

Appendix B: Describing Visual Aids

“A picture is worth a thousand words.”

Visual aids may include graphs, tables, models, diagrams, flow charts, photographs, illustrations, or simple blackboard drawings. They help to encourage student interest and increase understanding of many concepts. To be effective, visuals should be chosen carefully, be well-organized, and legible.

The following are general strategies for explaining a visual aid.

I. Specify what the visual represents, its subject.

This is a graph of...

This diagram represents...

The table shows the relationship between...

2. Give the students an idea of the general layout of the visual.

The illustration is a cross-section of an apple, showing the stem end on the left and...

On this graph, the horizontal axis represents... and the vertical axis represents...

The data on this table are presented in descending order...

3. Explain the order in which you will discuss the parts of the visual.

Working from left to right, I will discuss the parts of the cell...

We'll look at this from the center and work our way to the outside...

4. Working in the order you have just discussed, point out the important components and specify their location.

In the upper left-hand corner of the page we can see...

As the illustration shows, in the center of the figure is...

Let's look at the first column of this table, which shows...

5. Provide conclusions, implications, predictions.

This graph shows clearly that the population ceases.....

If this trend continues, we can expect...

Looking at this table, we can conclude that...

6. Provide a transition to the next part of your presentation.

Now that you have seen the structure of this cell, let's talk about...

This table has shown us that.... Let's move on now to discuss the implications of this finding...

Of course, you may need to adapt these strategies to suit the particular visual you are using.

Adapted from:

Kayfetz, J.L., & Smith M.E.F. (1992). *Speaking effectively: Strategies for academic interaction*, pp. 63-66. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Kayfetz, J.L., & Stice, R.L. (1987). *Academically speaking*, pp. 16-22. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

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