Common Flowchart Symbols, Meanings, and Examples [2023 Guide]

Benjamin Babb (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/author/benjamin-babb/)   August 18, 2023

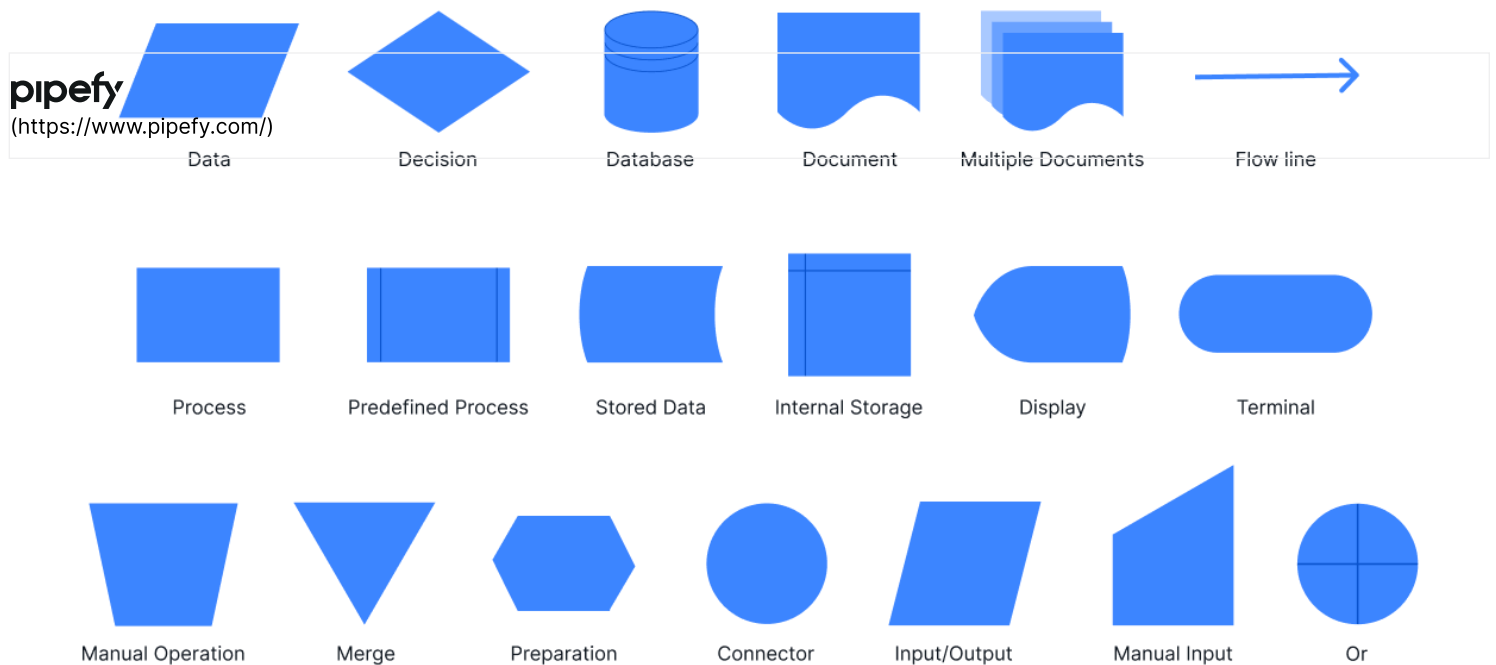

Flowchart symbols and explanations

Flowcharts make processes and workflows visible. Below are 17 of the most commonly used symbols for illustrating flows, creating workflow diagrams (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/workflow-diagrams/), and process mapping.

Other flowchart symbols have been standardized by the American National Standards Institute (https://www.ansi.org/) (ANSI) and the International Organization for Standardization (https://www.iso.org/home.html) (ISO).

Overview of symbols

Data	Decision	Database	Document	Multiple Documents	Flow line

Process	Predefined Process	Stored Data	Internal Storage	Display	Terminal

Manual Operation	Merge	Preparation	Connector	Input/Output	Manual Input	Or

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Basic flowchart symbols

Terminal

Terminal symbol

Indicates the beginning (trigger) or end (result) of a flow.

(https://assets-
site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-
content/uploads/2021/07/Terminal.png)

Flow line

Shows the direction and order of the flow.

Process symbol

Designates specific action or work within the flow.

Decision diamond

Indicates a choice that must be made or a question that needs to be answered. The result determines the next step in the flow.

Or symbol

A point in the flow where there is more than one possible next step and where a choice must be made.

Data and document symbols

Document symbol

Creation or use of a document is required. Documents include files, emails, reports, orders, or forms.

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content/uploads/2021/07/Document.png)

Multiple documents

Same as above, although the multiple documents flowchart symbol signals that more than one document is required.

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site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-
content/uploads/2021/07/Multiple-
Documents.png)

Data

The input or output of information. For example, data that must be entered in a form, or a report is displayed.

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site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-
content/uploads/2021/07/Data.png)

Database

Indicates a structured store of searchable data. Sometimes refers to a data file.

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content/uploads/2021/07/Database.png)

Stored data

A point in the flow during which data is copied, stored, or backed up.

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content/uploads/2021/07/StoredData.png)

Internal storage

The flowchart symbol for data that is stored on a local or on-premises server.

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site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-
content/uploads/2021/07/InternalStorage.png)

Display

A point in the flow where data is displayed visually to a user. For example, a report is generated or information is provided on a monitor.

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Input/Output

Identical to flowchart symbol for data. Indicates information is required at this point in the flow.

(https://assets-site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Input-Output.png)

Manual input

Indicates a task or step in the workflow that requires data entry or another activity to be completed manually.

(https://assets-site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Manual-Input.png)

Relationship flowchart symbols

Connector, or connection symbol

Indicates the flowchart continues at another point, or on another document. Connections symbols are numbered so that they can be matched, especially important for complex flows.

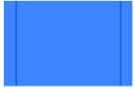(https://assets-site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Connector.png)

Merge

Indicates the intersection between multiple paths in the flow, where two or more work streams

on data flows meet.

(https://assets-

Other useful flowchart symbols

Predefined process

Indicates a process or workflow (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/workflows-definition/) that requires a high level of detail. Additional information for predefined processes is provided elsewhere, or the process is commonly understood.

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site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-
content/uploads/2021/07/PredefinedProcess.png)

Manual operation

Work or activity that cannot be automated (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/task-automation/). Input is required for each instance of the workflow.

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site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-
content/uploads/2021/07/Manual-
Operation.png)

Preparation

A step in the flow that supports or enables the following step.

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content/uploads/2021/07/Preparation.png)

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In what types of flowcharts can these symbols be used?

The different types of flowchart symbols are versatile in their usage. Depending on the needs, the symbols can be used to construct the following types of flowcharts:

Document flowchart

An illustration of the movement of documents throughout a process or workflow.

Data flowchart

A diagram that maps the flow of data or information between apps, systems, departments, and people.

Decision flowchart

A graphical representation of different courses of action and their outcomes. A decision flowchart can be used to compare multiple alternatives. These types of charts focus on points in the process or workflow at which point a choice must be made.

Logic flowchart

A type of flowchart used to guide software development and code.

Systems flowchart

A type of flowchart that emphasizes the organization of controls at the physical or resource level. In other words, a flowchart that illustrates the flow of information or work between systems.

Product flowchart

Diagrams that map and illustrate the activities, tasks, and processes necessary to develop a new product.
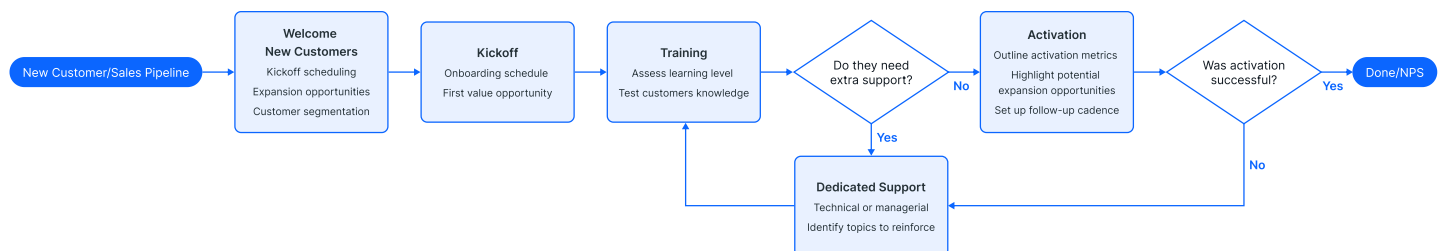
Process flowchart

An illustration of all the tasks, activities, and actions required to complete a process and produce an outcome.

Workflow diagram

Similar to a process flowchart, a workflow diagram illustrates the tasks and activities that must be completed in order to produce a specific outcome.
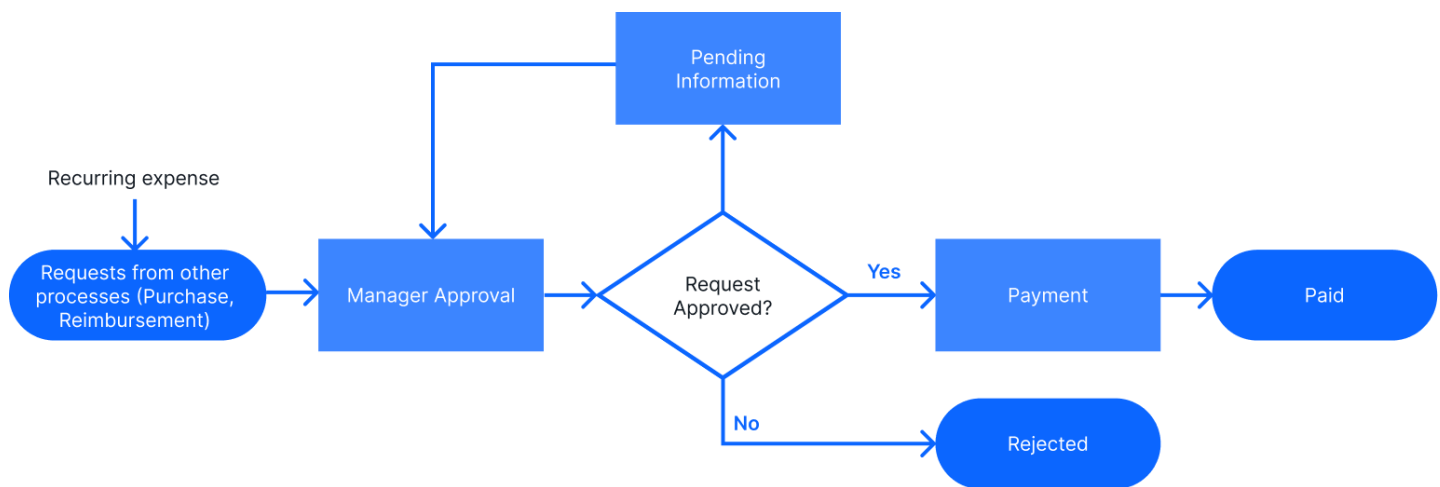
Flowchart examples

Sales process flowchart

(https://assets-site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/New-Customer-Sales-Pipeline-Workflow-EN.svg)

Click to enlarge the picture

Accounts payable flowchart

[(https://assets-site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Flow-Chart-Accounts-Payable-EN.png)](https://assets-site.staticpipefy.com/production/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Flow-Chart-Accounts-Payable-EN.png)

Click to enlarge the picture

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Pipefy Workflow Software (https://www.pipefy.com/workflow-software/)

Additional workflow resources

- Workflow Diagram Examples (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/workflow-diagram-examples)
- Workflow Terminology (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/workflow-terminology/)
- How to Create Workflows (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/how-to-create-workflows/)
- Workflow Management System Features (https://www.pipefy.com/blog/workflow-system/)
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Written by
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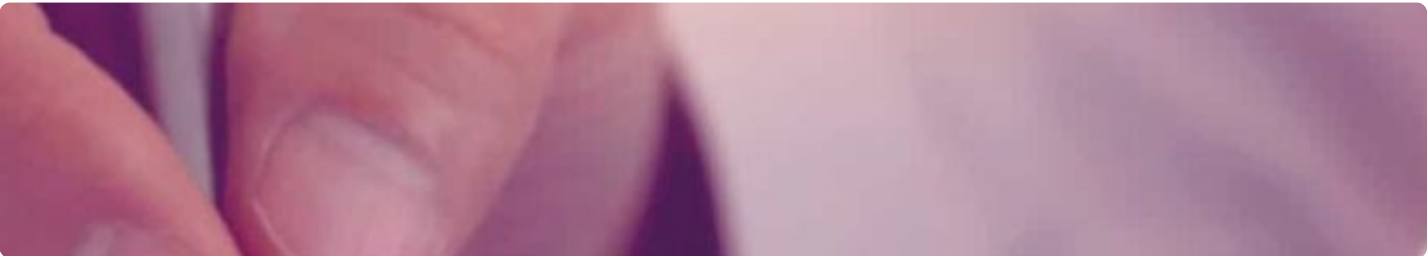(https://www.pipefy.com/blog/author/benjamin-babb/)

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