

- **Eliminate “visual noise.”** Excessive lines, bars, numbers, colors, or patterns will overwhelm readers. In place of one complicated visual, use two or more straightforward ones.
- **Be sure the visual can stand alone.** Even though it repeats or augments information already in the text, the visual should contain everything users will need to interpret it correctly.

### **Checklist: Usability of Visuals**

*(Numbers in parentheses refer to the first page of discussion.)*

#### **Content**

- Does the visual serve a valid purpose (clarification, not mere ornamentation)? (254)
- Is the level of complexity appropriate for the audience? (257)
- Is the visual titled and numbered? (261)
- Are all patterns identified by label or legend? (260)
- Are all values or units of measurement specified (grams per ounce, millions of dollars)? (261)
- Do the visual relationships represent the numeric relationships accurately? (288)
- Are captions and explanatory notes provided as needed? (259)
- Are all data sources cited? (261)
- Has written permission been obtained for reproducing or adapting a visual from a copyrighted source in any type of work to be published? (261)
- Is the visual introduced, discussed, interpreted, integrated with the text, and referred to by number? (292)
- Can the visual itself stand alone in terms of meaning? (293)

#### **Style**

- Is this the best type of visual for your purpose and audience? (257)
- Are all decimal points in each column of a table aligned vertically? (261)
- Is the visual uncrowded, uncluttered, and free of “visual noise”? (293)
- Is the visual engaging (patterns, colors, shapes), without being too busy? (293)
- Is color used tastefully and appropriately? (283)
- Is the visual ethically acceptable? (288)
- Does the visual respect users’ cultural values? (290)

#### **Placement**

- Is the visual easy to locate? (292)
- Do all design elements (title, line thickness, legends, notes, borders, white space) achieve balance? (292)
- Is the visual positioned on the page to achieve balance? (292)
- Is the visual set off by adequate white space or borders? (292)
- Does the left side of a broadside table face page bottom? (261)
- Is the visual in the best location in the document? (292)