

## Seven Steps for Incorporating Visuals

*Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick*

*Note: This handout was prepared for my ENG 102 classes. You may need to make modifications to your own visuals based upon the needs of your assignment and instructor.*

**Step 1. Provide the exact survey question and describe all of the findings using specific numbers. Every number that appears in the visual is described first in this paragraph. End the paragraph by writing, “Figure # illustrates these findings” in bold print.** Here is an example:

### **English 102 Students’ Concerns with Textbooks**

Many students work 1 or 2 jobs and are very concerned about college expenses, particularly the costs of textbooks. Angela Gulick’s English 102 students were asked, “What is your biggest concern or worry regarding textbooks?” Of the **57** students who took the survey, **33** thought textbooks were too expensive, **14** didn’t use enough of the textbooks to warrant the costs, **5** were unhappy they couldn’t buy used textbooks, **3** were unhappy the bookstore wouldn’t buy back textbooks at the end of the semester, and **2** said textbooks were outdated. **Figure 1 illustrates these findings.**

**Step 2. Provide an appropriate Figure and number for your visual.** Figures are numbered sequentially such as Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 (not Figure One, Two, Three).

**Step 3. Write a descriptive title in bold for your visual.** A visual should have a descriptive title in bold that answers the who, what, where, and when of the visual. Here is an example:

**English 102 students’ concerns with textbooks, Parkland College, October 5, 2022.**  
(who) (what) (where) (when)

**Step 4. Write an action caption for your visual.** An action caption states the **most significant finding** of the visual. An action caption contains a **specific statistic**, not general wording (the majority of, many, few, some). The action caption should be directly connected to the recommendations you make in Step 8.

**Ineffective:** A lot of students thought they paid too much for textbooks.

**Effective:** Of the **57** students surveyed, **33 (57%)** paid too much for textbooks.

**Step 5. Provide space and clear labeling for visual.** A visual should be large enough to be clearly labeled. See examples on next two pages for proper labels.

**Step 6. Provide a proper source citation for your visual.** At the bottom of the visual, type the following: Source: Author of survey. “Title of Survey Results.” Question number from survey results. Figure created by the name of the student who made the visual. >>>

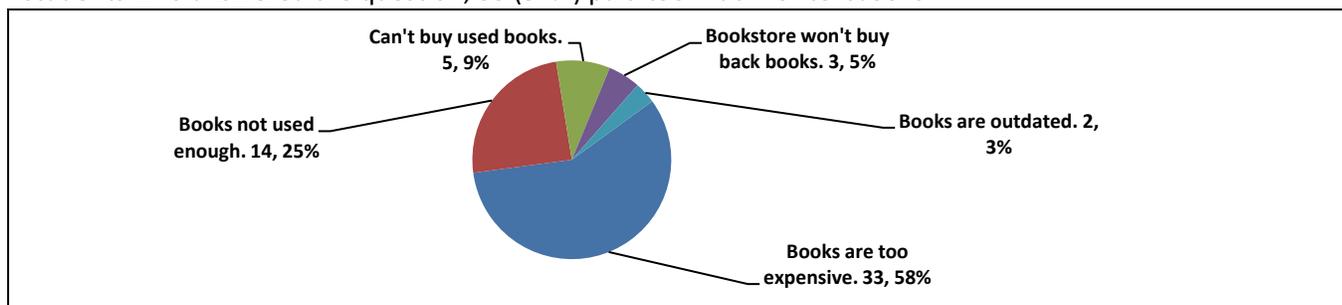
**Step 7. Explain the visual and the relevance of the data.** Immediately following the visual, you need to explain the significance of your findings and how they relate to your reader. Why do these findings matter? This is often a useful place to incorporate some of your classmates’ comments – combining statistics and “real voices” is often very effective.

**Look on the next page for all seven steps combined with a pie chart and a column graph.**

### English 102 Students' Concerns with Textbooks

Many students work 1 or 2 jobs and are very concerned about college expenses, particularly textbooks. Angela Gulick's English 102 students were asked, "What is your biggest concern or worry regarding textbooks?" Of the **57** students who took the survey, **33** thought textbooks were too expensive, **14** didn't use enough of the textbooks to warrant the costs, **5** were unhappy they couldn't buy used textbooks, **3** were unhappy the bookstore wouldn't buy back textbooks at the end of the semester, and **2** said textbooks were outdated. **Figure 1 illustrates these findings.**

**Figure 1: English 102 students' concerns with textbooks, Parkland College, October 5, 2022.** Of the 57 students who answered the question, 33 (57%) paid too much for textbooks.



Source: Angela Gulick. "Textbook Survey Results." Question 3. Figure created by Student Name.

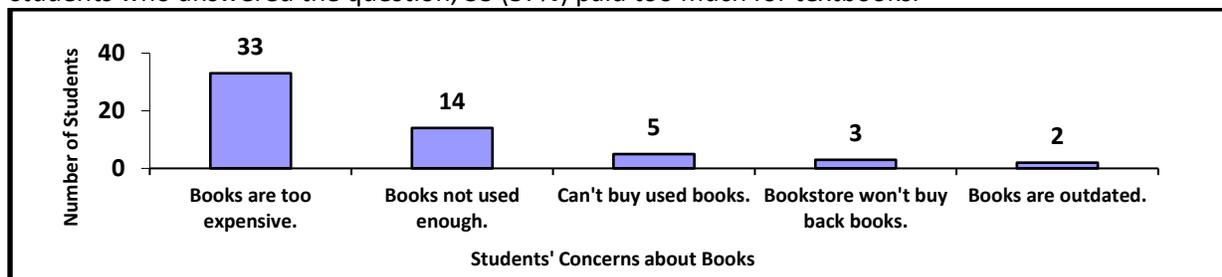
Students seem to understand that paying for textbooks is part of the expectation of going to college. However, the students have concerns over textbooks that are costly. Of the **57** students surveyed, **33 (57%)** indicated that they had paid too much for textbooks. A single textbook can be hundreds of dollars. In a typical semester where a student is taking four or five courses, these costs can be significant on top of tuition, fees, housing, car payments, insurance, food, and utilities. If students have to work multiple jobs to make enough money to pay for school, students probably won't have as much time to do their schoolwork and may be too tired to do that schoolwork anyway. It is reasonable to charge for textbooks *if* the textbooks are essential to the students' learning. But are textbooks always meaningfully incorporated into students' classes?

On the other hand, not every student felt that textbook costs were a problem. For some students, then, they see their textbooks as smart investments. Based on these differing opinions, abolishing textbooks entirely is not a solution. But the college needs to be mindful that some students don't have a lot of disposable income, and every penny matters. Textbooks *are* an investment, but the college should ensure that students are getting something out of that investment. Having access to affordable textbooks is vital to student success because textbooks present important information to students and can even serve as reference books in other classes.

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Here is the same information presented in the form of a column graph:

**Figure 1: English 102 students' concerns with textbooks, Parkland College, October 5, 2022.** Of the 57 students who answered the question, 33 (57%) paid too much for textbooks.



Source: Angela Gulick. "Textbook Survey Results." Question 3. Figure created by Student Name.