Flowchart Symbols

All the most common flowchart symbols you need to know, and how to use them.

Flowchart is a very intuitive method to describe processes. As such, in most cases, you don't need to worry too much about the standards and rules of all the **flowchart symbols**. In fact, a simple flowchart, constructed with just rectangular blocks and flowlines, can already get most jobs done.

However, if you want to get technical and precise, there are preset rules and standards you can follow. Specifically, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) set standards for flowcharts and their symbols in the 1960s. Afterwards, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) adopted the ANSI symbols in 1970. In general, flowcharts flow from top to bottom and left to right.

Top 18 Flowchart Symbols

Flowline

1. **Flowline Symbol**: Shows the process' direction. Each flowline connects two blocks.
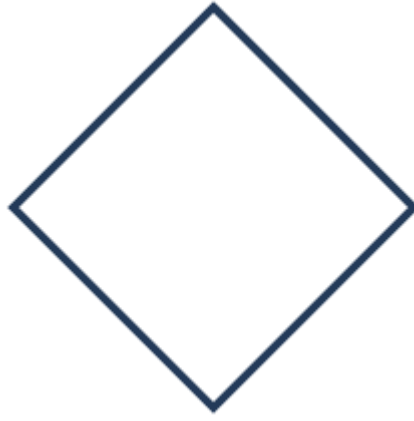

Terminal Symbol

2. **Terminal Symbol**: Indicates the beginning or end of a flowchart.

Process

3. **Process**: Represent a step in a process. This is the most common component of a flowchart.
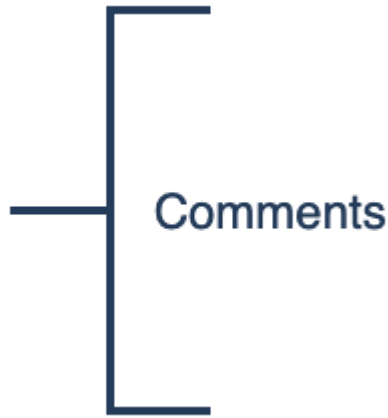
Decision Symbol

4. **Decision Symbol**: Shows a step that decides the next step in a process. This is commonly a yes/no or true/false question.

Input / Output

5. **Input / Output Symbol**: Indicates the process of inputting or outputting external data. This is indicated by the shape of a parallelogram.
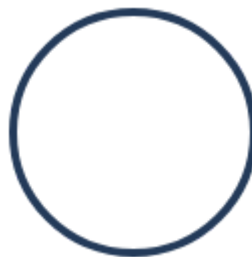
Comments

Annotation / Comment

6. **Annotation / Comment Symbol**: Indicates additional information regarding a step in a process.

Predefined Process

7. **Predefined Process Symbol**: Shows named process which is defined elsewhere.

On-page
Connector

8. **On-page Connector Symbol** are pairs of on-page connecter are used to replace long lines on a flowchart page.

Off-page
Connector

9. **Off-page Connector Symbol**: An off-page connector is used when the target is on another page. Read our flowchart connector guide for more information on how on-page and off-page connectors work.

Delay

10. **Delay Symbol**: Any delay period that is part of a process

Alternate Process

11. **Alternate Process Symbol**: An alternate to the normal process step. Flow lines to an alternate process block is usually dashed.

Data

12. **Data Symbol**: Data input or output

Document

13. **Document Symbol**: A document

Multi-document
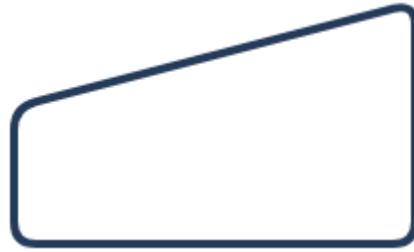
14. **Multi-document Symbol**: Multiple documents

Preparation

15. **Preparation Symbol**: A preparation step

Display

16. **Display Symbol**: A machine display

Manual Input

17. **Manual Input Symbol**: Data or information into a system

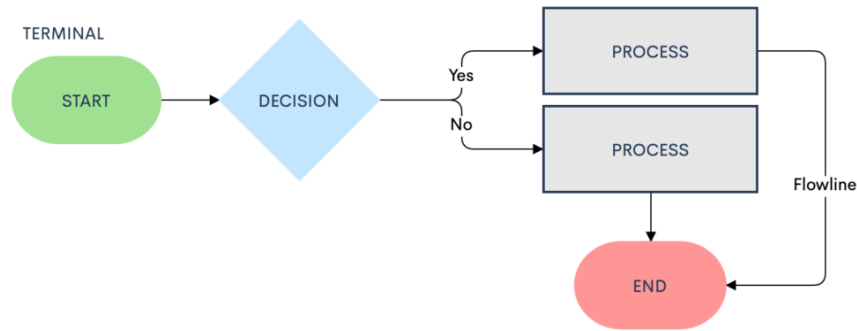Manual Operation

18. **Manual Operation Symbol**: A process step that isn't automated

All of these symbols are pre-made in our **flowchart maker**. Users will only need to drag & drop components into the digital canvas.

4 Most Common Flowchart Symbols

Top 4 Flowchart Symbols in Use

Although there are many flowchart symbols that can be used, there are 4 main symbols that are most important. In fact, you really need only these 4 in most cases:

1. Process Symbol:

Process

Process Symbol represents a step in a process. This is the most common component of a flowchart.

2. Terminal Symbol:

Terminal

Terminal Symbol indicates the beginning or end of a flowchart. This symbol usually has the text "Start"
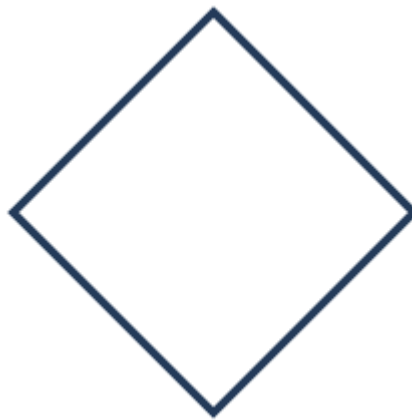
or "End".

3. Flowline Symbol:

Flowline

Flow lines indicate the process' direction. Each flowline usually connects two blocks. Flowlines can be straight lines, uni-directional arrow, or both-sided arrows, representing different kinds of connections between the steps.
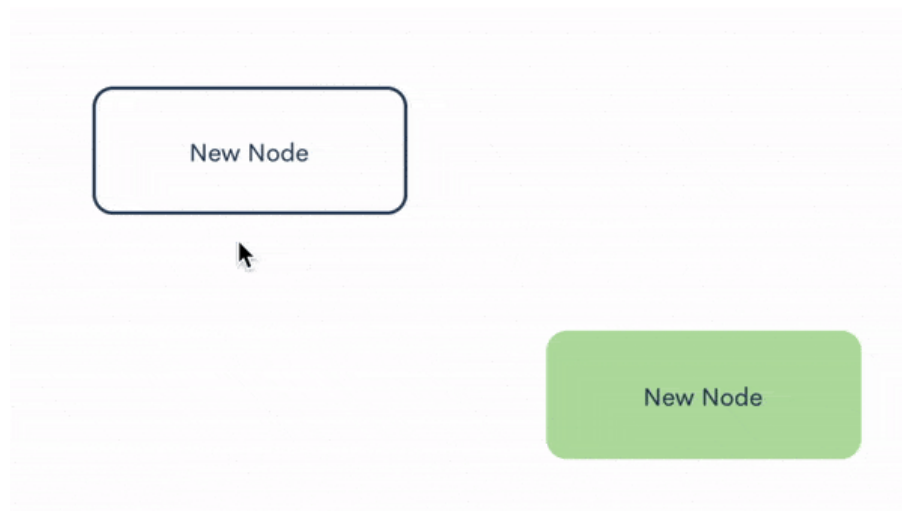
4. Decision Symbol:

Decision

Decision Symbol indicates a step that decides the next step in a process. This is commonly a Yes/No or True/False question.

Flowchart Symbols in Practice

Flowcharts are an easy way to visualize a process or procedure. They can be used in many different areas such as teaching, business, or even in science experiments. To put **flowchart symbols** to use, follow these steps and guidelines to get started.
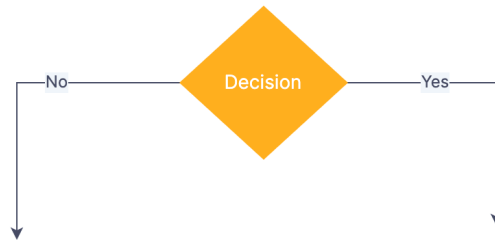

1. Start with a **Terminal** symbol. Often this Terminal symbol has the word "START" in this. This way, viewers of your flow chart can quickly identify where the flowchart begins.

2. Insert a **Process** symbol connected by flowlines.

3. Insert a **Decision** symbol whenever there's a choice to be made.

4. Build out the rest of the flowchart using the same principles.

5. End the chart with another **Terminal** symbol with the word "END" in it.

This article is also available in Indonesian and Spanish.

Flowchart Guides