

Exit Ticket Questions

1. How do I decide on tables vs. graphs vs. illustrations?

- Figures* show results in graphic or tabular form. Illustrations depict them in photos or diagrams. Tables present data while graphs condense and clarify data.
- It takes judgment to learn when to use illustrations or graphs or tables. For 20.109 your technical faculty are guiding you as to the form figures should take for different types of information.
- As you create the figures, be sure to think about the purpose they serve for your audience. Why did your technical faculty specify each form of figure? Understanding their reasoning will help you learn from their experience.

2. How do I get a sixth sense about my audience?

- When you write, audience feedback is delayed. You have to imagine the difference between what you and your audience know and fill in the gaps so your readers end up with a clear and accurate understanding of what you have learned.
- If you can get your figures and legends drafted ahead of time, you can make appointments to have someone look them over for you:
 - a. Pick a peer whose knowledge of your work is apt to match your audience's. Ask him/her to look over your figures and their legends and tell you their main point.
 - b. Make an appointment with staff at the MIT Writing and Communications Center (<http://writing.mit.edu/wcc/appointments>).
 - c. Make an appointment or e-mail questions on figures and legends to me (lsutliff@mit.edu).

3. What's the best way to phrase legends and labels?

- Worry more about things being clear, simple, precise and accurate and less about their being impressive.
- Be sure that legends tell readers what they are seeing and are written in the present tense.
- Remember that many readers decide to read an abstract after quickly looking at the article's figures and legends. They decide to read the whole article based on the abstract. MIT Writing across the Curriculum Director, Dr. Les Perelman, says less than half of abstract readers read the entire article. Your chances of yours being read and cited starts with the figures and legends.

4. Is there a straight forward way to meet APA citation standards?

- An easy way to learn about the American Psychological Association (APA) citation style is from the MIT library (<http://libguides.mit.edu/references>). There you will find links to several tools and some video tutorials for adding citations meeting many professional standards, including APA.
- The Purdue Online Writing Lab provides a good, regularly updated, overview of APA style (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>).
- APA also has a Web site that you can look over for still more insight: <http://www.apastyle.org/>.

*"Figure" as used here includes tables, graphs and illustrations (e.g., photos and diagrams).