

Using figures

- 1 Introduce the figure in the body text.
- 2 Ensure the figure is large enough.
- 3 Exclude unnecessary information.
- 4 Consider using devices such as labels, keys and scales to clarify the figure. Annotate.
- 5 Use the legend (aka 'caption') creatively – you can include a message as well as a title.
- 6 Check that the figure actually shows what your text claims it shows.
- 7 Consider whether you need in the body text to say more about the figure. You can explain what you want the reader to learn or remember from the figure.
- 8 Once you have a complete draft, check the numbering of your figures.
- 9 Ensure you've cited any sources.
- 10 Before publication, ensure you have copyright permission for figures you've copied or adapted.

This resource is published as the fourth in the Writing Protocols series.

Resources providing guidance on figures

Björn Gustavii, *How to write and illustrate a scientific paper* 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2008) provides introductory guidance on graphs and legends.

More advanced advice on the visual presentation of data is provided in various works by Edward R. Tufte. These include:

- *The visual display of quantitative information* (Graphics Press, 1983)
- *Envisioning information* (Graphics Press, 1991)

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