

Proper Labeling of Charts and Graphs

The Dos and Don'ts

Common Mistakes 1

- The single most common mistake is trying to include too many data sets onto a single chart/graph (CG).
 - For instance, if you asked a survey question and also asked for age, gender, and educational status, do not put into a single chart/graph.
 - You would create either two or three graphs.
 - For two in one: You might graph both age and gender together for instance.
 - For two in one: You might put age and educational status.
 - Or make a separate graph for age, gender and for educational status as they relate to your survey question.

Common Mistakes 2

- The second common error is not correctly labeling the chart or graph.
 - In part this is due to the labeling used in computer programs such as MS Word.
 - Even if the dialog box is labeled as Chart, if you constructed a graph indicate this both charts and graphs as figures.
- What is the difference between charts and graphs?
 - In general, if you are constructing a ‘pie chart’, label as Figure 1 (if the first figure in your paper).
 - Use a chart when you are comparing the parts of a whole.
 - If you constructed a bar graph or a line graph the label should be Figure 1.
 - The graph is used to show comparisons.
 - The line graph should only show 1 comparison and is great for showing relationships that include time
 - The bar graph can show more than 1 (say 2).

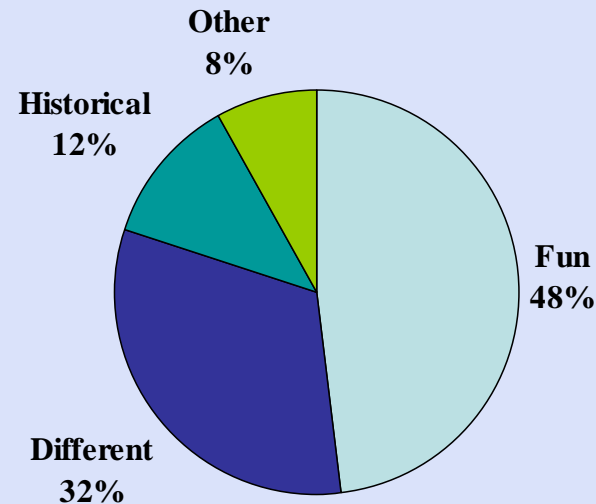
General Comments on Labels

- You **MUST** label correctly for each type of chart or graph.
- The title should include the following:
 - Use the term Figure (APA formatting requirement).
 - The number as 1, 2, and so on
 - A description of the chart or graph that is detailed enough that the audience knows is presented.
 - Should be capitalized, except for prepositions and articles (unless first word in the title).
 - In the format of a sentence without the verb included.
- Examples:
 - Figure 1: Responses to the Question, “What Do You Like about Anthropology?” OR
 - Figure 1: ESL Student Attendance for Five Class Sessions.

The Pie Chart

- Organize so that the largest portion is first, then proceed clockwise with each progressively smaller portion.
- If the portions are too small, think about ‘collapsing categories’. This means you combine similar responses.

Figure 1: Responses to the Question, “What Do You Like about Anthropology?” (n=25)

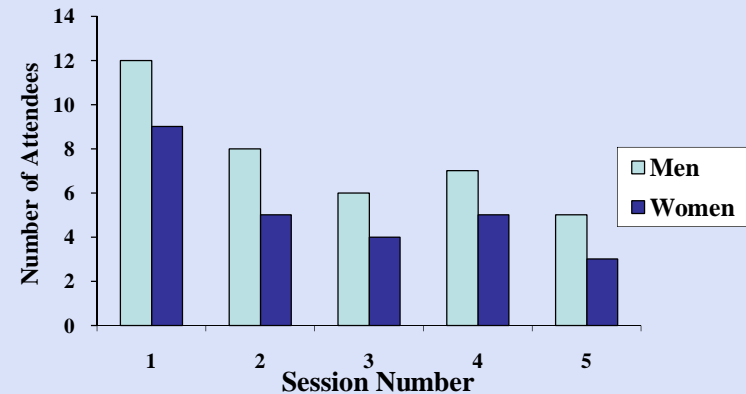


- Note on the chart, that I labeled each portion by percentage (I could have chosen number instead). Only use percentage if you include the number of responses as a part of the title (here n=25).
- Notice the three parts of the title: Figure, 1, and the verb-free sentence.

The Bar Graph

- Remember, graphs allow for comparisons
- Bar graphs allow you to make more than one comparison using the same graph.
- Here I decided to compare both session number and gender on the same graph

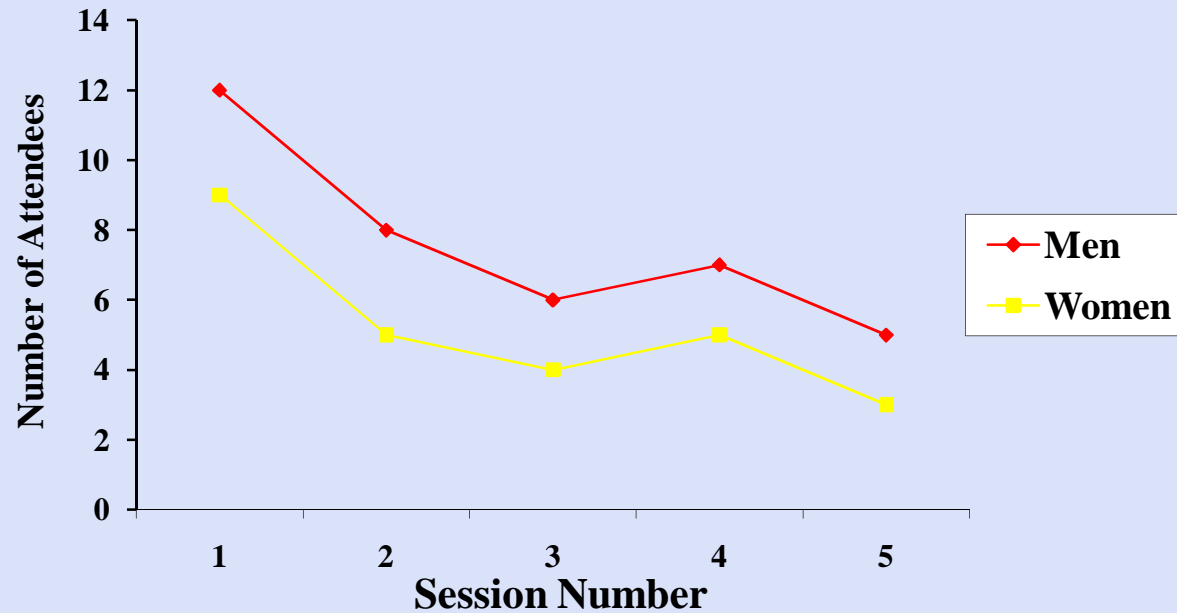
Figure 1: ESL Student Attendance for Five Class Sessions by Gender



- Note on the graph, I labeled the x-axis and the y-axis. I also included information on the numbers (or category name) for both axes.
- Notice the three parts of the title: Figure, 1, and the verb-free sentence.

Example of a Line Graph

Figure 1: ESL Student Attendance for Five Class Sessions by Gender



A link that might be of help: <http://www.ais.msstate.edu/AEE/Tutorial/graphictypes.html>