

Creating Graphics

No matter how clear your explanation, graphics can make a process even clearer to your readers. Providing graphics gives readers a tool for creating their own mental picture of the process you explain, and it also helps your words make more sense.

Looking at Graphics

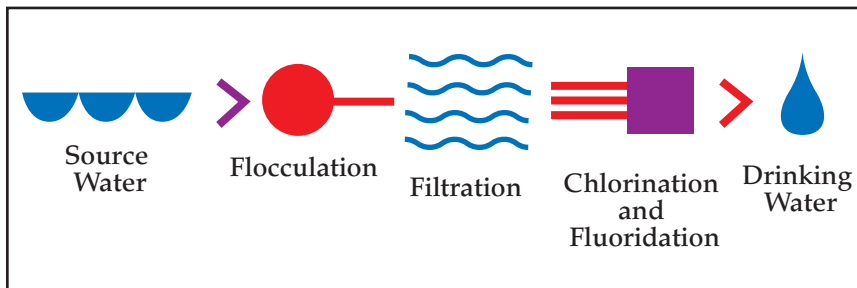
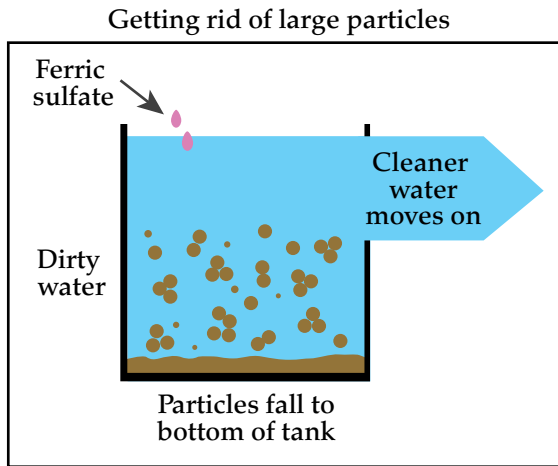
Some graphics are more helpful than others. Graphics that are cluttered or unclear can confuse readers. Look at the following graphics. Which is helpful? Which is confusing?



WHAT'S AHEAD?

In this section you will create graphics for your essay. You will also learn how to

- choose the best form for your graphics
- use words to make your graphics clearer



Looking at Graphics

Identify which graphic on page 77 might help readers understand a process better and which might confuse readers. Then, list the characteristics of the more helpful graphic.

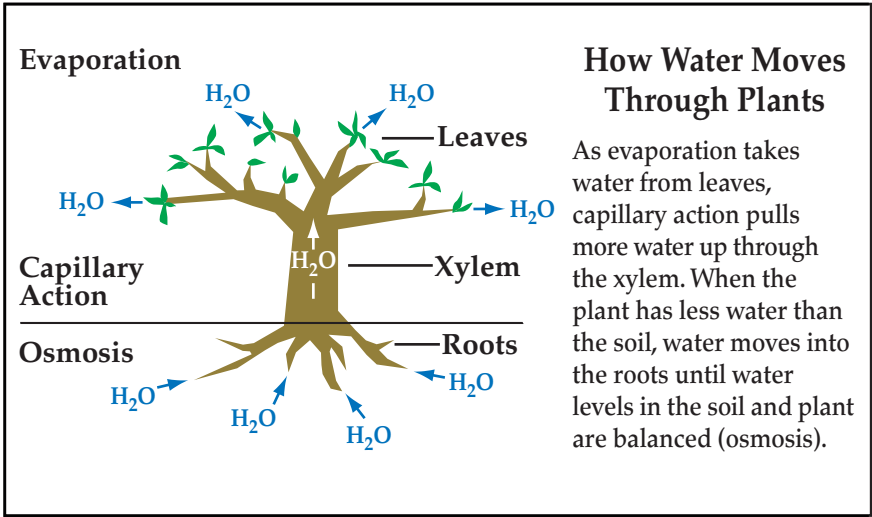
Creating Effective Graphics

You will use the four steps on the following pages to create graphics to make your explanation of a complex process clearer.

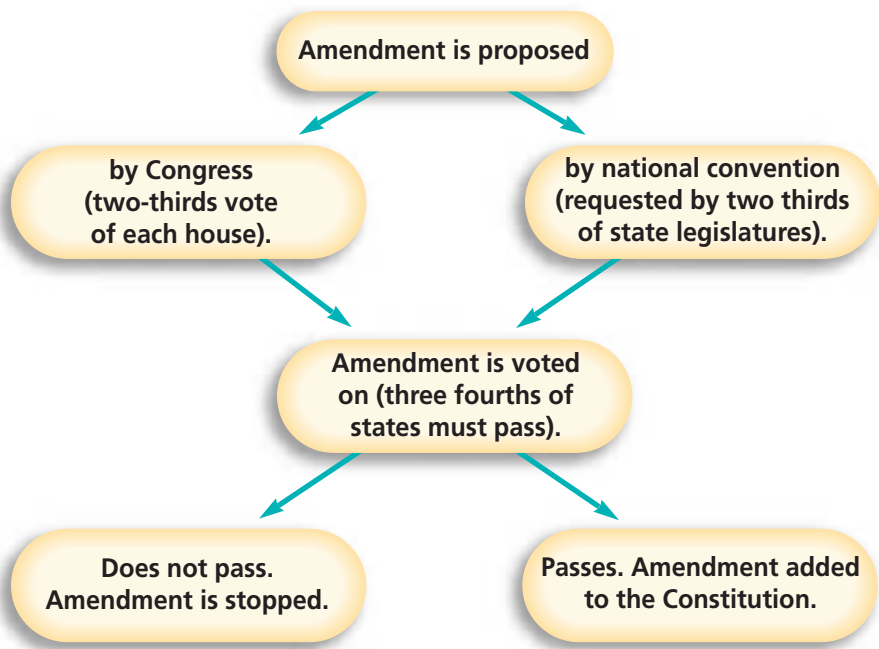
1. Decide what part of your essay should be illustrated. Think about what parts of the process or which structures involved in the process confused you at first. Your graphics should show an important structure or part of the process that might confuse readers.
2. Select the best way to illustrate the part you have chosen. Here are the three most useful options:
 - illustrations to sketch one item involved in the process. For example, in an essay on the process of digestion, a writer might use this drawing to illustrate the various types of teeth.



- diagrams to show a few smaller steps that make up a larger step or to give a clear picture of a structure involved in this step. The first graphic on page 77 is a diagram that shows the smaller steps that make up one step in the water treatment process. The diagram on the next page shows how plant structures work together to move water through the plant.



- flowcharts with words and symbols to show the major steps in the process. The second graphic on page 77 shows the major steps in the water treatment process. Here is a flowchart showing the major steps involved in amending the U.S. Constitution.



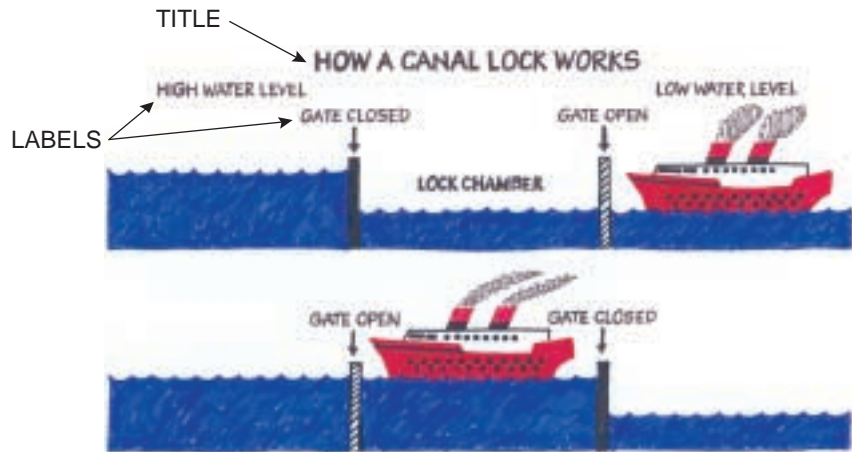
Make a rough sketch of your ideas to make sure the form you have chosen will work. You may have a few false starts before you figure out the sizes and shapes of items that will work best in your graphic.

3. **Create graphics by hand or by using a computer.** Choose the clearest (and easiest) way to communicate your ideas and create your graphics by hand or by using a computer graphics program. Make them bold and clear, not cluttered with unnecessary information or decorations. Use color only if it will make your message clearer. You might want to make the most important part of your graphic a bright color in order to draw attention to it.
4. **Add a title.** Also, add captions and labels to explain important parts of your graphic. Your title should tell readers in just a few words exactly what this graphic shows. Use a one-sentence caption to remind readers about what is happening at a particular point in the graphic or to explain something you cannot show. Identify objects in the graphic using labels. Make your labels no more than a few words long and place them as close as possible to the parts they name without covering any of your graphic. You may also want to draw a line connecting each part to its label.

CAPTION

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Engineers can raise the water level inside the lock chamber to the higher water level or lower it to the lower water level to allow ships to pass.



YOUR TURN 12 Creating Effective Graphics

Now it is your turn to create your own graphic.

- First, decide what information in your essay needs a graphic.
- Next, choose the type of graphic that will make the information clear to readers.
- Remember that you can create your graphic by hand or by using a computer.
- Finally, add titles, captions, or labels to explain your graphic.