the borrowed table/figure. Otherwise cite the author (or if no author, the title) and page number.
Note: An even better practice for technical report writing is to include full source citations in visual captions, because report visuals are sometimes separated from and passed along independently of the associated report. Use the same citation format that you’re using for your bibliography. (And of course, even when including full citations in captions, be sure to include the sources in the report bibliography as well.)

Examples:
- Figure 4. Bump steer comparison for 2006, 2007, and Predator Outlaw designs [5: 35].
- Figure 4. Bump steer comparison for 2006, 2007, and Predator Outlaw designs (Gibson et al, 35).

Do not include bibliographic citations for visuals that you create yourself using data you have collected yourself. (This information would be clarified in the text preceding the visual.) However, if you create a table or figure using data from other source(s), DO cite the data sources and include them in your bibliography. And if you include a modified version of a table or figure that you found in another source, use “adapted from ...” in the figure caption, and include the source in your bibliography.

- Figure 4. Bump steer comparison for 2006, 2007, and Predator Outlaw designs. Data from [5: 35] and [8: 21-23].
- Figure 4. Bump steer comparison for 2006, 2007, and Predator Outlaw designs (adapted from Gibson et al, 35).

For visuals you create yourself and are in no part derived from published sources, do not include bibliographic citations. For photos taken by you or one of your co-authors, you can simply add “Photo by [author name]” at the end of the caption, eg:

- Figure 5. 2007 OSU Formula SAE chassis. Photo by Brenton Gibson.