

Factsheet

Interpret tables, charts and graphs (1)

Basics

A lot of writing contains visual aids to help us understand information quickly and easily. These can include tables, charts and graphs, and this class will help you to read these visual aids accurately.

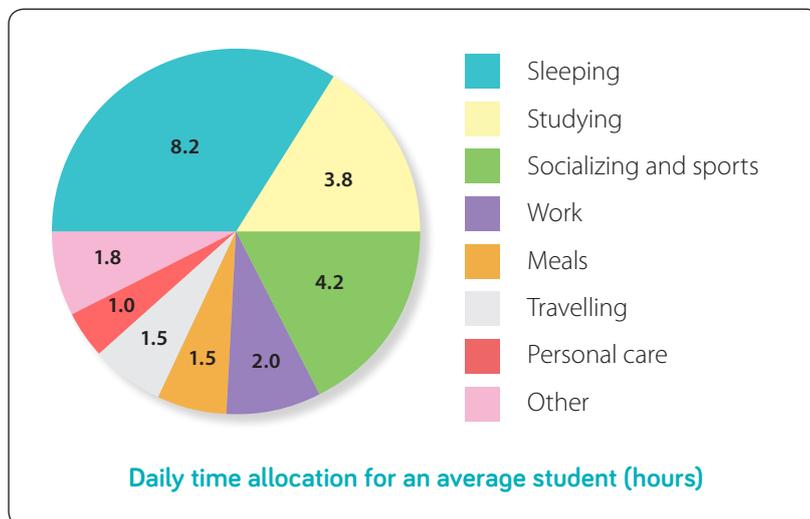
The academic context

Tables, charts and graphs are more common in academic texts than in general texts. They are often used to present numbers, statistics, trends or forecasts, and it is important to read them very carefully.

Key features

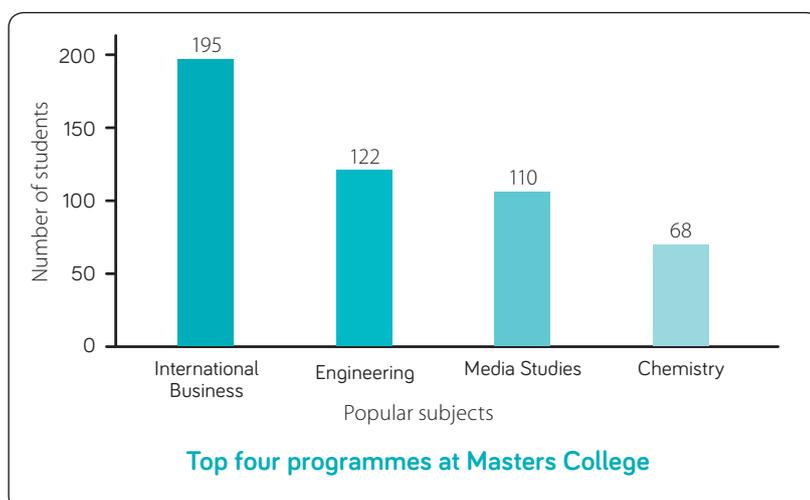
Pie charts

Pie charts are used to compare the parts of a whole. They do not usually show changes over time.



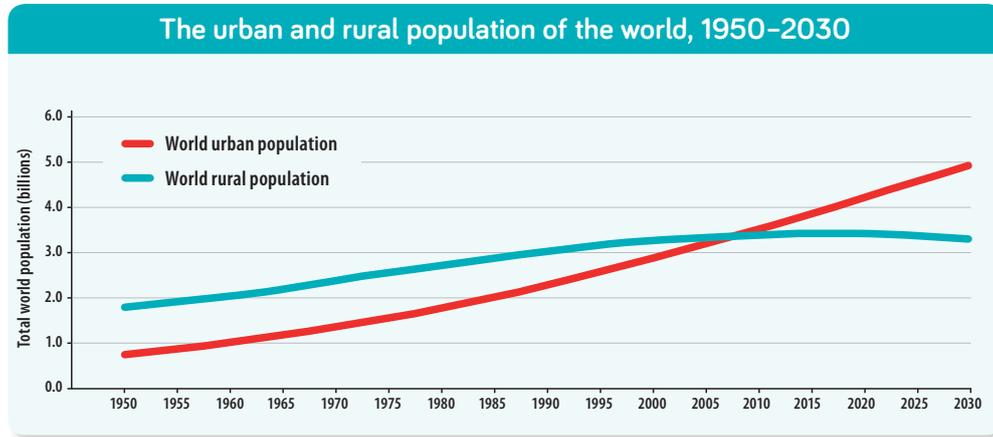
Bar charts

Bar charts are also used to compare, but they can show changes over a period of time.



Line graphs

Line graphs are usually used to show changes over time. They can show more detailed changes.



Tables

Tables are used to display groups of facts, especially numbers. They make it easier to find particular numbers or other information quickly.

Overview: contact time for first-year students

	Contact hours per week	Lectures	Seminars	Lab sessions	Tutorials
Marcus	15	8	2	1	–
Hamid	15	2	2	–	–
Franco	23	6	4	2	1

Challenges / difficulties

The most common difficulty is that visual aids can be complex. They often contain a lot of information.

How can I develop this skill?

The Worksheet will help you. Then, when you see visual aids online, in books or in lectures, take time to try to understand the information they are presenting.

Learning outcome

Learning to interpret tables, charts and graphs means that you will get more information out of what you read.

Theory to practice

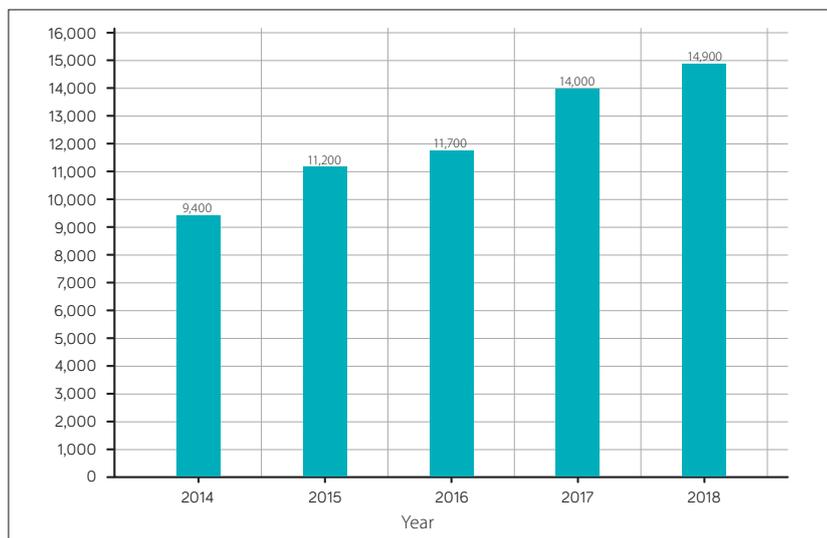
 The four visual aids (1–4) present the same information in four different ways. Which is the easiest to understand? Discuss your answers with a partner.

1

Number of women applying for engineering degrees					
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Applicants	9,400	11,200	11,700	14,000	14,900

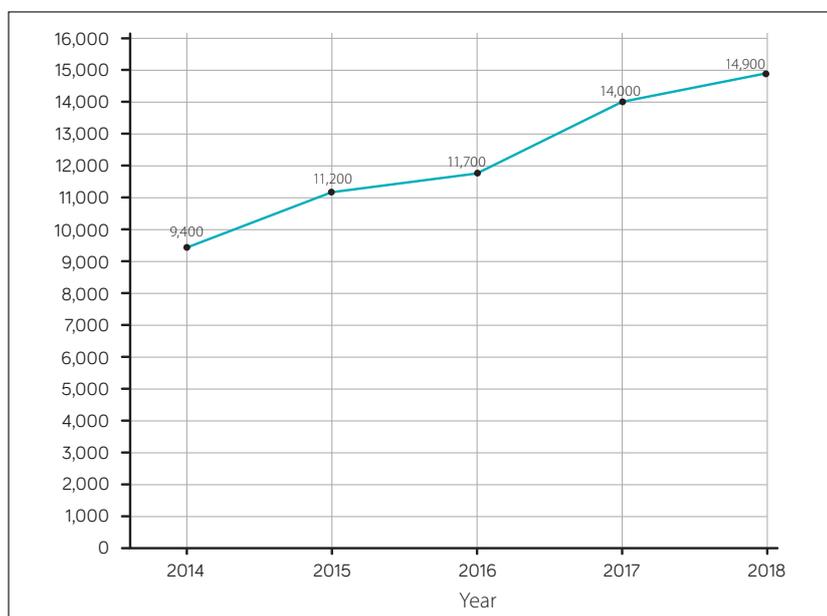
2

Number of women applying for engineering degrees



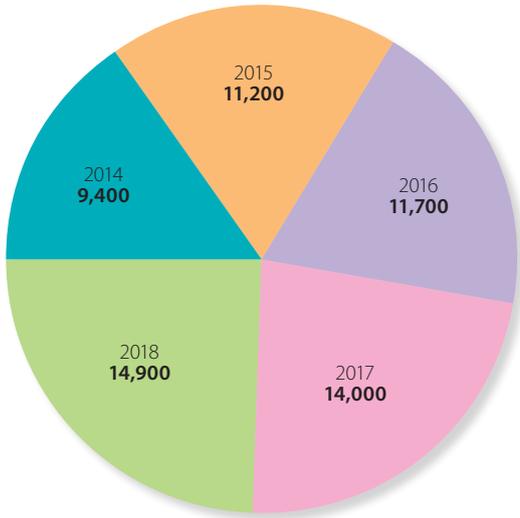
3

Number of women applying for engineering degrees



4

Number of women applying for engineering degrees



Ways to get more practice

Each time you see information presented visually using a table, chart or graph, read it slowly and carefully. Pay close attention to all the information.