

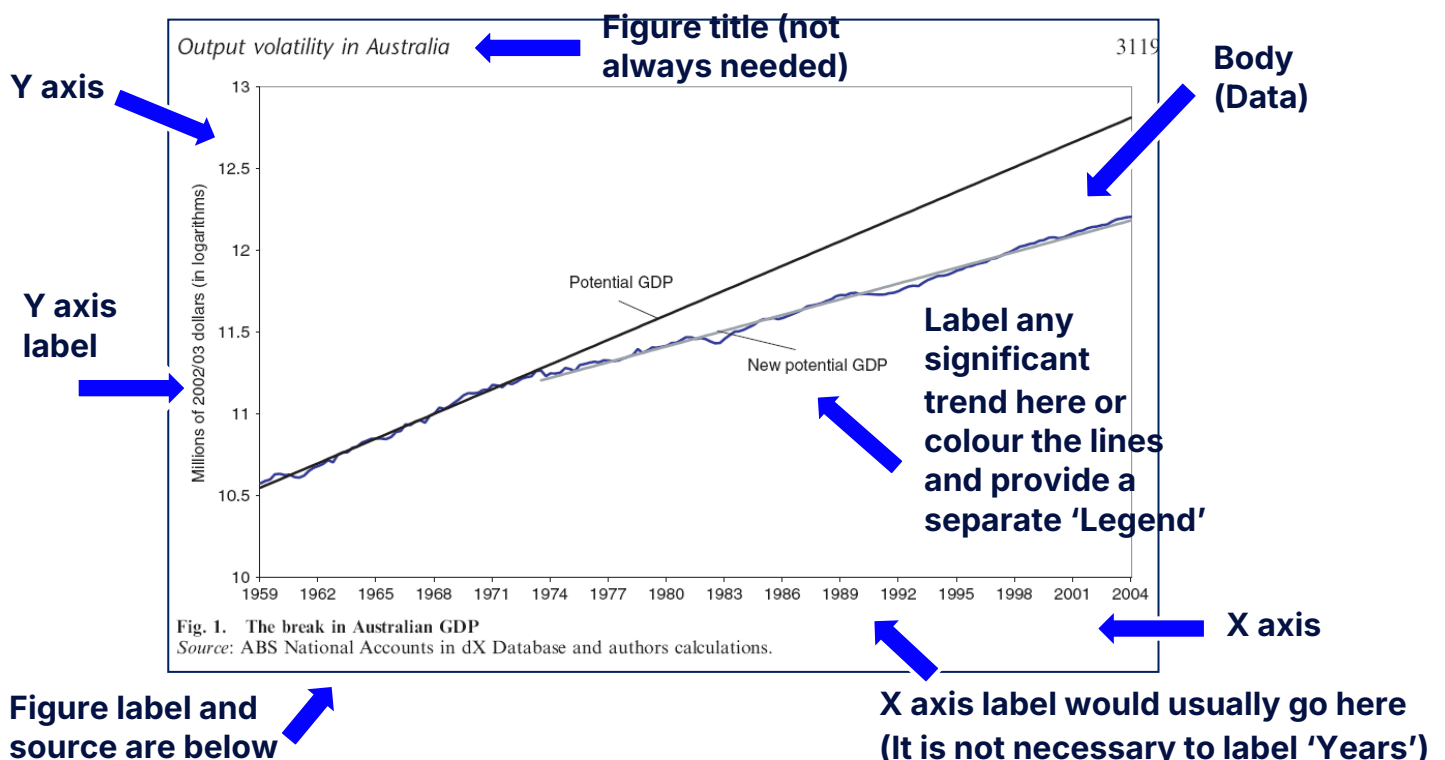
Using data to back up the points you make in your assignments is a good idea at university. Data is evidence that can support your argument. But what is the best way to present such information?

There are two main ways: Figures and Tables.

Figures

Figures can be diagrams of various kinds, e.g., drawings, logos or cartoons. They can also be graphs or charts. For example, see the line graph below.

- It is critical that you refer to the figure in the body of your report or essay: 'See Figure 1 below for the break in Australian GDP'. Never place a figure in your assignment and leave the reader without a lead-in phrase or directional "hook". Place this directional hook as near as possible in the text to the table being identified.
- It is important to identify the names of axes. Describe what is going on in the figures, for example, 'Potential GDP diverges from New potential GDP at a log of \$11.3m in 1974, see Y axis in Fig. 1'. Never use a figure without describing the significant findings in the text of your report or essay.
- It is also important to cite any sources used when recording data. If multiple sources are used and a graph or chart is composed from disparate sources, write 'Adapted from Jones (1999), Smith (2002), Harrison (2010)'.
- Figures are often given a 'Figure title' but this is not done in some subjects (check with your lecturer to establish the convention appropriate to your discipline). Figures are always given a label below the figure, with 'Figure' often abbreviated as 'Fig.'.
- There are many kinds of graphs/charts: plot, scatter, histogram, pie, area, radar, etc. Choose the one that best represents the data you have.



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Tables

Tables are treated in a similar way to figures, with the following differences:

- Tables are labelled at the top of the table; figures are labelled below the figure.
- If appropriate, tables are given explanatory notes in footnotes. If there is more than one explanatory note, the footnotes can be numbered. Footnotes are prefaced with the word: 'Note' or 'Notes'.
- Headings are provided for data in columns; demarcation lines also need to be drawn to separate the lines of data (however, avoid unnecessary lines that might clutter the data).
- In general, figures (charts/graphs) are used to demonstrate a trend; tables, by contrast, are used to show precise data.
- Provide data to an appropriate decimal place, do not provide more detail than necessary.
- The word 'Table' is never abbreviated; however the word 'Figure' often is ('Fig.').

Table title →

Column titles or headings →

Body (Data) →

Source and explanatory footnote →

Demarcation lines →

| Birthplace | Employer | Employer (%) | Own account worker | Own account worker (%) | Rate of entrepreneurship (%) ^a |
|--------------------------------------|----------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|---|
| Australia | 19,928 | 3.7 | 29,224 | 5.5 | 9.2 |
| English-speaking countries total | 23,471 | 3.8 | 35,374 | 5.7 | 9.5 |
| Non-English-speaking countries total | 9834 | 5.3 | 12,645 | 6.8 | 12.1 |
| Selected 10 Asian countries | | | | | |
| Laos | 58 | 4.5 | 64 | 5 | 9.5 |
| Thailand | 185 | 7.6 | 130 | 5.4 | 13 |
| Vietnam | 750 | 6.2 | 825 | 6.8 | 13 |
| Indonesia | 154 | 3.3 | 186 | 4 | 7.3 |
| Malaysia | 247 | 4 | 274 | 4.4 | 8.4 |
| Philippines | 163 | 1 | 359 | 2.1 | 3.1 |
| Singapore | 99 | 4.7 | 116 | 5.5 | 10.2 |
| China | 1252 | 7.5 | 1655 | 9.9 | 17.4 |
| Hong Kong | 450 | 5.3 | 422 | 4.9 | 10.2 |
| Taiwan | 107 | 7.7 | 109 | 7.8 | 15.5 |
| Total selected 10 Asian countries | 3465 | 5.2 | 4140 | 5.6 | 10.8 |

Source: Unpublished census data, Australian population and housing census 2001.
Note: ^a% employers plus % own account workers.

Finally

- Consider whether a figure or table is necessary. Often a simple description in words in the body of your assignment is adequate. Use tables and figures to add something important, and when a lot of information needs to be condensed.
- If you use many tables and figures (e.g., in a major report, or a doctoral or masters' thesis), it is customary to provide a 'List of Tables and Figures' on a separate page at the beginning of the document. Separate the tables from the figures, and list them sequentially:
 Table 1: Title...
 Table 2: Title ... etc., with corresponding page numbers.



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Follow these with:

Figure 1: Title ...

Figure 2: Title ...

Figure 3: Title ... and so on, again with a corresponding page number.

This allows readers to easily find the relevant information.



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