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# Captions for Figures and Tables

In papers written for classes and submitted to journals, every table and figure should include a caption, honoring these common practices:

- The caption for a figure appears below the graphic; for a table, above. It is easy to get this wrong accidentally.
- Typically, boldface or underscore the word "Figure" or "Table" and the associated number in the caption, then present the caption in plain text with only the initial letter of the caption and any proper names in the caption capitalized (see example below).
- Always concentrate on completeness and concreteness as you caption figures and tables. "**Figure 3:** Air flow" is far less illuminating and accurate than the following:

**Figure 3.** The motion of a parcel of air as it flows across a mountain.

- Do not be afraid to use lengthy figure and table captions—better that than confusing or incomplete ones.
- If your figure or table is essentially the same as or based on another author's, but you recreated or adapted it, it is standard to include the words "Adapted from" or "After" followed by the author's name and a citation at the end of the caption.
- Always cite the figure or table if it—or its data—came from a source, using the same citation style that you have used throughout the paper. The most logical place for the citation to appear is at the end of the caption. See [chapter 5](#) <sup>[1]</sup> of this manual for a thorough discussion of rules for source citation.

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