

# Figures and Tables

In academic writing, any picture, map, diagram or graph is referred to as a figure. Figures and tables should be used to **present large amounts of, or complex data in a simplified manner**, and must be able to “**stand alone**”. Such **graphics** (figures and tables) should be **referred to in text** and should appear only afterwards.

**For example:** “The HIV incidence rates among women are of particular concern (**see Figure 1**). The HIV incidence rate among female youth aged 15-24 years was over 4 times higher than for males in the same age group...”

In text, there is no need to re-iterate all the information portrayed in graphics, **rather draw your reader’s attention to the most important points**. Graphics **must only be included** in writing **if they serve the purpose**, and should be **numbered separately and sequentially** (Figure 1, Table 1, Figure 2, and Table 2). Figures and Tables should be **clearly labelled** (title, axis and bars) and **scales** (on either X-axis or Y-axis) **should be constant**.

Here is the important **difference between figures and tables**:

<b>Figures</b>	Legend and caption <u>below</u> the figure
<b>Tables</b>	Title <u>above</u> table

Both legends and titles should be **sufficiently descriptive**, that if someone in your field was given a piece of text with just figures and tables, they would be able comprehend the information contained therein. Remember to write abbreviations in full should you use them in your figure or table.

## Important tips:

If a table of figure is **from another source**, please **reference** it correctly (at the end of title or legend).

“Table 1: overall HIV prevalence by sex, all age groups, race, and locality, South Africa, 2012 (**HSRC, 2014**)”

If that graphic is slightly modified, then mention that it was “**modified/adapted from**” followed by reference. If the graphic was copied, mention that by saying “**reproduced from**” followed by the reference.

“Table 1: overall HIV prevalence by sex, all age groups, race, and locality, South Africa, 2012 (**adapted from HSRC, 2014**)”

The title of table/legend of figure should not be in the previous/next page respectively (**that is either a figure or table should be in the same page as their title or legend**).



**FHS**

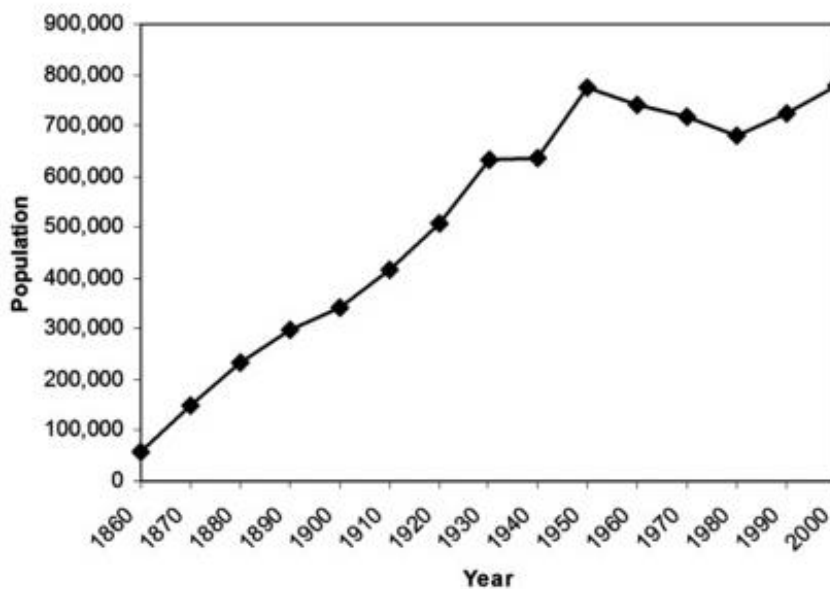
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**WRITING LAB**

Please see examples of tables and figures and their specific formatting below:

**Table 1: The increasing population of South Africans from 1860-2000 (adapted from Hegarty, 2011)**

Year	Population
1860	56,802
1870	149,473
1880	233,959
1890	298,997
1900	342,782
1910	416,912
1920	506,676
1930	634,394
1940	634,536
1950	775,357
1960	740,316
1970	715,674
1980	678,974
1990	723,959
2000	776,733



**Figure 1: The increasing population of South Africans from 1860-2000 (reproduced from Hegarty, 2011)**

**Content adapted from:** UCT Upper Campus Writing Centre, 2015

**Reference:** Hegarty, M., 2011. The cognitive science of visual-spatial displays: Implications for design. *Topics in cognitive science*, 3(3), pp.446-474.

Compiled by Karis Moxley, 2015; Revised, 2024.