U.S. Department of Transportation

Office of the Secretary of Transportation

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Style Manual

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Abstract

The *Bureau of Transportation Statistics Style Manual* is designed to ensure content created and published under the BTS banner is accessible to the broadest possible audience, has consistent style and branding, and is helpful to users navigating the production process.

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Quality Assurance Statement

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) provides high quality information to serve government, industry, and the public in a manner that promotes public understanding. Standards and policies are used to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of its information. BTS reviews quality issues on a regular basis and adjusts its programs and processes to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Notice

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Introduction

For the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), consistency and accessibility—i.e., compliance to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act—is key when creating quality content. Inconsistent or incorrect punctuation, poor spelling, and sloppy formatting not only detract from the appearance and accessibility of content, but they can taint a reader's perception of the content's accuracy and legitimacy, ultimately undermining BTS' credibility. Ensuring content is accessible for all users and readers is crucial to BTS, which is why this style manual bakes accessibility best practices into BTS' style choices and production process. *Remember, always strive to make each piece of content organized, well written, consistent, concise, properly punctuated, and accessible.*

BTS publications, their authors, and others involved in the production process are diverse. Researchers, developers, designers, federal staff, contractors, and others all participate in creating content, such as the following, for print and web publication:

- Reports to Congress and the President
- Data spotlights
- Press releases
- Journal articles
- Manuals
- Special reports
- Technical documentation
- Research studies
- Glossaries

BTS designed this style manual to ensure content created and published under the BTS banner is accessible to the broadest possible audience, has consistent style and branding, and is helpful to users—regardless of their role, familiarity with BTS, or publication type—navigating the production process.

This style manual is separated into four parts. Part 1. BTS Guidance and Requirements contains sections on BTS' production process and the roles and responsibilities of those involved as well as essential information about BTS' branding rules and requirements.

Part 2. Content Preparation contains sections on BTS' preferences regarding voice, word choice, spelling, and more; how to present visualizations like tables, figures, and other imagery; as well as abbreviations, symbols, numbers and math, and punctuation.

Part 3. Document Production contains sections on properly organizing content, formatting content in Word, and laying out publications in accordance with BTS style and branding.

Last, Part 4. Web Production contains sections on the different BTS web platforms and choosing the correct platform for your content, styling and formatting web content, and the production-to-publication process for web content.

The style manual concludes with two appendixes. Appendix A. BTS Style Hub informs readers where they can locate BTS-approved templates and other resources helpful for the production process while Appendix B. Legal Requirements briefly describes the laws under which BTS is required to adhere when creating content.

Unless otherwise directed by the Office of the Secretary (OST), employ the guidance in *BTS Style Manual* for all BTS content you produce. If you can't find what you are looking for in this style manual, first consult the *U.S. Government Publishing Office Style Manual* (*GPO Style Manual*) followed by the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Part 1.
BTS Guidance and Requirements

1. Production Process

The intricacies of BTS' production process may vary depending on the type of content produced and whether it's high-profile in nature, the parties involved, and the genre or medium, such as a report or brief compared to a webpage or web tool. Nevertheless, the foundation of BTS' production process covers the necessary steps and components needed to produce content and products that align with BTS' mission, brand, style, and identity as a federal statistical agency.

This section of the style manual covers the roles and responsibilities of those who may be involved in the production process, the stages of BTS' production process, and general guidelines and conventions for file naming to help you keep you and your files organized for easy coordination.

1.1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Several parties are involved when creating and publishing BTS content and products. This section describes the roles and responsibilities of the main parties.

NOTE: This section outlines the approval process as described in the *BTS Handbook*, which is available via the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A for more information.

Product Manager. The Product Manager has many responsibilities. When assigned a product, the Product Manager is responsible for creating a product plan, including identifying planned content, the intended audience, staff and budget requirements, major milestones, and target dates. Once approved by the Lead Office Director, the Product Manager is responsible for the following activities, as applicable:

- Consulting with the BTS Web Content Manager if the product requires information or video technology procurements beyond existing BTS web operations.
- Working with the BTS Web Content Manager and the BTS Visual Information Specialist to ensure functional and visual consistency with BTS style and other BTS products; to ensure compliance with Section 508 and other standards; and to identify, schedule, and prepare changes to the BTS website.
- Consulting with National Transportation Library (NTL) staff regarding cataloging, metadata, and related requirements; to establish tags, keywords, titles, and filenames for the product; and to schedule processing of the final product into the appropriate catalogs and repositories.
- Working with the BTS Statistical Program Coordination Director to develop a marketing strategy and prepare product release announcements and related materials.
- Working with the Office of Spatial Analysis and Visualization Director if the product includes maps to obtain cartographic assistance and ensure that BTS cartographic standards are met.
- Working with the BTS Confidentiality Officer if the product uses confidential information to ensure confidentiality is not compromised.

- Conducting a fact check and cold read of the final draft to assure, among other things, that numbers are consistent between text and tables and figures.
- Notifying the BTS Deputy Director that the product has been released as well as notifying all the individuals who should be recognized for the accomplishment (note that this task may also be performed by the Lead Office Director).

Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). The COR of a contract is the contractor's main point of contact with BTS. A COR may also take the role of a Product Manager. The COR is responsible for helping usher their contractor(s) through BTS' production process, including providing templates and other BTS resources available only through the BTS network, obtaining the necessary approvals, and coordinating efforts with other BTS staff as needed.

BTS Director. The BTS Director is responsible for approving the final version of a product (in addition to the BTS Deputy Director and Lead Office Director). For reports to Congress, the BTS Director is responsible for approving transmittal letters.

BTS Deputy Director. The BTS Deputy Director is responsible for designating Lead Office Directors and approving the final version of products (in addition to the BTS Director and Lead Office Director).

Lead Office Director. The Lead Office Director is designated by the BTS Deputy Director. When assigned a new product, the Lead Office Director is responsible for designating the Product Manager. The Lead Office Director is also responsible for approving the final version of product (in addition to the BTS Director and BTS Deputy Director) as well as notifying the BTS Deputy Director that the product has been released and notifying the individuals who should be recognized for the accomplishment (note that this task may also be performed by the Product Manager).

Author. Authors are responsible for creating and preparing content that meets the requirements of their project, product, and/or contract and that aligns with this style manual and other BTS requirements. Authors are also responsible for addressing and incorporating feedback, suggestions, and edits provided by the Product Manager, COR, editor, designer, and others.

Editor. Editors are responsible for collaborating with authors and designers to ensure content aligns with this style manual and other BTS requirements as well as the requirements of the project, product, and/or contract. Editors are responsible for being cordial, clear, consistent, and timely.

Designer. Designers are responsible for providing graphic design support as needed per the requirements of the project, product, and/or contract, which may include laying out documents; designing covers; and creating figures, illustrations, infographics, and other visualizations. Designers are responsible for adhering to this style manual and BTS' branding preferences and practices.

1.2. PRODUCTION PROCESS

Regardless of the type of content or product being created, all should proceed through the stages of the production process as follows:

1. **Assignment—**Product Managers, CORs, and/or leadership may assign writing tasks. When issuing assignments, they should provide the following information:
    a. Goal of the publication
    b. Target audience
    c. Content development
    d. Deadline for the first complete draft
    e. Any other key requirements
    f. The Contractor Style Toolkit at a minimum (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A)

2. **Information Gathering—**Upon receiving their assignment, authors should gather information. This stage might include the following:
    a. Asking clarifying questions to fully understand the assignment
    b. Reviewing applicable documentation (e.g., notes, reports, standards, policies, interviews, focus groups, peer review panels) as necessary to create a solid foundation of knowledge before writing

3. **Drafting—**Authors are responsible for crafting a draft using the gathered information and shared understanding of the product's goals and requirements. This stage may include the following steps:
    a. Downloading a copy of the relevant BTS template (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) to use for drafting
    b. Preparing an outline that covers all required sections and key content
    c. Developing comprehensive content based on the outline and gathered information
    d. Using the Metadata and Alt Text template (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) to write alternative text captions for any nondecorative graphics (e.g., graphs, maps, figures) included in the draft
    e. Completing a Permissions Table (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) for all graphics included in the draft

    Drafting in a BTS template is an important step authors must take that helps everyone. Templates help authors format their content; help editors ensure consistent formatting and well-organized heading hierarchy, enabling them to complete reviews more quickly; help designers because a template's preset styles can easily map to styles in their layout software; and help the accessibility remediator keep BTS compliant with the law.

    For help completing your draft, seek out the plethora of resources for authors available on the BTS Style Hub (Appendix A).

4. **Internal Content Review—**The person who assigned the writing task should conduct a content review to ensure the base content meets their expectations. Ensuring the draft is complete before entering the editing process (stages 5–8) is key to preventing rework. Accordingly, stages 3 and 4 may repeat until the draft is complete.

5. **Submission to Editor—**Once the draft is complete, submit it along with the associated alternative text captions and Permissions Table to the editor. The submission process may vary depending on whether contractors are involved, but generally, BTS recommends using a secure file-sharing method; for example, creating a project channel within the appropriate Microsoft Teams team offers an easy way to exchange files and maintain file integrity throughout the production process.

6. **Intake—**Upon receiving a submission, the editor should complete the following steps:
   a. Review the submission package for completeness (i.e., all files noted in stage 5 are present)
   b. Page through each file and ask the author clarifying questions if needed

7. **Formatting—**Before beginning their edit, the editor should review the formatting of the file to ensure all styles are correctly applied and match the content outlined in Section 11. Formatting in Word. The editor should leave a comment for the author if there are any formatting issues they cannot resolve, such as skipped or orphaned heading levels.

8. **Initial Edit—**After formatting, the editor should turn on Track Changes and edit the main document to ensure clarity, grammatical accuracy, style manual compliance, and consistency within and (if appropriate) across documents. The editor should ensure accessibility best practices have been applied (including figures) to facilitate smooth layout, remediation, publication, and reader experience.

   The editor should also review the Permissions Table to ensure source lines in the main file match the noted requirements as well as the alternative text caption file to ensure the descriptions are clear and best practices (as described in Section 5.2. Alternative Text Captions) have been applied.

   Once the editor’s initial edit is complete, they should submit the files to the author with an overview of the changes made and a summary of recurring issues the author should address.

9. **Author Review—**During this stage, the author should review the editor’s feedback and complete the following steps:
   a. Accept and/or reject all Track Changes as appropriate
   b. Respond to all comments
   c. Address any recurring issues

   Once these steps are complete, the author should submit the files back to the editor for an additional round of review.

10. **Additional Edits—**The editor should conduct another review of the file, ensuring comments and unresolved items have been addressed.

    Stages 9 and 10 shall repeat until the file is complete, clear, accurate, and compliant with this style manual and legal requirements.

11. **Finalization—**Once the file is approved by the appropriate party or parties, the editor should conduct a final review for correctness and completeness (e.g., styles are still correctly applied, URLs are working, no crucial content or sections are missing).

    If the file will be laid out in Adobe InDesign or another design program, the editor should submit the final Word file to the designer, who will proceed with stage 12.

    If the file will not be laid out in InDesign or another design program, the editor should convert the file to PDF, reach out to the designer for a title page if necessary, and proceed to stage 13.

12. **Layout/Desktop Publishing—**Using the file provided by the editor, the designer should flow the content into InDesign or other design program and work with the editor to ensure all content was transferred correctly.

13. **Author Approval—**The author should review the laid-out file and confirm approval. If any changes are needed, repeat stages 12 and 13 until the author approves the file.

    Once the file is approved, the editor should submit the final PDF and finalized alternative text caption file to the remediator.

14. **Remediation—**The remediator should assess the files and ask clarifying questions if necessary. Once the remediator has all the information they need to proceed, they should set the PDF's properties and tag the file to meet WCAG 2.1 AA and PDF/UA requirements. The remediator should then submit the Section 508-compliant file to the author for publication.

15. **Publication—**The author should work with their team and the Web Content Manager to get the final file published in the appropriate location(s).

1.3. FILE-NAMING CONVENTION

BTS necessitates the use of a specific file-naming convention, which is described in this section. Authors and contributors should maintain this file-naming convention consistently throughout the life of a file. This convention is a basic best practice for you as the file creator and serves as a vital knowledge management activity. A human-readable and dated file name will ensure your file is instantly understandable at any time, including weeks or even years later, by you, your colleagues, and BTS staff.

The following are the rules for building an easily understandable and proper file name:

1. The file name should first include the BTS Office acronym (as it exists on the day the file is created) to identify ownership and establish provenance.

   Examples: OAI, ODDS, OILS, OSAV, OSDA, OSEA, OTA

2. Use underscores to separate the different components of the file-naming convention. If a component contains more than one word, use hyphens instead of spaces.

3. If the file is part of a project, program, or contract, include identifying information, such as a project or program acronym or the contract number.

   Example: OSDA_SafeOCS

   Example: OSDA_WMATA

4. Include the document title or a shortened version of it. It’s important to keep file names brief and human-readable, so truncate the title as necessary but within reason.

   Example: OTA_TSAR

   Example: ODDS_NCFO

5. Because BTS issues new versions of its flagship publications each year or on a cyclical schedule, always include the year of publication in the file name.

   Example: OTA_TSAR-2024

   Example: ODDS_NCFO-2026

6. Include the document or content type so other parties know the type of document with which they are working (e.g., report, manual, webpage).

   Example: OTA_TSAR-2024_Report

   Example: ODDS_NCFO-2026_Raw-Dataset

7. When you are finished working on a document, save the latest version and include the date and time stamp for tracking the iterations of your document. For consistency, use the following format: YYYYMMDD-HHMM (using a 24-hour time clock). This convention makes it easy to identify the latest version of the document and aids folder organization when sorting by “Date Modified.”

   Example: OTA_TSAR-2024_Report_20231215-1635.docx

   Example: ODDS_NCFO-2025_Raw-Dataset_20260625-0930.xlsx

8. Never use words like “Final” or “Final_Version” to denote the file version because no electronic document or file is ever final, even once it goes to print. Following this rule, you’ll avoid confusing and messy file names like the following: Final_version2.3_Final_edits_v5_FINAL.pdf.

When applying these best practices, you end up with the following complete file-naming convention:

> **File-Naming Convention Map:** [BTS-Office]_[Project-Identifier, if applicable]_[Shortened-or-Abbreviate-Document-Title]_[Document/Content-Type]_[Date-and-Time-Stamp in YYYYMMDD-HHMM format].[file-extension]
>
> **Example:** OSDA_SafeOCS_Data-Collection-Protocol_SOP_20221208-0945.docx

Example: OTA_120034005600789_Statistical-Analysis-Multimodal-Data_Final-Report_20230324-1300.pdf

Example: OTA_TSAR-2024_Report_20231215-1635.docx

Use BTS' naming convention as described and stick with it. This effort will help mitigate version control issues, alleviate confusion finding the correct file, and help maintain clean and clear folders across all BTS content.

2. Branding and BTS Identity

Branding is an invaluable tool that, when used successfully, creates a strong, positive, and unified perception of a company, organization, or collection of products. Often confused with marketing tools that are tangible, such as slogans, logos, or distinctive design elements, branding is a concept—an identity molded by the consistent and effective use of elements across all content.

As a government office, BTS aims for its brand to be reliable, authoritative, and user-friendly so it can provide maximum value to the public and field of transportation statistics. Providing clear, accessible, and visually consistent information is key to maintaining our brand.

2.1. WRITING STYLE

Writing style can and should vary depending on the target audience and publication type. A technical report, for instance, will likely be more formal and detailed than a brochure or presentation. Regardless, a few key guidelines always apply.

All BTS content must be written in plain and inclusive language. Per the Plain Writing Act of 2010, all content published by the Federal Government must be written for the general public—even if the target audience for your publication is other technical experts. Section 3. Preferred Language provides more specific guidance on writing plainly and inclusively, but the following guidelines are essential:

- Avoid excessive technical jargon
- When jargon is necessary, clearly define the terms
- Write concisely
- Avoid technology-specific language
- Avoid sensory-specific language

By following these guidelines, your content will be more accessible to users for whom English is a second language, at different education levels (most adult Americans read at or below a middle school level), and with disabilities regardless of what technology (e.g., a printed page, a computer or tablet, a refreshable braille device) they might use to engage with your content.

For more guidance on writing practices and BTS preferences, refer to Section 3. Preferred Language.

2.2. BTS COLOR PALETTE

To unify products visually, BTS established the six-color palette shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. BTS Primary Color Palette

PANTONE 287 C	PANTONE 2925 C	PANTONE 7717 C	PANTONE 407 C	PANTONE 7408 C	PANTONE 200 C
Hex #003087	Hex #009ade	Hex #00867d	Hex #b2a8a2	Hex #f6be00	Hex #ba0c2f

Source: BTS.

When more than six colors are needed, adjust the opacity of the brand colors per the percentages shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. BTS Palette Shades

	PANTONE 287 C Hex #003087	PANTONE 2925 C Hex #009ade	PANTONE 7717 C Hex #00867d	PANTONE 407 C Hex #b2a8a2	PANTONE 7408 C Hex #f6be00	PANTONE 200 C Hex #ba0c2f
80%	50629a	49addd	409e98	c2bab5	f9cb42	c94d5a
70%	6676a7	61b8e2	58aba5	cac3bf	fad25a	d0636f
60%	7c89b3	77c2e6	70b6b2	d1cbc8	fbd871	d67983
50%	919dc0	8dccea	87c2be	d9d4d1	fbde89	dd8f98
40%	a7b1cd	a4d6ee	9fcfcb	e1ddda	fce5a1	e4a6ad
30%	bdc4d9	bae0f2	b7dad8	e8e5e3	fdebb8	eabcc1
20%	d3d8e6	d2ebf7	cfe7e5	f0eeed	fef2d0	f1d2d6
10%	e9ebf2	e8f5fb	e7f3f2	f7f6f6	fef8e7	f8e8ea

Source: BTS.

This palette was created to be as interpretable as possible for those with color blindness, but BTS authors and designers need to keep the spectrum of visual ability in mind when using these colors to create meaningful visualizations that are accessible to the broadest audience possible. For more information on using the BTS palette in an accessible manner, refer to Section 5. Visualizations.

2.3. USDOT SIGNATURE AND LOGOS

An important element of the USDOT brand is its signature—the purpose of which is to identify the Department and its administrations in a consistent, clear, and uniform way. Appropriate use of the signature and logo is defined and regulated by the Department; this is nonnegotiable.

All USDOT signatures are a combination of the logo (the triskelion) and the name "U.S. Department of Transportation." In some instances, the signature may include the name of an office within USDOT.

For BTS, the signature consists of the triskelion, the Department's name, and "Office of the Secretary of Transportation" all in the Trans typeface, which is the official typeface of USDOT. All elements of the signature are aligned flush left.

Do not add "Bureau of Transportation Statistics" to the USDOT signature. If necessary to identify BTS, "Bureau of Transportation Statistics" should be bold and added 12 points below the official signature so it is not perceived as part of the signature; refer to Figure 3 for an example.

No additional elements, typography, or graphic devices should ever be added to the basic signature configuration.

Never alter the proportion of the elements that comprise the signature—the relative sizes should all remain the same. Do not change the typography or the general configuration of the signature, add extra offices, or alter the scale of the triskelion.

Figure 3. Presentation of BTS with the USDOT Signature

A. Incorrect Usage | **B. Correct Usage**

Source: BTS. | Source: BTS.

The signature should be placed prominently on the title page of a report or the bottom left corner of the first page of a document.

Use the official logo files available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A). If you do not have access to the SharePoint site, reach out to your manager or COR.

The following are the three approved color options for the signature (Figure 4):

- Blue triskelion with black text (use in color documents)
- Black triskellion with black text (use in black-and-white documents)
- White triskellion and white text (use against dark backgrounds)

The official USDOT Blue is Pantone 281, hexadecimal color (hex) code #00205B**,** and CMYK (100C, 78M, 0Y, 57K).

Figure 4. USDOT Logo Variants

A. Blue Triskelion with Black Text

Source: BTS.

B. Black Triskelion with Black Text

Source: BTS.

C. White Triskelion and White Text

Source: BTS.

For more detailed guidance about using the USDOT signature, contact the [Graphics and Printing Coordinator] for advice and counsel on unique or special applications of the signature.

Part 2.
Content Preparation

3. Preferred Language

BTS content should be written in language that is clear, accessible, inclusive, and accurate, as noted in Section 2.1. Writing Style. This section summarizes best practices; words, phrases, and common errors to avoid; as well as alternative language.

3.1. INTENDED AUDIENCE

An intended audience is the demographic you think will read, use, and otherwise interact with your content. Always know your intended audience(s) before you begin conceptualizing and writing.

Start with a simple user story: Project *x* will help user *y* do *z*.

If you need further help dissecting and understanding your intended audience(s), answering the following questions may help:

- Do you have one or multiple audiences?
- Can you segment your document to meet the needs of your various audiences (i.e., an executive summary for upper management, an appendix with detailed data for technical experts, and the body for others)?
- If there are multiple audiences, can you choose one to be the primary audience?
- What is the knowledge level of your audience(s) on the subject?
- What will your audience do with the information presented?

3.2. BEST PRACTICES

The following principles are best practices for writing clearly, accurately, and accessibly:

- Avoid excessive technical jargon.
- Define technical jargon when necessary.
- Write concisely.
- Avoid directional phrases and sensory- and technology-specific language, as described in Table 1.
- Use active voice in nontechnical contexts.
- Refer to an idea in consistent terms (it may sound repetitious, but using one term consistently is clearer than using several terms interchangeably for one idea).
- Avoid using directional language (e.g., “above,” “below”) when pointing readers to the location of information. Use descriptive pointers instead (e.g., “refer to the graphic in Box 3-2”).

Table 1. Words and Phrases to Facilitate Accessibility and Inclusivity

Language to Avoid	Alternative(s)	Reasoning
Directional phrases. **Example:** “Refer to the table below for a list of phrases to avoid.”	Refer to specific chapters, sections, or visuals. **Example:** “Refer to Table 1 for a list of phrases to avoid.”	**Accessibility:** Directional language is often ambiguous and potentially confusing for users who are listening to the text rather than reading it (and therefore have no “above” or “below”). Referring to a specific section (and providing a jump link when possible) ensures the user is directed to the right content.
Sensory-specific language. **Example:** “See Table 1.”	Use phrases that apply regardless of a user’s ability. **Example:** “Refer to Table 1.”	**Inclusivity:** Not all users rely on the same sense(s) and to the same extent to engage with your content. Some users will read your text, and others will listen with a screen reader. Some users will listen to your video while others will read the closed captions.
Technology-specific language. **Example:** “Click the following link.”	Use phrases that apply for any technology. **Example:** “Select the following link.”	**Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Users may need a range of technology to engage with your content. Users with mobility disabilities, for instance, may not have a mouse with which to “click.” Instead, they might use their voice or eye tracking to engage with links.

3.2.1. Verb Tense

In the present tense, the action is happening now. The present tense is often easier to read and understand than the past or future tense. Using present tense is the best choice for most content. The following are a couple examples of present tense:

> The Windows Start screen is uniquely yours, personalized with your favorite apps, people, photos, and colors.
>
> Windows Update installs important updates automatically.

3.2.2. Active and Passive Voice

Voice is either active or passive. Active voice often makes your writing clearer and stronger. While there are strategic uses for passive voice, it can often make your writing less clear, wordier, and weaker. Concision and clarity are pillars of good writing—both of which often come with using active voice.

In active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action.

> **Formula:** [subject] + [verb (performed by the subject)] + [optional object]
>
> **Example:** The project team performed a statistical analysis on the dataset.

In passive voice, the subject is the receiver of the action.

> **Formula:** [subject] + [some form of the verb “to be”] + [past participle of a transitive verb] + [optional prepositional phrase]
>
> **Example:** A statistical analysis was performed on the dataset.

These examples illustrate how using active voice is more direct and contains all the key information readers may need or want. Further, in the passive voice example, you'll notice *who* performed the analysis is missing. This omission is common in passive writing, which can make information less clear, and in some more complex sentences, even cause confusion or misinformation.

It is best practice to use active voice where possible, relying on it more than passive voice.

3.3. COMMON MISSTYLINGS

3.3.1. "That" Versus "Which"

"That" is restrictive (essential), and "which" is nonrestrictive (nonessential). In general, if you can remove the clause without destroying the meaning of the sentence, the clause is nonessential (nonrestrictive), and you should use "which"; if removing the clause destroys the meaning of the sentence, the clause is essential (restrictive), and you should use "that."

> **Example:** The car that has a flat tire is in the median strip.
> **Description:** The phrase is essential, telling you a defining feature of the car so you can find it.
>
> **Example:** The car, which has a flat tire, is in the median strip.
> **Description:** The phrase is nonessential, telling you a feature about the car that's interesting rather than necessary to know.

3.3.2. "There"

Avoid using the word "there" unless used to refer to a location. For instance, "There are five reasons for this approach" should be revised to "The five reasons for this approach are..."

3.3.3. "This," "These," and "Those"

For clarity, always ensure "this," "these," and "those" are followed by a noun. For instance, "This is the reason we changed our approach" should be revised to "This result is the reason we changed our approach."

3.4. VOICE AND TONE

The voice is the person your readers hear talking; it is an identifiable personality, style, or point of view. The tone is the writer's attitude toward the reader and the subject. Consider the following to arrive at the right voice and tone:

- Why are you writing this document?
- Who are you writing to and what do you want them to understand?
- What tone is right for your audience?

Strive to do the following:

- Be confident, courteous, and sincere.
- Use appropriate emphasis and subordination.
- Stress the benefits for the reader.
- Write at an appropriate level of difficulty.

When multiple authors are contributing content, a uniform and appropriate voice and tone should be used by all. Make sure all authors are aware of the intended audience(s), the purpose(s) of the content, and the goal(s) of the content. Additionally, reviewing previous editions of content or similar content published by BTS can provide valuable insight into how content should be written. Product managers and editors should strive to eliminate differences between sections in voice and tone.

3.5. WORD CHOICE

Choose simple words where possible to increase clarity and readability. Avoid jargon, technical terms, or abbreviations that readers will not easily understand. If you must use them, explain them in simple words. Remember, the goal is to get your message across as clearly as possible. Using familiar or commonly used words and phrases helps.

3.6. WORDINESS

Less is more when it comes to writing. Look for opportunities to eliminate unnecessary words. One way to do this is to use verbs instead of nouns where possible:

> **Wordy:** The researcher then began the initiation of the analysis of the survey data.
>
> **Succinct:** The researcher then analyzed the survey data.

In general, nouns require more words to introduce them, and they tend to slow the reader down, while verbs keep things moving. Consider the examples in Table 2 when writing.

Table 2. Common Wordy Phrases to Avoid

Instead of	Consider
In the process of	During, while
Due to the fact that	Since, because
At that point in time	Then
Prior to	Before
Period of time	Period
With the exception of	Except for
Be a reflection of	Reflect
The majority of	Most

4. Spelling and Capitalization

The little details can have a big impact on the quality of your content as well as on a reader's perception of BTS. This section covers proper spellings and capitalization, which should be consistent throughout your content.

4.1. SPELLING

Section 5.2 of the *GPO Style Manual* contains an exhaustive list of preferred and correct spellings. Often, when two spellings are technically correct, the shorter or non-British version is preferred, such as the following:

British English: acknowledgement
American English: acknowledgment

British English: towards
American English: toward

British English: judgement
American English: judgment

British English: travelled
American English: traveled

In addition to indicating the preferred forms of words with variant spellings, GPO's list also contains other words that are frequently misspelled or cause uncertainty.

4.2. CAPITALIZATION

For proper capitalization of certain terms, refer to Chapter 4 of the *GPO Style Manual*, which lists more than 30 pages of capitalization examples.

The following terms should always be capitalized:

- "Congress" when referring to U.S. Congress, but "congressional."
- "Department" when referring to USDOT.
- "Federal" when part of a proper noun, such as "Federal Bureau of Investigation."
- "Nation" when a synonym for the United States, but "national."

Only capitalize the word "State" when part of a proper noun, such as "the State of Virginia" or "Washington State." Do not capitalize "state" in other instances, such as "state DOTs" or "the state."

If a noun is derived from a proper noun, it should be capitalized (e.g., Shakespearean).

Within tables (i.e., not table captions), use sentence case (capitalize the first word and proper nouns) for all text, including headers and data cells, unless a proper noun.

Within figures (i.e., not figure captions), use sentence case (capitalize the first word and proper nouns) for all text that appears in the image, including axis labels, data line labels, and so forth, unless a proper noun.

For table and figure captions, use title case (i.e., capitalize each word except prepositions with fewer than four letters). For more information on applying title case, refer to Chapter 3 of the *GPO Style Manual*.

5. Visualizations

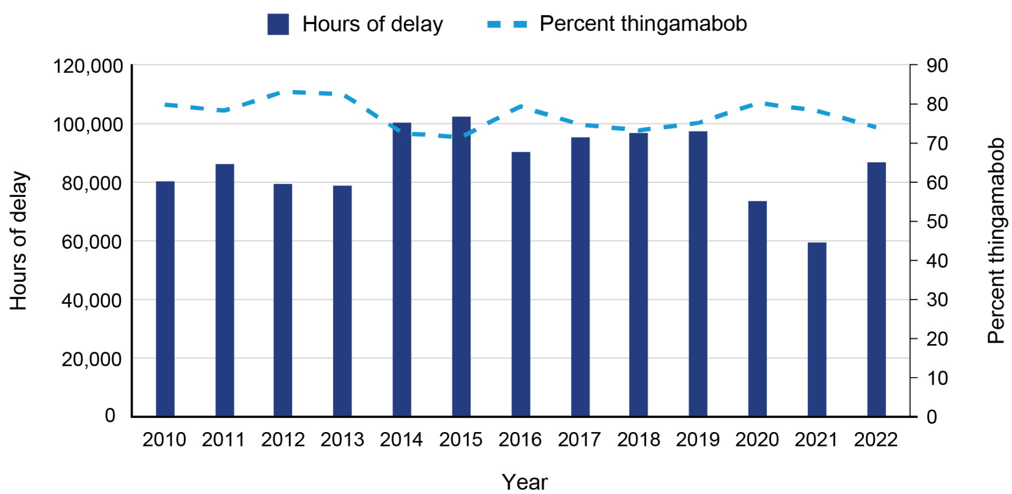
5.1. FIGURES

The term “figure” encompasses all nontabular visualizations that add meaning to your text (i.e., not decorative images). Good figures are legible, don’t rely on color alone to convey meaning (unless that is the nature of the visual like heat maps), and can be interpreted independently of the surrounding text.

Figures should be visual in nature and not be mostly text or contain excessive amounts of text. For accessibility, text should be placed on the page as text and not an image.

Though figures should be able to stand alone, all figures should be referred to in your body text. Figure 5 is an example of how a figure should be presented, including a caption, source line, and any notes.

Figure 5. Sample Figure with Appropriate Formatting and Associated Elements



Source: BTS.
Note: This graph is described in further detail in Section 5.1.5. Graphs and Charts.

As described in Section 5.1.2. Attribution, please complete a Permissions Table (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) to ensure rights have been obtained to use any figures that are not government-owned and to help ensure all source lines contain the required information.

All figures must also have alternative text captions (also known as alt text), which are described further in Section 5.2. Alternative Text Captions. Draft your alt text using the Metadata and Alt Text template (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) and provide them to your remediator for review (for more information on this process, review BTS’ production process in Section 1. Production Process).

5.1.1. BTS Figure Style and Accessibility

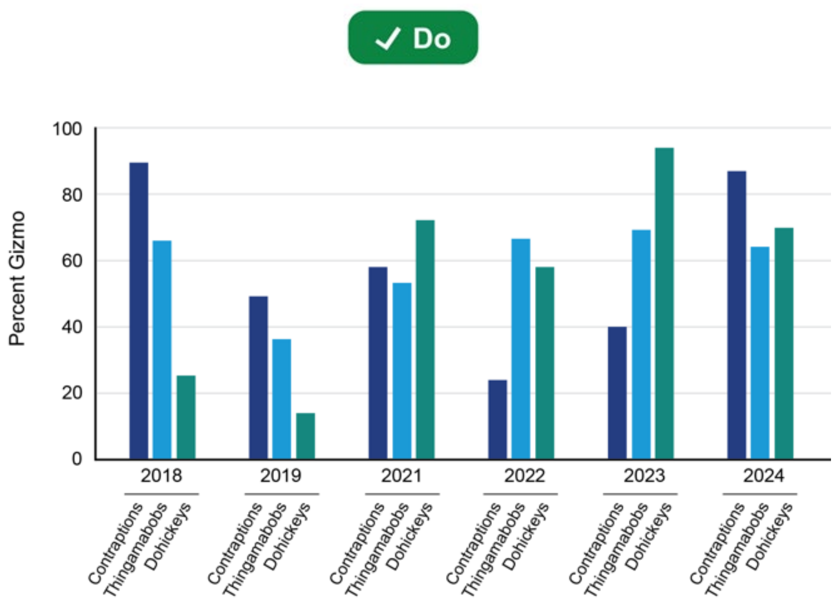
Ensuring accessibility and abiding by [Section 508](#) isn't just a priority for BTS, but it's also law for government agencies. Figures, by nature, are highly visual elements, which requires a lot of accessibility consideration when creating and producing. To ensure accessibility compliance, figures shouldn't use color-only indicators for data, which is the most common practice when building graphs and charts. While many organizations rely on patterns to meet accessibility standards, BTS prefers to use direct data labeling for a clean and consistent look.

To follow BTS style when creating figures, use the BTS color palette (Figure 1 and Figure 2) and directly label data lines, bars, or pieces. Refer to Figure 6 through Figure 10 for examples of proper BTS figure styling.

For more information on the mechanics of building proper graphs and charts that follow BTS style and are accessible, refer to [Section 5.1.5. Graphs and Charts](#).

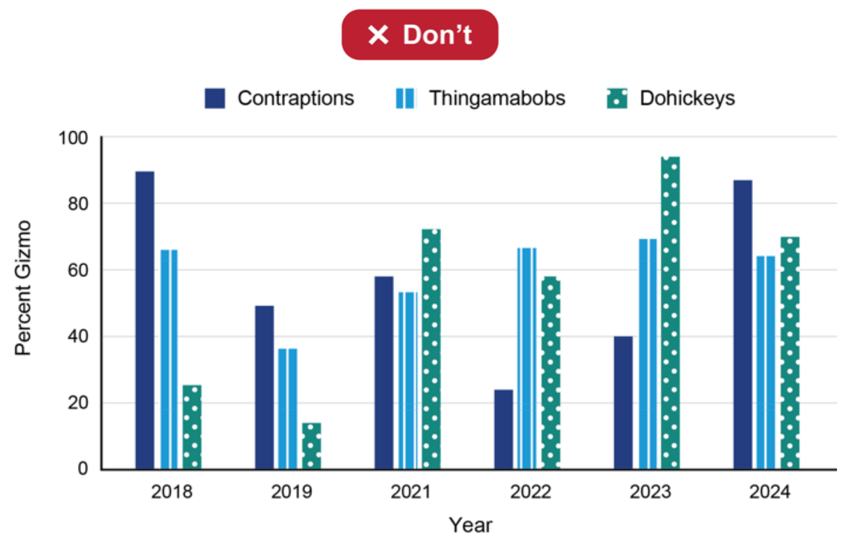
Figure 6. BTS Figure Style: Bar Chart

A. BTS Style



Source: BTS.

B. *Not* BTS Style

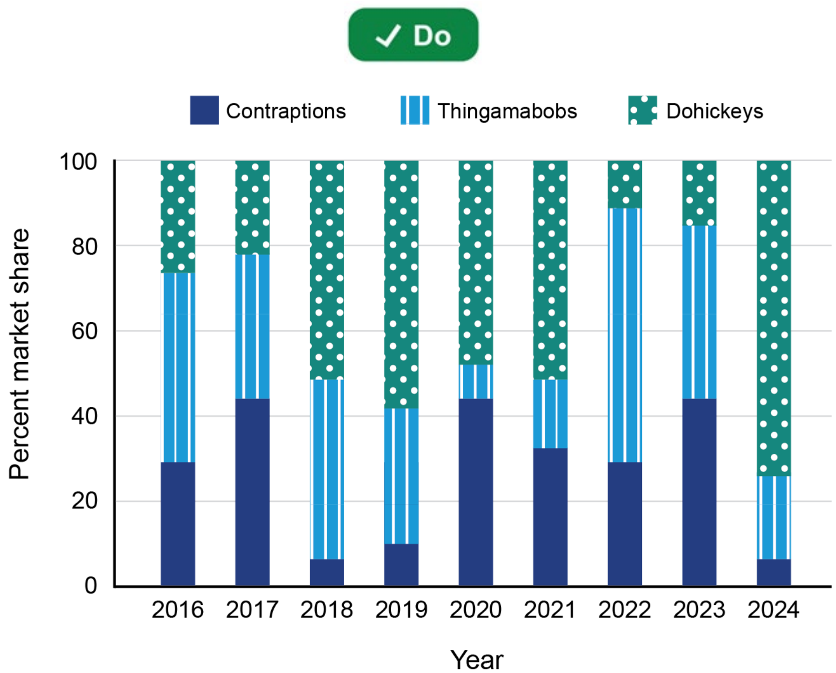


Source: BTS.

There is a caveat with stacked bar charts regarding BTS style and accessibility: If you're creating a stacked bar chart, you must use patterns for the bars. Given the structure of a bar chart, directly labeling each bar of a stack across all stacks will clutter the figure with text and distract from the visual presentation of the data. Instead, use patterns for the bar parts to create an accessible and compliant stacked bar chart. Refer to Figure 7 for examples.

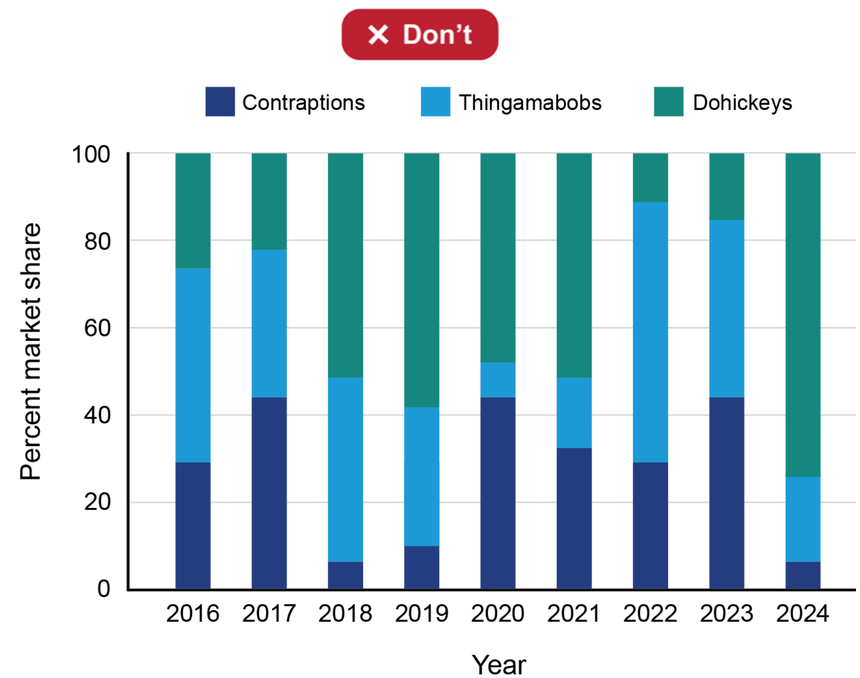
Figure 7. BTS Figure Style: Stacked Bar Chart With Patterns

A. Accessible Stacked Bar Chart



Source: BTS.

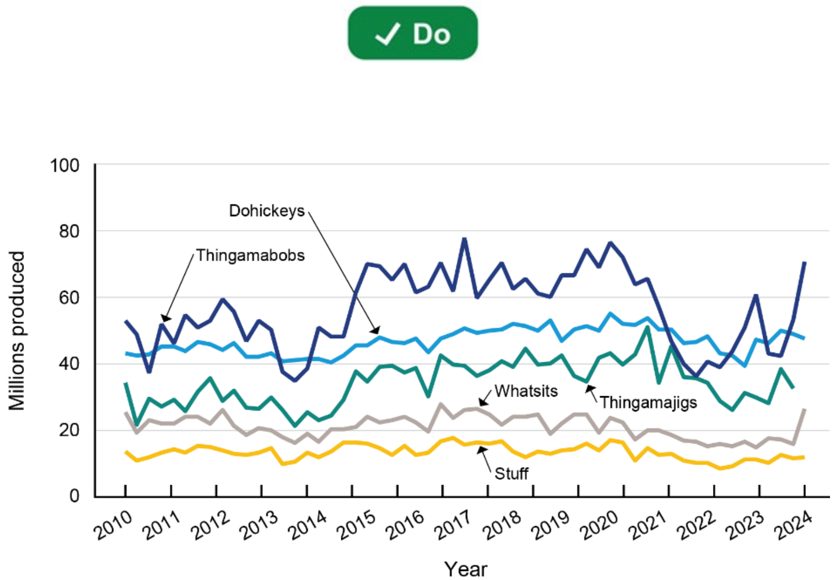
B. Insaccessible Stacked Bar Chart



Source: BTS.

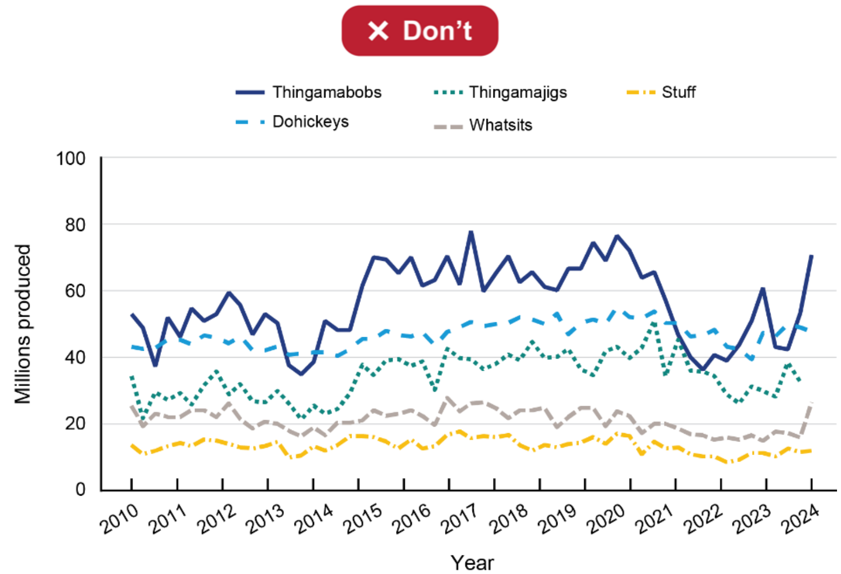
Figure 8. BTS Figure Style: Line Chart

A. BTS Style



Source: BTS.

B. *Not* BTS Style

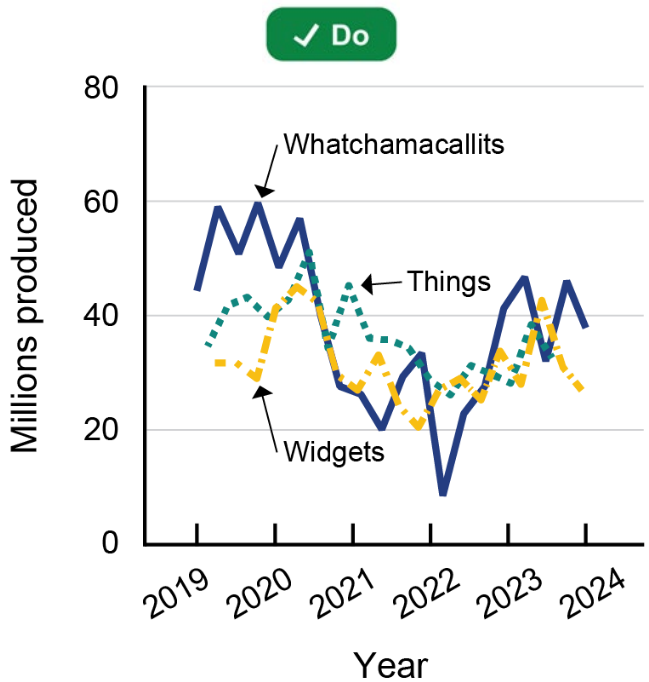


Source: BTS.

There is a caveat with line charts regarding BTS style and accessibility: If your chart contains data lines that begin separately, overlap and are congruent for a portion of the chart, and then diverge again, you must use patterns so users can differentiate the data lines before and after they converge. In these situations, color alone is not Section 508 compliant and thus not legal. Refer to Figure 9 for examples.

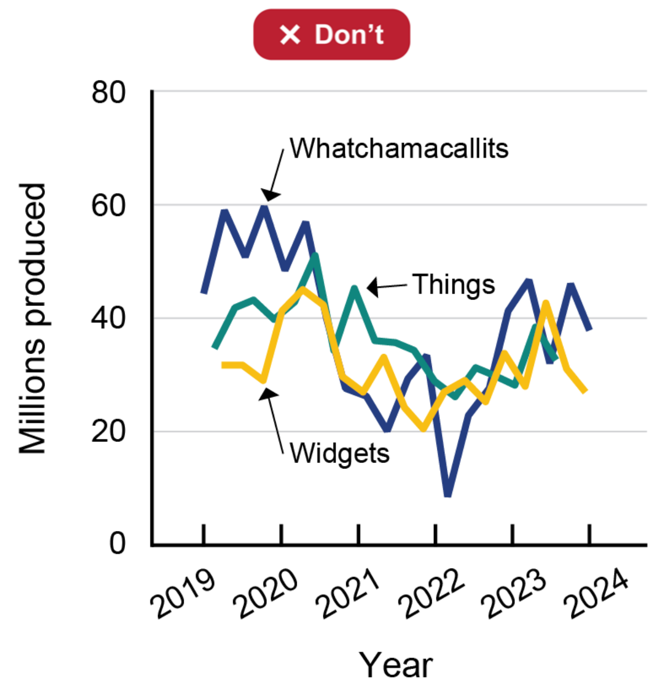
Figure 9. BTS Figure Style: Line Chart With Patterns

A. Accessible Overlapping Lines



Source: BTS.

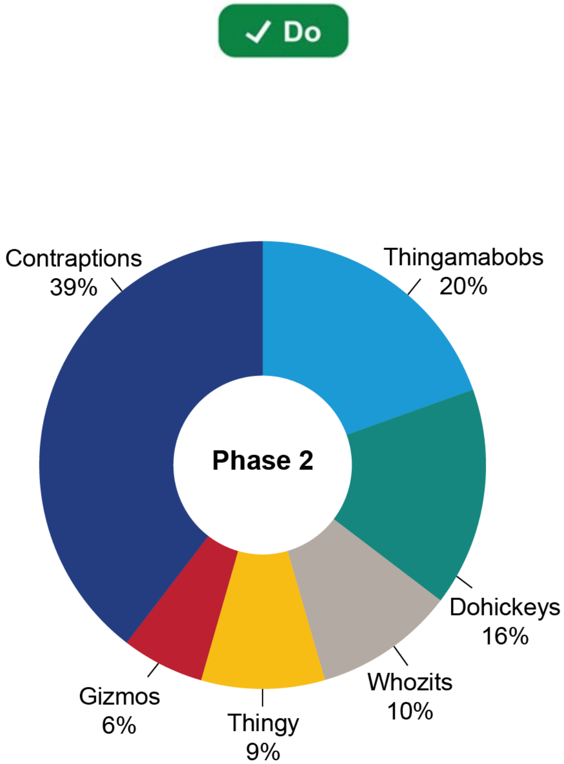
B. Inaccessible Overlapping Lines



Source: BTS.

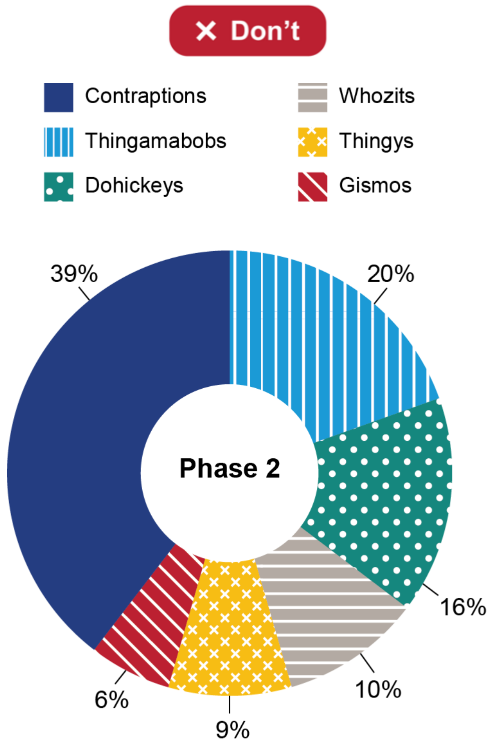
Figure 10. BTS Figure Style: Pie Chart

A. BTS Style



Source: BTS.

B. *Not* BTS Style



Source: BTS.

5.1.2. Figure Captions and In-Text Callouts

All figures must have a descriptive caption (sometimes referred to as titles) placed above the figure image. All captions should be cross-referenced so that corresponding in-text callouts can be inserted as active jump links. Note that figure captions should be title case (refer to Section 4.2. Capitalization) and should not have a terminal period. Figures should appear as near to their callouts as possible.

Number figure captions sequentially (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and so on). If your content uses complex page numbering (e.g., includes the chapter or section number in the page-numbering scheme), figures can follow the same numbering scheme (e.g., for figures in chapter 1, they may be numbered as Figure 1-1, Figure 1-2, Figure 1-3, and so on).

In-text callouts should be inserted as jump links (also known as cross-references). Callouts should include the label and number of the relevant figure (e.g., "Figure 1"). The label "Figure" should be capitalized. To learn how to insert cross-references and jump links, check out the resources available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A).

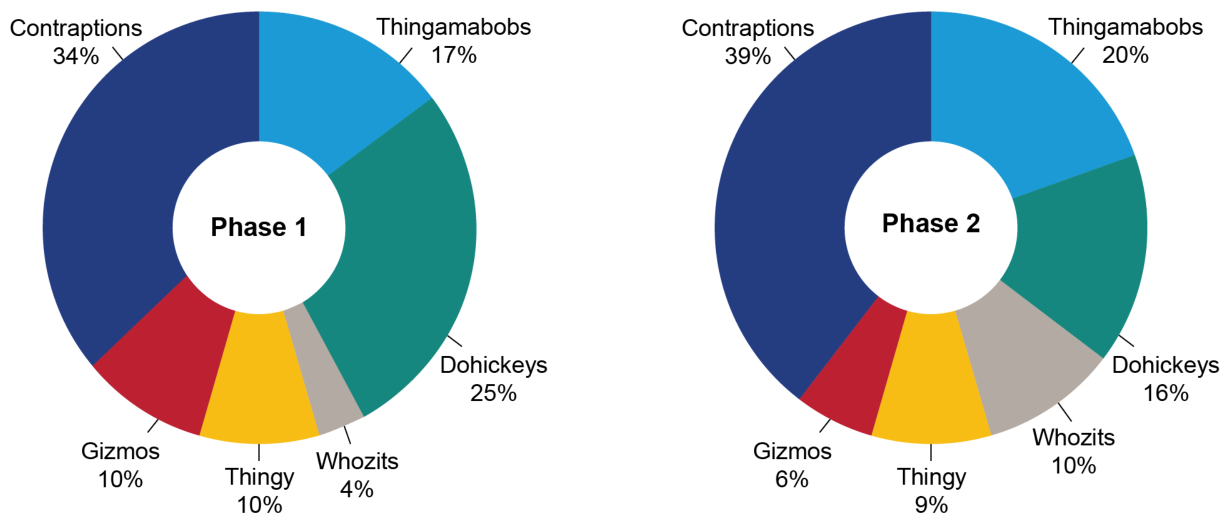
A compound figure is a figure with separate graphical parts that have a purpose for being shown together as one figure, such as a figure comparing the before and after images of a 4-way intersection becoming a roundabout. Apply the following rules when creating and using compound figures:

- Label each figure part alphabetically.
- Include a unique subcaption for each figure part placed above the figure part.
- Include an overall figure caption that is descriptive of all parts.

Refer to Figure 11 for an example of a compound figure.

Figure 11. Sample Compound Figure

A. Subcaption for Part A **B. Subcaption for Part B**



Source: BTS. Source: BTS.

Regarding the styling of figure captions, subcaptions, source lines, notes, and more, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A).

5.1.3. Attribution

Providing proper attribution for figures is just as important as citing your sources. Attribution is legally required and gives readers valuable information so they can refer to that source if needed.

The following sections describe when it's necessary to obtain permission to use a figure, how to track permissions, and how to cite figures in your content.

5.1.3.1. Permissions

All nondecorative figures should be tracked in a Permissions Table (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) to establish a record of when and how permissions are received and any conditions of the permissions. This record is helpful to ensure source lines include all the necessary information and to refer to in cases of copyright infringement concerns.

For most figures, providing proper attribution by way of citation is sufficient. For some figures, you may need to contact the publisher or owner to obtain permission to republish the figure. Always check the republishing and reprinting rights of the publisher. If you cannot find this information, contact them directly for instruction.

Be careful with images that contain peoples' faces. If your image contains the faces of government employees in a government space, no permissions are required. If the faces are of nongovernmental employees, obtain permission to publish their likeness. If your image was taken in a private, nongovernment space, obtain permission from all parties whose likeness is shown.

For public figures (well-known actors, athletes, politicians, etc.) the right of privacy is somewhat diminished. While they still have some right to privacy, a claim that someone has violated their rights is somewhat harder to prove because they have placed themselves in the public eye.

5.1.3.2. Figure Source Lines

All figures should have a source line crediting the individual or organization who owns it. As shown in the figures throughout this manual, the source line should appear immediately after the figure image.

In most cases, the source line only needs to include the name of the person or organization who owns it and (if known) the year it was originally published. If, however, the figure's owner requires different information be included as a condition of permission, ensure the source line matches their request. The Permissions Table (template available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) is a great place to track such requests.

Regarding the styling of source lines, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A). Note that, regardless of the number of sources a figure may have, the word "Source:" remains singular. Align the source line flush with the left of the of the figure image.

A source line must be provided even for figures owned by BTS. If the figure has been previously published the source line should read as follows:

Source: BTS [Year].

If the figure was originally created for the publication you're working on, the source line should read as follows:

Source: BTS.

Source lines are required for BTS-owned figures primarily for consistency. Additionally, providing a source line allows readers to confidently use and cite BTS-owned figures in their own work, which is important as all government-owned figures are open source.

5.1.4. Images

Images should be a minimum of 300 dpi. If laying out the file in a design software like InDesign, be sure to store all the original image files and provide them to your designer to help facilitate the layout stage of the production process.

Note that, if nongovernment employees are identifiable in images, you may need to either edit them out, blur their face, or get their permission to use their likeness.

As the government cannot endorse any specific brands or products, avoid using images that show specific brands. If a brand name is visible, blur or edit it out.

5.1.5. Graphs and Charts

This section summarizes recommended uses for common types of graphics as well as formatting guidance. For information on color usage and accessibility refer to Table 4 and Table 5 in Section 5.1.6. Colors and Patterns.

Graphs are useful for showing the relationship between two or more factors. Table 3 summarizes the purpose of common types of graphs and charts.

Table 3. Graphs and Charts by Purpose

Graph/chart type	Purpose
Bar graph	Shows the relationship between categories on the same scale.
Bar graph, stacked	Compares total and subtotal values across categories for different variables.
Line graph	Displays change over time as a series of data points connected by a line.
Map	Shows information relative to a geographical region.
Pie chart	Illustrates parts or percentages of a whole.
Scatter plot	Displays what happens to one variable when another variable is changed.

Many of these visualizations use color to convey meaning. Refer to Section 5.1.1. BTS Figure Style and Accessibility and Section 5.1.6. Colors and Patterns for guidance on how to ensure more than one visual cue is provided to interpret each of your figures.

The following is an overview of general figure formatting guidance:

- Axes must be labeled.
- Figures cannot rely on color alone to convey meaning; labels and/or patterns should be used to provide a second visual cue (refer to Section 5.1.1. BTS Figure Style and Accessibility for guidance).
- Any text in figures must be large enough to be readable (minimum 8-pt font). Any BTS-made figures should use Arial typeface for text.

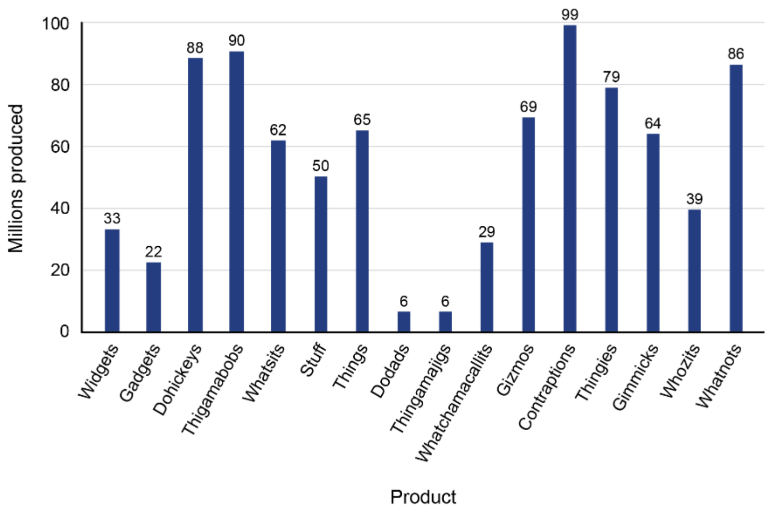
The following sections provide examples and additional guidance on common types of graphs and charts.

5.1.5.1. Bar Graphs

Bar graphs are a common visualization used in BTS content. In these visualizations, all axes must be labeled and (if applicable) show units. If bars are color-coded, a secondary visual cue must be added, such as labels and/or patterns. If patterns are provided and labels are not, the figure must also have a legend, which should be placed above the chart area of the figure. Figure 12 and Figure 13 illustrate sample bar graphs and provide recommendations for when these visualizations are most appropriate and how to make them accessible.

Figure 12. Sample Bar Graphs

A. Poor Presentation of a Bar Graph

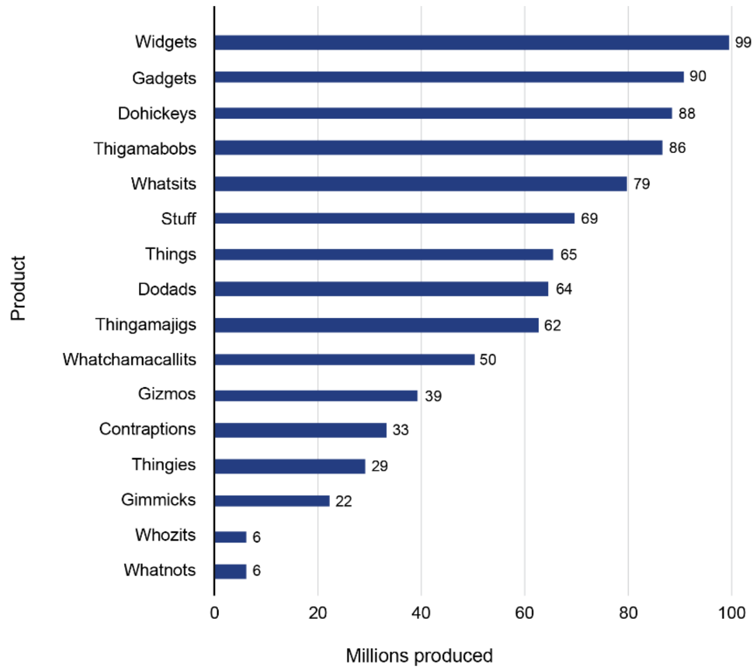


✕ Don't

This bar chart is okay, but the chart lacks organization, and the *x*-axis labels are quite long and angled, making them a bit more difficult to read.

Source: BTS.

B. Better Presentation of a Bar Graph

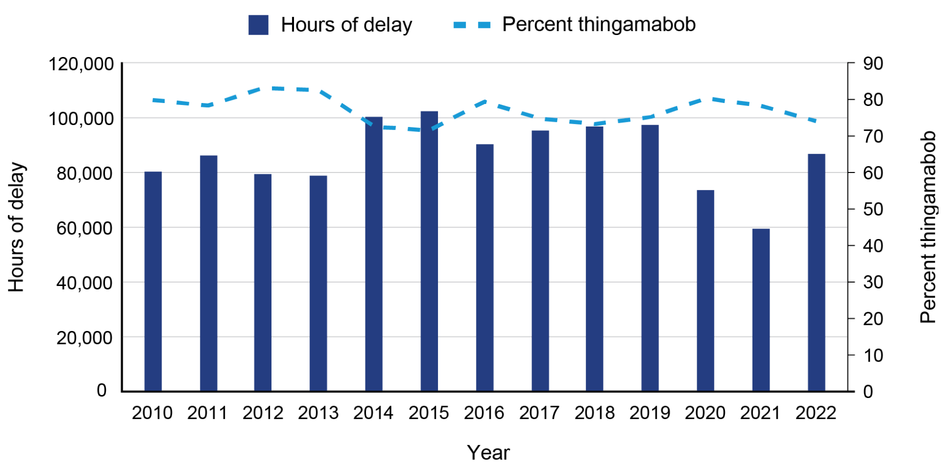


Source: BTS.

✓ Do

Consider flipping the chart on its side to allow for easier reading of longer labels and organizing the data bars from longest to shortest, which will help the reader understand the graph quickly. If necessary, highlight the most important bar to help the reader understand the data at a glance.

Figure 13. Two-Axis Bar Graph



Source: BTS.

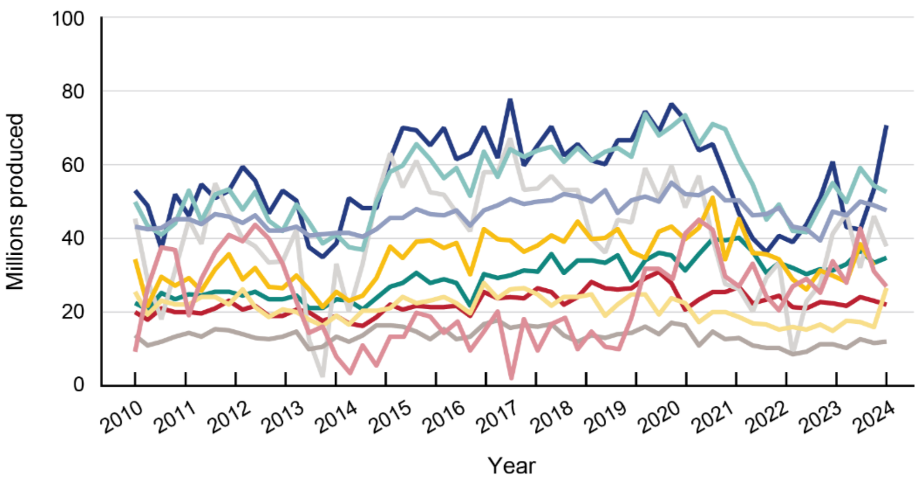
✓ Do

For a two-axis chart, be sure to label each axis clearly, including adding additional hash or tick marks to accommodate a different numbering pattern. Be sure to include a legend for each axis placed above the figure.

5.1.5.2. *Line Graphs*

Line graphs are helpful visualizations for illustrating trends over time. They are most helpful when showing a limited number of datasets; when too many lines are overlapping (also known as line spaghetti), the figure becomes hard to read, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Sample Inaccessible Line Graph



✕ Don't

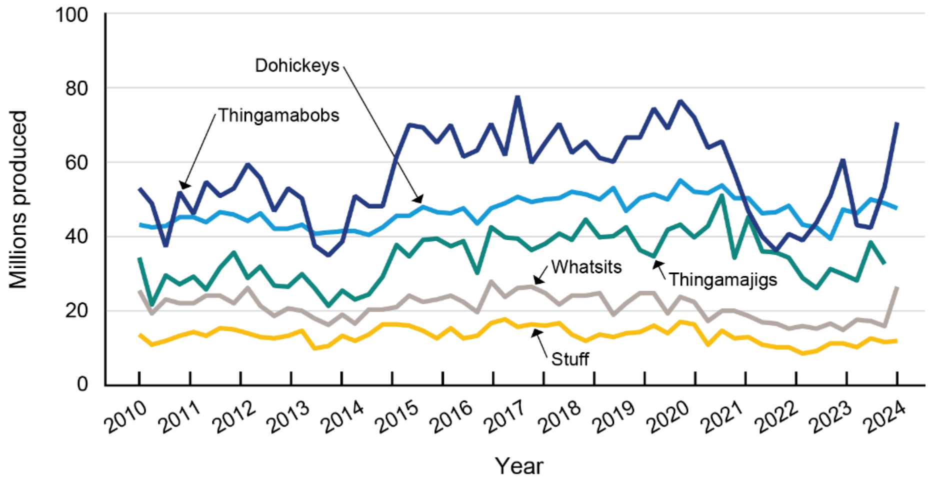
Each line in this line chart is a solid color, which means this chart relies on color only to differentiate data and thus is not accessible. Further, this chart has too many lines, which can make it difficult to read and decipher.

Source: BTS.

Figure 15 illustrates accessible line graphs. These graphs are not too cluttered, don't rely on color alone to convey meaning (i.e., each line is uniquely labeled), and have labels for all axes.

Figure 15. Sample Accessible Line Graphs

A. Group 1

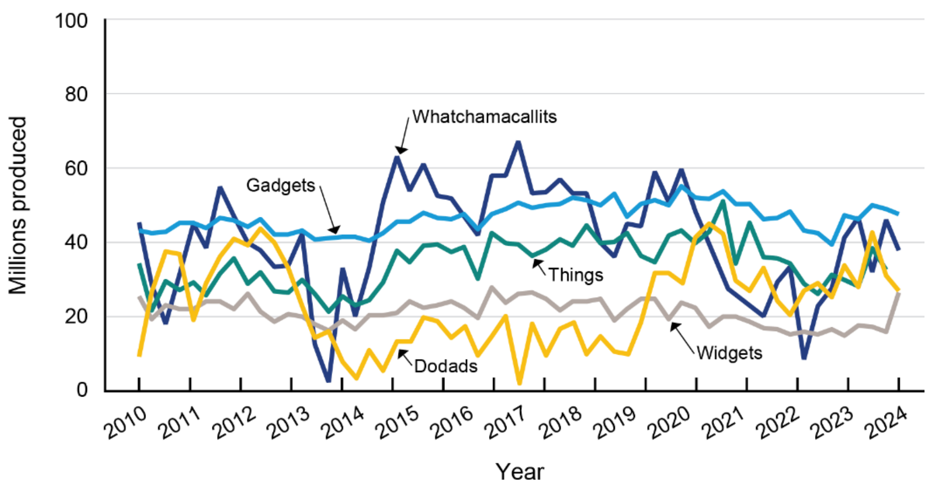


✓ Do

For charts that create line spaghetti (too many overlapping lines), separate the lines into multiple charts so each line can be individually labeled and more easily tracked across axes.

Source: BTS.

B. Group 2



Source: BTS.

5.1.5.3. Maps

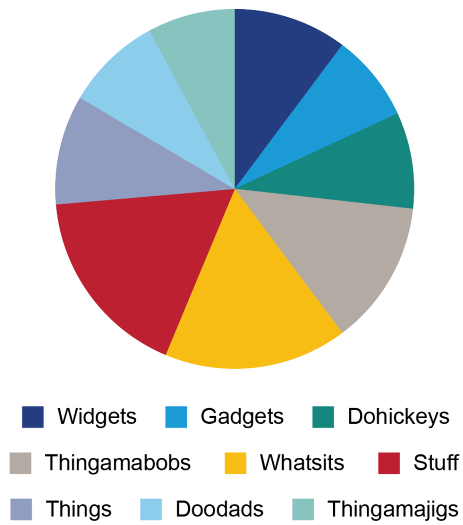
Please refer to the *BTS Cartography Guide* (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) for in-depth guidance on creating strong and accessible maps.

5.1.5.4. Pie Charts

Pie charts are ideal for illustrating proportions of a whole. Like line graphs, pie charts are more helpful when illustrating a limited number of datasets. Figure 16 provides four sample pie charts: one that's not accessible, one that is accessible but doesn't have the best presentation, another one that's a great example of a pie chart, and another that's an alternative presentation to consider when you have more than six pie slices.

Figure 16. Sample Pie Charts

A. Sample Inaccessible Pie Chart

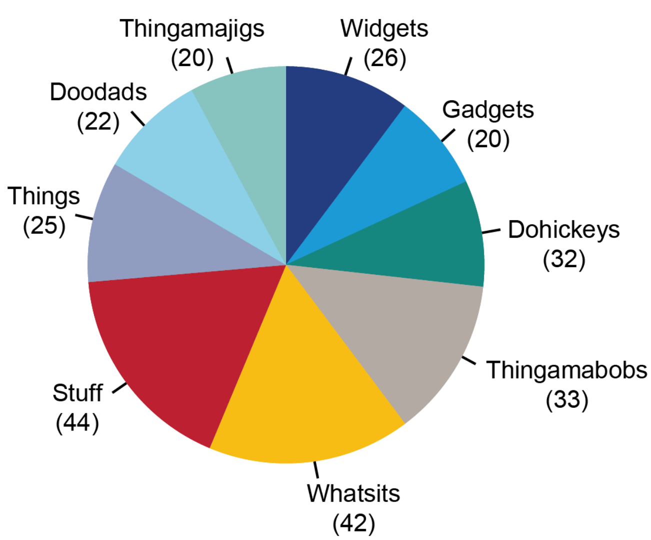


Source: BTS.

✕ Don't

First, there are far too many pie slices for each slice not to be individually labeled. This approach would require the reader to take extra time to map the legend entries to the pie chart. Second, this pie chart not compliant with Section 508 as it uses color-only indicators for each slice.

B. Sample Accessible Pie Chart, But Still Not the Best Presentation

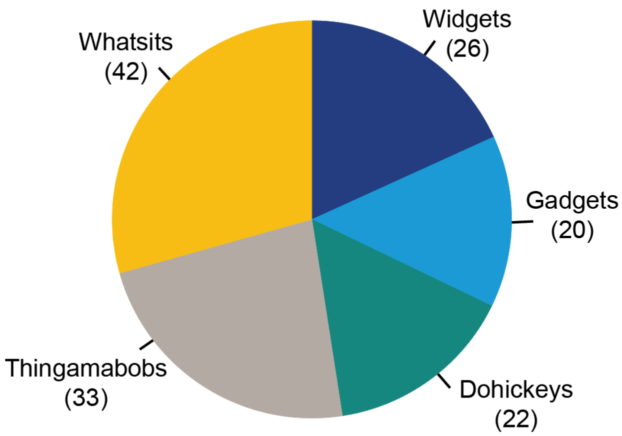


Source: BTS.

✕ Don't

While this pie chart is compliant with Section 508 as each slice is individually labeled, a pie chart likely isn't the best presentation of these data. Reserve the use of pie charts for charts with five or fewer data points.

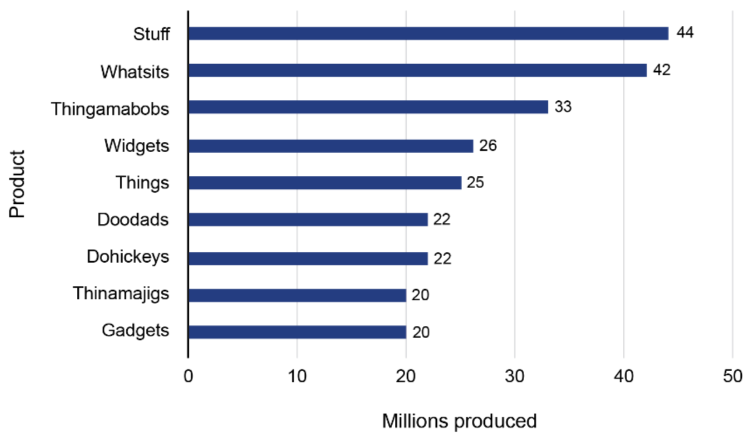
C. Sample Pie Chart That's Easy to Understand



Source: BTS.

Pie charts work best with five or fewer slices. Clear and direct labeling for each slice is key as humans don't have the best judgement of size differences when it comes to slices. For example, 26 Widgets looks very similar to 20 Gadgets.

D. Alternative to Pie Chart With Too Many Slices



Source: BTS.

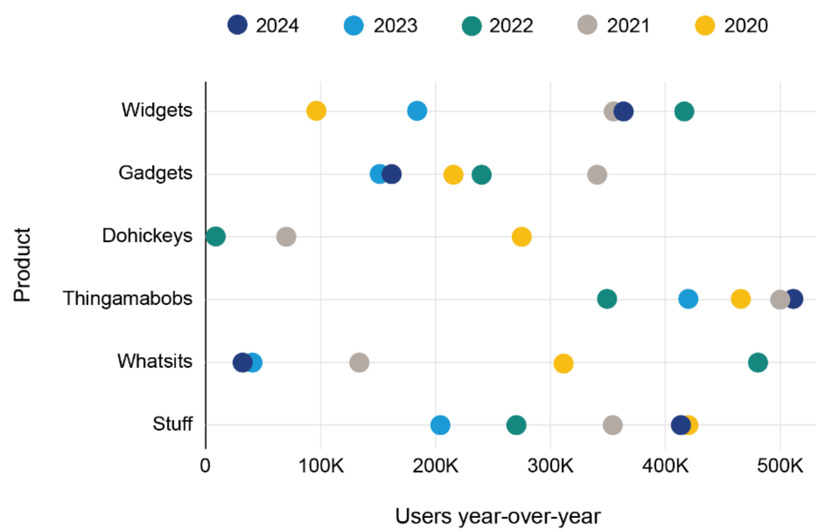
If you have more than five data points, consider using a bar chart instead of a pie chart. This presentation better visually demonstrates the differences in data points and is thus easier to comprehend.

5.1.5.5. Scatter Plots

Scatterplots illustrate the relationship between numeric variables. If more than one dataset is being plotted, the points for each dataset must be a distinct shape to ensure accessibility. Figure 17 provides two sample scatter plots, one that is not accessible and another that is.

Figure 17. Sample Scatter Plots

A. Sample Inaccessible Scatter Plot

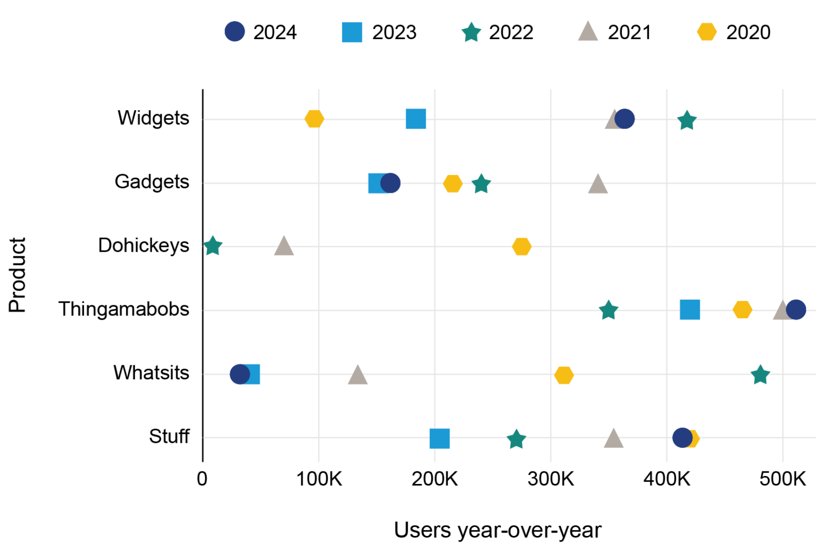


✕ Don't

This scatter plot relies on color alone to distinguish the different years, making this chart inaccessible and not compliant with Section 508.

Source: BTS.

B. Sample Accessible Scatter Plot



✓ Do

This scatter plot uses color and shape to distinguish the different years. Not only does this approach ensure the chart is accessible and compliant with Section 508, but it also makes it easier and quicker to understand for all readers.

Source: BTS.

5.1.6. Colors and Patterns

Graphs, charts, iconography, and so on should be developed using BTS' brand colors (described in Section 2.2. BTS Color Palette). Table 4 summarizes BTS' palette and accessible color pairings within the palette.

Table 4. BTS Color Palette and Accessible Pairings

BTS Brand Color: Hex Code	Normal Text AA Compliant With White	Large Text* AA Compliant With White	Normal Text AA Compliant With Black	Large Text* AA Compliant With Black	Accessible Pairing Colors: Text and Background	Accessible Pairing Colors: Graphical Objects
Dark Blue: #003087	Yes	Yes	No	No	• **Yellow:** #F7BE00 • **Light Blue:** #009ADE (large text only)* • **Gray:** #B2A8A2	• **Yellow:** #F7BE00 • **Light Blue:** #009ADE • **Gray:** #B2A8A2
Light Blue: #009ADE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	• **Dark Blue:** #003087 (large text only)*	• **Dark Blue:** #003087
Green: #00857D	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	• None	• None
Gray: #B2A8A2	No	No	Yes	Yes	• **Dark Blue:** #003087	• **Dark Blue:** #003087
Yellow: #F7BE00	No	No	Yes	Yes	• **Dark Blue:** #003087 • **Red:** #BA0C2F (large text only)*	• **Dark Blue:** #003087 • **Red:** #BA0C2F
Red: #BA0C2F	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	• **Yellow:** #F7BE00 (large text only)*	• **Yellow:** #F7BE00

*Large text is defined as 14 point (typically 18.66px) and bold or larger or 18 point (typically 24px) or larger.

When using these colors in your data visualizations, incorporate them in the following order:

1. Dark blue
2. Light blue
3. Green
4. Gray
5. Yellow
6. Red

If your visualization needs more than six colors, cycle back through this list decreasing the saturation by 40 percent (refer to Figure 2).

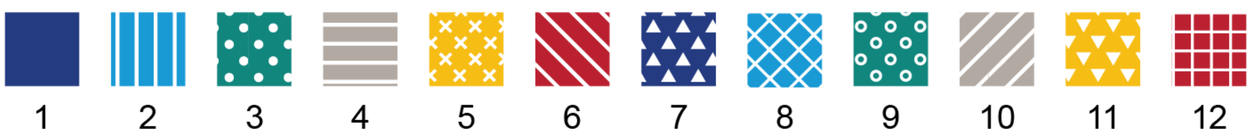
Table 5 provides tips for ensuring accessibility with a limited color palette.

Table 5. Tips for Ensuring Accessibility With a Limited Palette

Issue	Solution
Figure or legend currently **relies on color**	**Label:** Labeling each element (e.g., the bars of a bar graph or wedges of a pie chart) avoids the need for a legend. Labels are often the clearest means of ensuring interpretability. **Pattern:** Applying patterns is a great alternative to labeling when adding labels would clutter the figure. Ensuring each color is associated with a unique pattern (and defined in a legend) gives readers a secondary means of visually interpreting the figure.
Graphic element has **insufficient contrast** with background	**Outline:** For certain graphic presentations of data (e.g., bar graphs, pie charts), applying a thin outline to the data being represented ensures contrast with the background. For instance, most BTS brand colors do not have sufficient contrast with white. Applying a thin black outline to the bars of a bar graph would ensure the data stand out against the page.
Graphic element has **insufficient contrast** with an adjacent element	**Outline:** Applying a thin outline to the data being represented ensures visual separation between adjacent elements. **Saturation:** Using different shades of the same color is another approach to ensuring visual contrast. To test, try viewing the graphic in grayscale.

If you must use pattern as a secondary visual cue, incorporate them in the order shown in Figure 18. These pattern swatches are available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A).

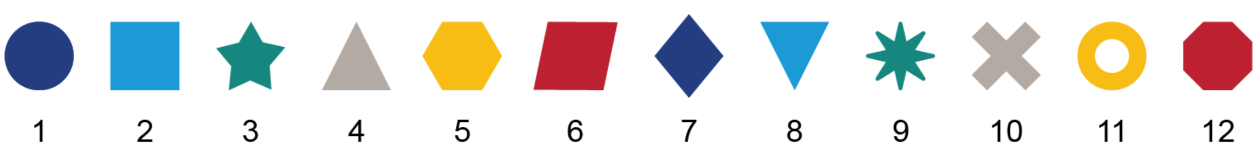
Figure 18. BTS Pattern Swatches



Source: BTS.

If your visualizations require symbols, incorporate them in the order shown in Figure 19. These symbols are available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A).

Figure 19. BTS Symbols



Source: BTS.

5.2. EQUATIONS

For detailed information on the formatting and presentation of equations, refer to Section 8. Numbers and Math.

5.3. ALTERNATIVE TEXT CAPTIONS

All figures (from images to graphs) that are used to convey meaning and all display equations require alternative text captions (more commonly referred to as alt text), which a screen reader will read when it reaches an image. Good alt text provides low-vision users with comparable information to what sighted users learn from looking at a figure.

Draft alt text using the Metadata and Alt Text template (available on the BTS Style Hub; Appendix A). These captions should be applied to each image during the remediation stage, or if laying out the document in a program like InDesign, the captions should be applied to each image at the end of the layout stage.

The following is guidance for producing accessible alt text:

- Ensure the alt text conveys the key point of the figure.
- Keep alt text brief and to the point; exclude extraneous details.
- Define all acronyms or abbreviations upon first use in each alt text caption.
- Don’t refer to color or pattern (these indicators do not help blind or low-vision users).
- Don’t include symbols (e.g., “2 + 2 = 4” should be written “2 plus 2 equals 4” or “5%” as “5 percent”).

5.4. TABLES

BTS publications generally include two types of tables: textual tables (i.e., tables that present text as data) and numeric tables (i.e., tables that present numbers as data). The following guidance applies regardless of table type:

- All text within a table, including the column headers, should be in sentence case.
- All columns must have headings.
- If a table spans multiple pages, the header row must repeat at the top of each page.
- No rows or cells can be blank.
- Rows shouldn’t break across pages.
- Rows shouldn’t have subordinate rows.
- There must be a relationship between the contents of each row.
- Merged cells should be avoided to the extent possible.
- Font size should be no smaller than 8 point.
- If the first column contains information that serves as a header for each row, the first column should have a light gray fill (hex #DBDBDB).
- Tables should span the width of the page or column unless the table has little information and this presentation makes it difficult to read the table.
- Tables should only have horizontal borders separating each row.

Note that tables should *never* be used as a formatting mechanism. Accessibility tools like screen readers cannot easily navigate tables used for design purposes, making the content inaccessible to readers using those tools.

Regarding the styling of table captions, column headers, table text and data, source lines, notes, and more, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

5.4.1. Table Captions and In-Text Callouts

All tables must have descriptive captions (sometimes referred to as “titles”) placed above the table. All captions should be cross-referenced so that the corresponding in-text callouts can be inserted as active jump links. Note that table captions should be title case (refer to Section 4.2. Capitalization) and should not have a terminal period. Tables should appear as near to their callouts as possible.

Number table captions sequentially (e.g., Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, and so on). If your content uses complex page numbering (e.g., includes the chapter or section number in the page-numbering scheme), tables can follow the same numbering scheme (e.g., for tables appearing in chapter 1, they may be numbered as Table 1-1, Table 1-2, Table 1-3, and so on).

In-text callouts should be inserted as jump links (also known as cross-references). Callouts should include the label and number of the relevant table (e.g., “Table 1”). The label “Table” should be capitalized. To learn how to insert cross-references and jump links, check out the resources available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A).

5.4.2. Attribution

If your content includes tables from other sources or tables that use data from other sources, you must provide the source below the table.

In most cases, the source line only needs to include the name of the person or organization who owns the table or data and (if known) the year it was originally published. If, however, the table/data’s owner requires different information be included as a condition of permission, ensure the source line matches their request. The Permissions Table (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) is a great place to track such requests.

Regarding the styling of source lines, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A). Note that, regardless of the number of sources a table may have, the word “Source:” remains singular.

5.4.3. Textual Tables

Table 6 is an example of an ideal textual table. Each column has a heading, all headings appear at the top of the table, each cell is filled in, and no cells are merged.

Table 6. Sample Table—Port Throughput Measures

Element/metric	Description
Annual total tonnage	Domestic, foreign, import, export, and total short tons, current year and percentage change from previous year
Annual container throughput	Inbound loaded, outbound loaded, empty, and total TEU, current year and percentage change from previous year
Annual vessel calls by vessel type	Current year and percentage change from previous year
Top 5 commodities	Total short tons current year and percentage share of total
Average container vessel dwell time	Within port terminal boundaries limited to terminals servicing container vessels
Average RO/RO vessel dwell time	Within port terminal boundaries limited to terminals servicing RO/RO vessels

TEU = twenty-foot equivalent unit; RO/RO = roll-on/roll-off.

5.4.4. Numeric Tables

Numeric tables have the following slight formatting differences from textual tables:

- Textual data should be left aligned.
- Numeric data should be aligned to the decimal place.
- Data with a value below 1 must use a cipher—a fancy word for the zero before the decimal point (e.g., 0.24).

Table 8 is an example of a numeric table.

Table 7. Sample Table—Transit Vehicles and Ridership in Revenue Years 2000, 2010, and 2018–2020.

Transit type or ridership	Transit vehicles	2000	2010	2018	2019	2020
Transit: rail	Heavy rail cars	10,311	11,510	10,763	11,198	11,064
	Commuter rail cars and locomotives	5,497	6,768	7,023	7,144	7,524
	Light rail cars	1,306	2,096	2,729	2,811	2,799
	Total rail vehicles	17,114	20,374	20,515	21,153	21,387
Transit: nonrail	Motor bus	59,230	63,679	63,284	64,000	63,830
	Demand response	22,087	33,555	33,253	34,613	34,561
	Ferry boat	98	134	171	183	204
	Total nonrail vehicles	89,022	115,300	114,340	116,428	116,227
Transit: station	Rail stations	2,595	3,124	3,448	3,632	3,665
Ridership: unlinked passenger trips (billions)	Rail transit UPT	2.95	3.92	4.18	4.24	2.12
	Nonrail transit UPT	5.00	5.38	4.78	4.72	3.30
	Total unlinked passenger trips	7.95	9.30	8.96	8.96	5.42

UPT = unlinked passenger trips.

5.5. FIGURE AND TABLE NOTES

BTS uses three primary types of notes. These notes should appear beneath the figure or table in the following order (note that source lines should always appear first):

1. **Textual notes**—Textual notes should begin with “Note:” and include descriptive text in complete sentences. No matter how many notes are provided, the word “Note:” should remain singular. Refer to the following example:

   Note: These data have been gathered based on questionnaires from 32 participants. Data from question 17 were omitted.

2. **Abbreviation-defining notes**—Abbreviation-defining notes should define all abbreviations or acronyms used in the preceding figure or table in order of appearance. The abbreviation/acronym and its definition should be separated by an equal sign (=) with a space on either side. If a figure or table has several abbreviations, definitions should be separated by semicolons. Use lowercase for definitions unless it is or contains a proper noun:

   BTS = Bureau of Transportation Statistics; deg. = degrees; and N/A = not applicable.

3. **Symbol-defining notes**—Symbol-defining notes should define all symbols used in the preceding figure or table in order of appearance. Each definition should appear on a new line, and there should be no space between the symbol and its definition, such as follows:

   *These data have a confidence level under 90 percent.
   —Not applicable.

Regarding the styling of figure and table notes, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

6. Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

The cardinal rule in using abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms is that the approach should be helpful, not cumbersome, for the reader. This section covers proper usage of abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms.

> For brevity, mention of "acronym" herein includes abbreviations and initialisms as well.

6.1. PROPER USAGE

Upon first mention, write out the full definition of the acronym and follow it with the acronym in a parenthetical, such as follows:

> The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) is a federal statistical agency.

From there onward, use the acronym.

If your audience is intimately familiar with the acronym or is more familiar with the acronym than the spelled-out version (e.g., PDF), use the acronym instead.

Abbreviate and capitalize company ("Co."), corporation ("Corp."), incorporated ("Inc."), limited ("Ltd."), and brothers ("Bros.") when used after the name of a corporate entity.

The abbreviation "mph" is acceptable in all references for miles per hour. The abbreviation "mpg" is acceptable in all references for miles per gallon.

To the extent possible, avoid using a bunch of acronyms in a single sentence or paragraph.

For an exhaustive list of abbreviations, refer to Sections 9-1 through 9-64 in the *GPO Style Manual*.

6.2. LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, AND INITIALISMS

In addition to spelling out acronyms in text, consider including a List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms, especially if your intended audience is a group of mixed readers with varying knowledge of the subject matter (e.g., Congress).

Lists of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms are also helpful to avoid readers having to find and flip back and forth to the original definition of the acronym.

If including a List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms, organize items in alphabetical order, only capitalize definitions that are proper nouns, and use the singular form of the acronym unless the acronym is never used in the singular:

Incorrect:	CMSs	content management systems
Correct:	CMS	content management system

6.3. DEGREES, STATE ABBREVIATIONS, AND MONTHS

When a degree or certification is shown after a person's name, it should be offset with commas:

> The report was prepared by Christopher Smith, Ph.D.
>
> Jane Jones, Esq., has joined the board of directors.

Take care when degrees and certifications are added to names on the About This Report page of in the Acknowledgment section if you choose to include one. If a degree or certification cannot be verified for all contributors, then advanced degrees should be omitted for all.

A first mention of a person with doctoral or medical degree should include the proper abbreviation after the name. In subsequent references to that person, their name can be preceded by "Dr.":

> **First Mention:** Anthony Fauci, M.D.
>
> **Second Mention:** Dr. Fauci

Abbreviate junior ("Jr.") or senior ("Sr.") after a name; use a comma between the name and the abbreviation (e.g., Harry Connick, Jr.).

When standing alone, spell out state names in body text:

> **Incorrect:** The team considered the MD interstate system.
>
> **Correct:** The team reviewed data from Texas, Alaska, and California.

Use postal abbreviations for states when preceded by a city. Separate with semicolons when a series of cities and states are listed in text:

> **Incorrect:** New York, New York, La Plata, Maryland, Washington, District of Columbia
>
> **Correct:** New York, NY; La Plata, MD; Washington, DC

Always spell out the name of months (January, February, March, etc.) when used in text. If used in footnotes, tables, or other areas where space is limited and brevity is necessary, you can abbreviate months with five or more letters (Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.); however, always spell out months with 4 or fewer letters (May, June, and July).

7. Symbols

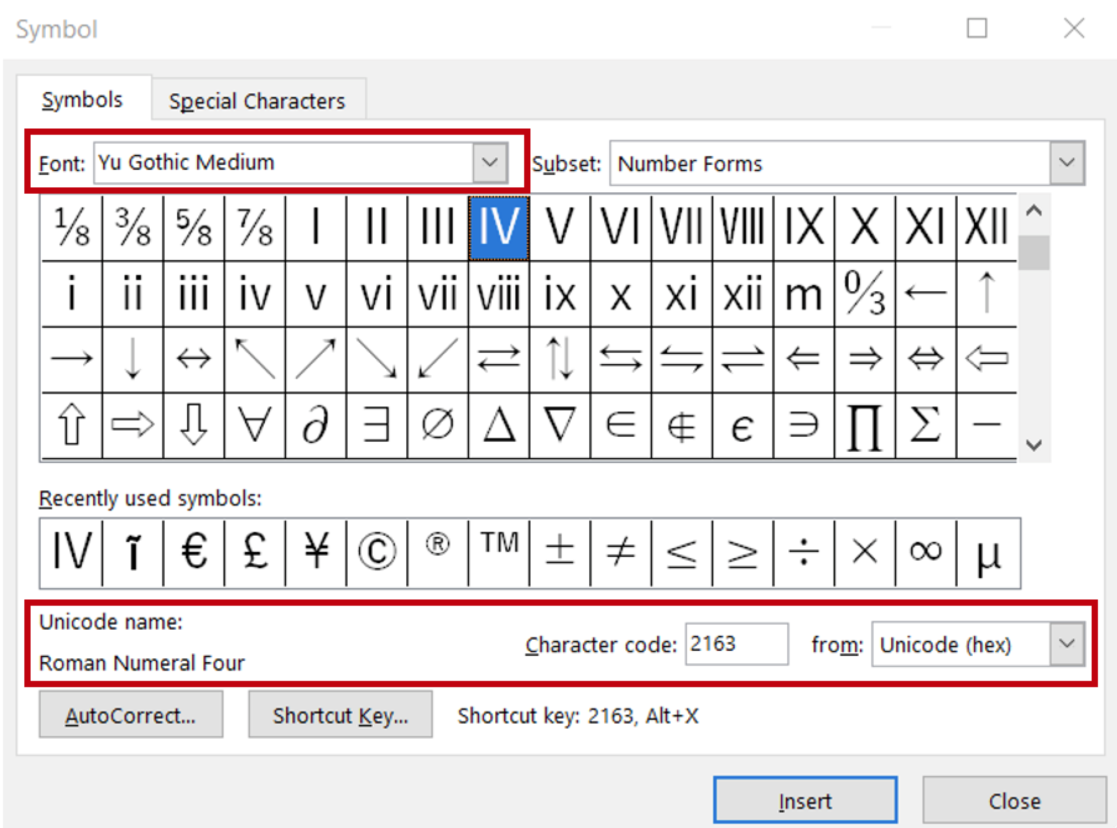
When publishing on the web, avoid the use of symbols for screen-reader accessibility. When symbols are necessary, use Unicode characters.

When symbols appear with a value, they should not be separated by a space unless they are part of an equation (refer to Section 8.4.2. Equations for additional guidance).

Not all screen readers can read Unicodes, but to give users using these types of assistive technologies the greatest chance of understanding your content, you must insert symbols as Unicodes. Symbols include things like Roman numerals, Greek letters, degree symbols, multiplication signs, and other mathematical symbols. As a general rule of thumb, if the symbol cannot be found on a basic keyboard, it likely needs to be inserted as a Unicode.

You can confirm you are using a Unicode by opening the Symbol window and selecting the relevant symbol. If the symbol is a Unicode, a Unicode name and number will be displayed, such as illustrated in Figure 20.

Figure 20. How to Confirm If a Symbol Is a Unicode



Source: BTS.

As illustrated in Figure 20, Roman numeral four (Ⅳ) has a Unicode name of “Roman Numeral Four” and an assigned Character Code of 2163.

BTS’ main typeface, Arial, does not support Unicodes. Instead, use the typeface Yu Gothic Medium. The following examples use Yu Gothic Medium for the Roman numeral four Unicode and the degree Fahrenheit Unicode:

> Issue Ⅳ of the newsletter will be released next quarter.

> Temperatures rose by 3.2℉ each hour.

When using Unicodes in the Yu Gothic Medium typeface, you may need to adjust the font size and/or character positioning (in the Advanced tab of the Font dialogue box) to get a seamless look with the Arial body text.

8. Numbers and Math

This section covers when to write out numbers or use numerals, rounding conventions, and formatting numbers and equations.

8.1. WHEN TO USE NUMBERS OR SPELL OUT

For an exhaustive set of rules governing the use of numbers with examples, refer to Section 12 of the *GPO Style Manual*.

8.1.1. Numerals

8.1.1.1. Numbers Expressed in Figures

A figure is used for a single number of 10 or more except for the first word of a sentence:

Incorrect: 14 cars jumped the rails.

Correct: Inspectors evaluated 50 of the bridges.

Correct: Thirty-four of the rest stops were at capacity.

8.1.1.2. Numbers and Numbers in a Series

When 2 or more numbers appear in a sentence and 1 of them is 10 or larger, use figures for each number:

Incorrect: The researchers triaged four of the 78 surveys received.

Correct: Of the 15 cargo ships (9 breakbulk and 6 tanker), 3 were flagged as foreign.

Correct: Petroleum came from nine fields, of which eight were discovered in 1956.

Never begin a sentence with a figure, except for sentences that begin with a year:

Incorrect: 76 members attended the annual meeting.

Correct: Two hundred vehicles were destroyed.

Correct: 1966 was a seminal year for transportation.

Use roman numerals for wars and to show sequences for people (e.g., World War Ⅱ, Elizabeth Ⅱ). Note that Roman numerals must be inserted as Unicodes; refer to Section 7. Symbols for more information.

For ordinal numbers (numbers that indicate position), spell out “first” through “ninth” and use figures for 10th and above. Some ordinal numbers, such as those indicating political or geographic order, should use figures in all cases (e.g., 3rd District Court, 9th ward). Do not superscript ordinal numbers:

Incorrect: She came in 1^{st} place.

Correct: She came in 1st place.

8.1.1.3. Ages

For ages, always use figures. If the age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it should be hyphenated. Don’t use apostrophes when describing an age range. The following are several examples:

He is a 21-year-old driver.

The average railcar is 21 years old.

The girl, 8, has a brother, 11.

The survey was administered to 18-year-olds.

She is in her 40s.

8.1.1.4. Dimensions

When writing about height, weight, or other dimensions, use figures and spell out words like “inches,” “feet,” “miles,” and so forth:

She is 5-foot-3.

He wrote with a 2-inch pencil.

Note that the word “inches” should never be abbreviated.

8.1.1.5. Money

When referring to money, use numerals. For amounts of $1 million or more, spell out the words “million,” “billion,” “trillion,” and so forth:

$26.52

$100,200

$8 million

8.2. ROUNDING

Round units consistently throughout your content. For example, you may choose to round all units to the nearest tenth.

An exception to this rule would be when rounding might create identical figures that would confuse the meaning of the data. For example, rounding 1.22 and 1.24 to the nearest tenth would create identical figures (1.2). If the purpose of showing these two figures is to illustrate their differences, rounding to 1.2 would defeat that purpose.

8.3. UNITS

Units should be abbreviated only when they appear with a numeric value. BTS abbreviates units as shown in Table 9. Note that no unit abbreviation uses periods.

Table 8. Unit Abbreviations

Unit	Abbreviation
Centimeter(s)	cm
Day(s)	—
Degree(s)	° (Unicode 00B0)
Degrees Celsius	℃ (Unicode 2103)
Degrees Fahrenheit	℉ (Unicode 2109)
Foot/feet	ft
Hour(s)	hr
Inch(es)	—
Kelvin	K
Kilometer(s)	km
Kilometers per hour	kph
Meter(s)	m
Mile(s)	mi
Miles per hour	mph
Minute(s)	min
Month(s)	mo
Second(s)	s
Week(s)	wk
Year(s)	yr

—Unit should never be abbreviated.

8.4. FORMATTING MATH

The *GPO Style Manual* doesn't contain guidance for formatting math. As such, BTS defers to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the gist of which is covered in the following sections.

8.4.1. Variables

Variables should always be italicized. If using characters that are not part of the English alphabet to represent variables, ensure they are Unicodes (refer to Section 7. Symbols for more information).

Any characters that are neither part of the English alphabet nor Unicode symbols must be inserted as images and have alternative text captions applied, such as follows:

> This variable, f_{adj}^{i}, is an image with alt text applied.

To avoid confusion, a variable should have one unique definition. In math-heavy documents, it may be helpful to include a List of Symbols in the backmatter.

Each variable should be defined upon first use. If the first appearance of a variable is in the body text, define it as you would an acronym:

> Infrared thermography uses cameras to measure the infrared radiation (*Q*) emitted by a structure, which is related to its surface temperature in Fahrenheit (*T*).

If the first appearance of a variable is in an equation, follow the equation with a "where" statement that defines all variables newly introduced in that equation, such as follows:

> Where:
>
> - *Q* = infrared radiation
> - *T* = surface temperature in Fahrenheit

Note that variables are italicized, there is a space on either side of the equal sign (=), and the definition is not capitalized (unless a proper noun is used).

8.4.2. Equations

Insert display equations using Word's Equation tool to ensure proper formatting of math.
A display equation is an equation or math that appears on its own line (i.e., not within a paragraph) and is sequentially numbered, such as follows:

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \tag{1}$$

$$(x + a)^n = \sum_{k=0}^{n} \binom{n}{k} x^k a^{n-k} \tag{2}$$

There are two important formatting principles for equations and math:

- All variables should be italic (Word's Equation tool generally follows this rule).
- All operators should have a space on either side (Word's Equation tool automatically applies this formatting).

Once the display equation is formatted correctly, copy and paste it into your document as a picture (enhanced metafile) or jpeg and apply alt text. In content that will be published online (excluding spreadsheets), equations must be pasted in as images with alt text captions applied.

Math that appears in text should be manually typed and include the use of Unicodes as appropriate for special symbols (+, −, ×, ÷, ±, ≤, ≥, etc.). If your math is more advanced (e.g., $\hat{x}$, $\bar{y}$, f_{adj}^{i}) use Word's Equation tool to display it as intended and then copy and paste the math as a picture and apply alt text (refer to the previous parenthetical for examples).

Define all variables upon first mention. If the first mention is within a display equation, present variable definitions in a where statement. For more information on how to present variables and where statements, refer to Section 8.4.1. Variables.

Number equations sequentially (e.g., 1, 2, 3, and so on). If your content uses complex page numbering (e.g., includes the chapter or section number in the page-numbering scheme), equations can follow the same numbering scheme (e.g., for equations appearing in chapter 1, they may be numbered as 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, and so on).

Equations don't need to be inserted as cross-references nor do their in-text callouts need to be inserted as cross-references. When calling out an equation in your text, follow the same approach as used for figures and tables: include the label and number of the relevant equation (e.g., "Equation 1"). The label "Equation" should be capitalized.

9. Punctuation

Punctuation provides vital clues for reader understanding. It's governed by well-documented rules. For example, every English sentence requires end punctuation. Within those rules are stylistic choices, some of which are covered in this section.

For an exhaustive tutorial with examples on the proper and preferred use of punctuation, refer to Section 8 of the *GPO Style Manual*.

9.1. SERIAL COMMA

BTS uses the serial comma (commonly known as the Oxford comma), in which a comma precedes the conjunction "and" in a list of three or more items:

> **Incorrect:** Android, iOS and Windows
>
> **Correct:** Android, iOS, and Windows

9.2. SPACES

Use only one space after periods, question marks, and colons—and no spaces around dashes.

9.3. LISTS

Introduce bulleted and numbered lists with a complete sentence before the colon (:).

For bulleted or numbered lists, don't use a period at the end of each list item if the list is made up of single words or short phrases (e.g., an inventory or shopping list). If the list is made up of longer phrases, full sentences, or a full paragraph, use concluding punctuation for each list item.

Do not punctuate bulleted or numbered lists with semicolons and "; and" at the end of the penultimate list item.

The following are two examples of properly punctuated lists:

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday

- Avoid contact with harsh chemicals.
- Always wear protective eye equipment.
- Always work in a well-ventilated environment.

9.4. PARENTHETICALS AND BRACKETS

Parentheticals are used for many purposes, such as presenting examples or further information. Never use a single parenthesis, unless necessitated for mathematical purposes.

If you need to present a parenthetical within a parenthetical (i.e., a nested parenthetical), use brackets for the secondary parenthetical:

> The sequence included two participants (participant A [PA] and participant B [PB]) and two scenarios (scenario 1 [S1] and scenario 2 [S2]).

Brackets also have many purposes, such as presenting in-text reference callouts or within a quote to show text added to the original quote. Like parentheses, never use a single bracket, unless necessitated for mathematical purposes.

Part 3.
Document Production

10. Organization

BTS reports vary by size, format, and function. The needs of the intended audience(s) will dictate the form these elements will take. Each element has a specific purpose or function, playing an important role in the transmission of information. This section outlines the structure and organization of BTS reports (this structure does not apply to short documents like brochures, factsheets, and summaries).

Table 10 contains the traditional BTS report structure.

Table 9. BTS Report Structure and Organization

Section	Element	Pagination details
Frontmatter	Cover	• Unnumbered
	About This Report	• Roman numeral page i
	Information Service, Statement, and Notice	• Roman numeral page ii
	Acknowledgments*	• Roman numeral page iii
	Table of Contents	• Next available Roman numeral
	List of Figures*	• Next available Roman numeral
	List of Tables*	• Next available Roman numeral
Body	Foreword, Preface, Introduction	• Arabic page 1
	Chapters/Sections	• Next available Arabic numeral
Backmatter	References	• Next available Arabic numeral • References can also appear at the end of each chapter rather than in the backmatter
	Appendixes*	• Next available Arabic numeral
	Glossary*	• Next available Arabic numeral
	Index*	• Next available Arabic numeral
	List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms*	• Next available Arabic numeral
	List of Symbols*	• Next available Arabic numeral

*Optional section.
Note: When laying out special reports, designers may add a Title Page after the cover if wanted. If you choose to do so, place a blank page between the cover and Title Page.

10.1. FRONTMATTER

“Frontmatter” refers to the sections that precede your main content, and these sections are paginated using lowercase Roman numerals starting with the letter i (i.e., 1). Frontmatter sections must appear in the following order (an asterisk [*] indicates an optional section):

1. About This Report
2. Information Service, Statement, and Notice
3. Acknowledgements*
4. Table of Contents
5. List of Figures*
6. List of Tables*

10.1.1. About This Report Page

The About This Report Page is required for all BTS reports and must remain a single page. The information presented on this page should be separated into three sections. The first section, entitled “About the Bureau of Transportation,” details the following information about BTS:

> **Leadership**
> Director First Name Last Name, *Director, Office of Director*
> Deputy Director First Name Last Name, *Deputy Director, Office of Director*
>
> **Publication Management Official**
> First Name Last Name, *Position, Office*

The second section, entitled “About This Report,” details the contributors of the report:

> **Project Manager(s)**
> First Name Last Name, Position, Office
>
> **Major Contributor(s)**
> First Name Last Name, First Name Last Name, and First Name Last Name
>
> **Editor(s)**
> First Name Last Name, First Name Last Name, and First Name Last Name
>
> **Visual Information Specialist(s)**
> First Name Last Name, First Name Last Name, and First Name Last Name
>
> **Other Contributor(s)**
> First Name Last Name, First Name Last Name, and First Name Last Name

The third and last section details the following information about the report:

- Report DOI
- Publication Date
- Title
- Performing Organization (i.e., the contractor(s) or others who performed the work necessary to produce the report)
- Key Words
- Abstract
- Recommended Citation

If any items within these sections are not applicable to your report, insert “N/A.”

If wanted, contributors belonging to the performing organization can be denoted with an asterisk after their name and after the “Performing Organization” heading.

Also, if wanted, you may include peoples’ degrees and certifications; however, take care to be consistent—if an advanced degree is listed for one individual, it must be included for all. If you cannot verify a person’s degrees or credentials, they should be omitted for all.

Concluding the About This Report page is the recommended citation. While NTL provides detailed guidance on recommended citation format by publication type, the following is general guidance:

> United States Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics. *Title in Italics and Proper Title Case*. Washington, DC: YYYY. https://doi.org/10.21949/NNNNNNN.

DOIs are provided by NTL staff. Contact their Data Curation/Data Management Team to request a DOI.

Refer to the About This Report page of this style manual as a reference for completing this page for your report.

10.1.2. Information Service, Statement, and Notice Page

Begin the Information Service, Statement, and Notice page with the following statement and information:

> All material contained in this report is in the public domain and may be used and reprinted without special permission. Source citation is required.
>
> BTS information service contact information:
>
> **Ask-A-Librarian** http://transportation.libanswers.com/
>
> **Phone** 202-366-DATA (3282)

After this information, you may include the following, which are all optional:

1. Legal notices
2. Credits for book design
3. Illustration or photography credits not noted in the text

Last, at the bottom of the page, place the Quality Assurance Statement and Notice. These important pieces must be written exactly as follows:

> **Quality Assurance Statement**
>
> The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) provides high quality information to serve government, industry, and the public in a manner that promotes public understanding. Standards and policies are used to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of its information. BTS reviews quality issues on a regular basis and adjusts its programs and processes to ensure continuous quality improvement.
>
> **Notice**
>
> This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Transportation in the interest of information exchange. The U.S. Government assumes no liability for its contents or use thereof.

10.1.3. Acknowledgments

An Acknowledgments page, which is optional, is for acknowledging and giving special thanks to outside contributors—not major contributors. Outside contributors, for example, are those that contributed data, helpful resources, insights, and so forth or organizations or agencies that supported the effort but did not majorly contribute to it.

Take care when including peoples' degrees and certifications in the Acknowledgments. If an advanced degree is listed for one individual, it must be included for all. If you cannot verify a person's degrees or credentials, they should be omitted for all.

10.1.4. Table of Contents, List of Figures, and List of Tables

The Table of Contents is the backbone of a report. It outlines the document's body of work by dividing it into chapters, sections, and/or parts. Take care when writing chapter titles—a reader should be able to quickly discern the scope and theme of the document by glancing at the Table of Contents.

The Table of Contents and List of Figures and List of Tables, if including, must be linked for usability and accessibility (i.e., they must be clickable to navigate the document with ease).

For more information on styling the Table of Contents, refer to Section 11.4. Table of Contents Styling.

10.2. MAIN CONTENT

Organize the main content of your document per the requirements of your project or contract.

Heed the following about headings:

- Keep headings brief and descriptive.
- Make sure all headings are unique.
- Limit the number of headings and levels.
- Don't stack headings (i.e., don't immediately following one heading with another heading).
- Don't skip or jump heading levels (i.e., don't jump from heading level 1 to heading level 3).
- Avoid orphaned headings (i.e., if a section has subordinate headings, it must have more than one subordinate heading of the same level).

10.3. BACKMATTER

"Backmatter" refers to the supplemental material that follows the main content. Backmatter should appear in the following order and be paginated consistent with the main content (an asterisk [*] indicates an optional section):

1. References (note that Reference lists can also appear at the end of each chapter rather than in the backmatter)
2. Appendix(es)*

3. Glossary*
4. Index*
5. List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms*
6. List of Symbols*

10.3.1. Appendixes

Appendixes should be lettered, beginning with Appendix A, and appear in alphabetical order.

10.3.2. List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms and List of Symbols

If including, the elements within the List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms and the List of Symbols must be in alphabetical order.

In the List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms, definitions shouldn’t include other abbreviations, acronyms, or initialisms. This same general rule also applies to the List of Symbols; however, if a symbol definition is exceedingly long, you may use another symbol for brevity as long as that symbol is also defined in the List of Symbols.

11. Formatting in Word

The best way to ensure proper formatting is to start drafting in the relevant Word template (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A). Each template has BTS-approved styles and the BTS color palette.

In addition to using the BTS templates for consistent styling, the formatting of each document must be consistent across all BTS products. As such, this section details BTS' formatting requirements and preferences.

11.1. MARGINS

All documents should have 1-inch margins on all sides. Any textual content in the margins (including page numbers) should be set 0.5 inches from the top, bottom, left, or right. This approach ensures content can be easily printed by users if wanted.

11.2. PAGINATION

Pagination is the process of separating and organizing your content across the pages of a document. The pagination of a shorter document, like a brochure or factsheet, requires a different approach than the pagination of a longer document, like a technical or congressional report.

Regarding shorter documents, paginate as necessitated by the genre of document. For example, a brochure doesn't require page numbers across the panels and a one- or two-page factsheet doesn't necessitate page numbers either. However, a small booklet, technical memo, or summary, for example, should include consecutive pagination.

Regarding longer documents, Table 10 in Section 10. Organization outlines BTS' pagination requirements.

When preparing a long document (e.g., 100+ pages) for print publication, BTS recommends laying out the file so that each chapter or major section begins on an odd-numbered page. This approach is conventional for printed content, where chapters begin on a right-hand page. This approach may require you to insert a blank page at the end of a major section so the following section begins on an odd-numbered page. If you choose to employ such an approach, ensure the entire page is blank and does not include a page number.

11.2.1. Roman Numerals

Frontmatter is numbered with lowercase Roman numerals, starting with numeral i (i.e., 1).

11.2.2. Arabic Numerals

After the frontmatter, page numbering restarts with Arabic numeral 1.

For shorter documents, consecutive page numbering is a simple and appropriate approach (e.g., 1, 2, 3, and so on).

For longer documents, you can follow a more advanced convention as long as it follows an intuitive pattern, such as using the chapter number followed by consecutive page numbers (e.g., for Chapter 6, the page numbers would be 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, and so on).

If unsure how to number the pages in your document, check with your Product Manager.

11.3. TEXT STYLING

"Text styling" refers to the visual treatment that makes textual elements, such as headings, body text, vertical lists, captions, and so forth, distinguishable. Typeface, font size, indention, and spacing are all elements that affect text styling.

In general, use 11-point Arial typeface in black for body text.

Regarding the styling of headings and all other text styles, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

Do not use excessive or unnecessary hard or soft returns—these are not accessible or Section 508 compliant. Instead, use proper before and after spacing, nonbreaking spaces, and page or section breaks. To learn how to properly use BTS templates and format your document, seek out the resources available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A).

Always avoid widows (the last line of a paragraph that sits at the top of a page, separated from the rest of the paragraph) and orphans (the first line of a paragraph that sits at the bottom of a page or column, separated from the rest of the paragraph).

11.4. TABLE OF CONTENTS STYLING

The Table of Contents should show three heading levels:

- Chapter/section headings
- Level 1 headings
- Level 2 headings

Frontmatter headings should never appear in the Table of Contents.

For accessibility, all headings in the Table of Contents must be active jump links. Create an autogenerated and linked Table of Contents by using Word's Custom Table of Contents feature located in the References ribbon or just use the preformatted BTS templates for ease (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

Regarding the styling of the Table of Contents, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

11.5. HYPERLINKS

For accessibility, linked text must be descriptive. For example, the sentence "Click here for more information" is ambiguous; a more specific sentence like "Refer to WCAG Success Criterion 2.4.4 for more information on link purpose," tells users where the link leads.

BTS reserves underlining for hyperlinks only. *No other content should be underlined.* "Hyperlinks" includes URLs, email addresses, and jump links. Cross-references to figures and tables are exempt.

Regarding the styling of hyperlinks, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

To help readers better navigate your document, you can insert chapter or section headings as cross-references (i.e., jump links), which will take the reader directly to the relevant section. Jump links to other chapters or sections should be formatted as hyperlinks, such as done for the reference to Appendix A in the preceding paragraph and this paragraph. To learn how to insert cross-references and jump links, check out the resources available on the BTS Style Hub (refer to Appendix A).

11.6. LISTS

Lists serve several purposes:

- They can break up the monotony of text-heavy narrative.
- They can bring order to run-on sentences that make multiple points or that comprise many items.
- They can indicate order or importance.

All list items should be parallel in structure. For instance, when listing activities, start all list items with verbs or verb phrases. Additionally, use either full sentences or fragments, never a mixture of both.

11.6.1. Vertical Lists

BTS has two established styles for vertical lists: bulleted and numbered. Most of the time, a vertical list should be bulleted. Use numbered lists when order matters or for easy reference when you need to refer to a specific list item.

All vertical lists should be introduced by a complete introductory sentence.

Use a period at the end of a list items if they're full sentences or longer phrases or fragments. Don't use a period at the end of list items if they're a single word or short phrases. Punctuation must be consistent within each list.

Regarding the styling of vertical lists, refer to and use the preset styles in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

11.6.2. Run-In Lists

Most run-in lists comprise a series of terms separated by commas. BTS uses the serial comma (commonly known as the Oxford comma), in which a comma precedes the conjunction “and” (e.g., “red, white, and blue”).

Use semicolons instead of commas to separate list items that are complete sentences and/or contain an additional in-line list separated by commas:

> Reptiles, amphibians, and predatory mammals swallow their prey whole or in large pieces, bones included; waterfowl habitually take shellfish entire; and gallinaceous birds are provided with gizzards that grind up the hardest seeds.

If your run-in list is complex and lengthy, consider reformatting as a vertical list.

Avoid numbering run-in lists. If numbering is essential, the numbers should be offset in parentheses; don’t separate a number from its list item with a period or a single parenthesis:

> **Incorrect:** The team conducted three analyses: 1) cost–benefit, 2) regression, and 3) causal.

> **Incorrect:** The team conducted three analyses: 1. cost–benefit, 2. regression, and 3. causal.

> **Correct:** The team conducted three analyses: (1) cost–benefit, (2) regression, and (3) causal.

11.7. FOOTNOTES

Footnotes should be reserved for asides or additional information not wholly necessary to include in the body. Style footnotes using the preset style in the BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) and insert a tab between the footnote number and text, as done in this example.[1]

Number footnotes sequentially throughout the document. For longer documents, if desired, you can reset footnote numbering per chapter or major section.

For documents that use a two-column layout, footnotes should span both columns.

11.8. REFERENCE LISTS AND IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Clearly citing sources is essential to comply with copyright laws. Descriptive citations are also helpful to readers and respectful to fellow authors. This section outlines how to style references, including Reference lists and in-text citations.

---

[1] This is an example footnote, as discussed in Section 11.7. Footnotes. Make sure to insert a tab between the footnote number and text for proper formatting and alignment.

11.8.1. Reference Styling

When referring to the titles of full works (e.g., books, journals, reports, newspapers), use italics. When referring to the titles of short works (e.g., articles, chapters), use quotes:

> The *Transportation Statistics Annual Report* is an annual publication produced by BTS.
>
> The article "Using Full-Scale Observations on Footbridges to Estimate the Parameters Governing Human–Structure Interaction," published in the *Journal of Bridge Engineering*, is trending.

11.8.2. Reference Lists

Reference lists should be placed at the end of a document, chapter, or section. Any work referred to in content *must* be included in the Reference list. Organize the Reference list in alphabetical order.

BTS follows the *Chicago Manual of Style* for formatting references. In general, each citation should appear as follows for print sources:

> [Author's Last Name], [Author's First Name] and [First and Last Names of any Additional Authors]. [Publication Year]. ["Article/Chapter Title"], [*Overall Publication Title*], [Page Range (if applicable)]. [City of Publisher]: [Publisher].

In general, each citation should appear as follows for electronic sources:

> [Author's Last Name], [Author's First Name] and [First and Last Names of any Additional Authors]. [Publication Year]. ["Article/Chapter Title"], [*Overall Publication Title*], [Page Range (if applicable)]. [City of Publisher]: [Publisher]. [URL]. Last accessed [Date of Last Access].

Note that the last name precedes the first name only for the first author. If a work has three or more authors, a comma should separate each full name. If a source has more than five authors, list the first three, then add "et al." to the end of the list. Authors should be noted in the same order as in the cited publication.

If consecutive entries have the same author(s), these entries should be ordered chronologically in ascending order. In such instances, only give the authors' names in the first entry. In subsequent entries, use a three-em dash (——) instead of the names.

For publications that do not specify the publication year, use "n.d." in lieu of the date.

11.8.3. Example Reference Citations

Book Citation With Single Author or Editor

Strayed, Cheryl. 2012. *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Garrett-Petts, W.F., James F. Hoffman, and Ginny Ratsoy, eds. 2014. *Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?: Community Engagement in Small Cities*. Vancouver, BC: New Star Books.

Book Citation With Multiple Authors or Editors

Grazer, Brian, and Charles Fishman. 2015. *A Curious Mind: The Secret to a Bigger Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rezzolla, Luciano, Pierre Pizzochero, David Ian Jones, Nanda Rea, and Isaac Vidaña, eds. 2018. *The Physics and Astrophysics of Neutron Stars*. Switzerland: Springer.

Book Citation With Author and an Editor or Translator

García Márquez, Gabriel. 1988. *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Translated by Edith Grossman. London: Cape.

Chapter Citation

Bureau of Transportation Statistics. 2022. "Chapter 2 Passenger Travel and Equity," *Transportation Statistics Annual Report*, 2-1–2-24. Washington, DC: USDOT.

Journal Citation

Van Nimmen, K., and P. Van den Broeck. 2022. "Using Full-Scale Observations on Footbridges to Estimate the Parameters Governing Human–Structure Interaction," *Journal of Bridge Engineering*, 28, no. 1. Reston, VA: American Society of Civil Engineers. https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)BE.1943-5592.0001975. Last accessed August 31, 2023.

Newspaper Citation

Vargas, Theresa. 2023. "For Disabled D.C. Students, An Uncertain Wait On School Buses Remains," *Washington Post*, August 31, 2023. Washington, DC: Fred Ryan. https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/08/30/school-bus-disabled-students-dc/. Last accessed September 1, 2023.

Magazine Citation

Mass Transit, May/June 2023. Middletown, PA: Endeavor Business Media. https://www.masstransitmag.com/magazine/49499. Last accessed June 29, 2023.

Tuzik, Robert. 203. "How Sound Transit Contorls Train-Borne Noise," *Mass Transit*, May/June 2023. Middletown, PA: Endeavor Business Media. https://www.masstransitmag.com/rail/maintenance/article/53060537/how-sound-transit-controls-trainborne-noise. Last accessed June 13, 2023.

Audiovisual Citation

de Blasio, Bill. "Mayor de Blasio Delivers State of the City Address." NYC Mayor's Office. YouTube video, 1:22:40. https://youtu.be/aZZYIpfZ-iA. Last accessed July 3, 2023.

Legal Citation

Public Law 111-274, Plain Writing Act of 2010. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-111publ274/pdf/PLAW-111publ274.pdf. Last accessed August 31, 2023.

Title 49 U.S.C. § 101, Department of Transportation. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title49/html/USCODE-2011-title49.htm. Last accessed August 31, 2023.

Executive Order Citation

Executive Order No. 14028. 2021. Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/05/12/executive-order-on-improving-the-nations-cybersecurity/. Last accessed August 31, 2023.

Cartography Citation

Collins Geo. 2011. *Access to Water*. Scale 1:100,000,000. In *Atlas of Global Development*, 3rd edition, by The World Bank, 110–111. Glasgow: HarperCollins.

11.8.4. In-Text Citations

Each reference in a Reference list should have at least one corresponding in-text citation. Present in-text citations within brackets in author–date format as follows:

Single author: [Smith 2023]

Two or three authors: [Smith, Jones, Davis 2023]

Four or more authors: [Smith et al. 2023]

If you mention the authors directly in the text, only include the year in brackets immediately following their mention:

> **Incorrect:** According to Lineback and Thompson, business/establishment surveys were often distinctively different from demographic surveys because their data [Lineback, Thompson 2010].

> **Correct:** According to Lineback and Thompson [2010], business/establishment surveys were often distinctively different from demographic surveys because their data.

Note that there is never comma before the publication year. In-text citations should appear at the end of the relevant clause or sentence before the end punctuation:

> **Incorrect:** New passenger car sales in the U.S. declined from 5.3 million to 3.4 million vehicles. [BTS 2023]

> **Correct:** New passenger car sales in the U.S. declined from 5.3 million to 3.4 million vehicles [BTS 2023].

12. Layout

During the layout stage of BTS' production process, the designer flows content from a Word file into a design program, such as InDesign. However, not all documents will need to be laid out by a designer prior to publication. Some documents will simply be converted from a Word file to a PDF. Regardless of the layout process needed for your document, this section covers when it is appropriate to proceed to the layout stage and the requirements for producing a BTS-compliant layout.

12.1. WHEN TO ENTER INTO LAYOUT

A document is ready to go into layout only when the draft content has been completely finalized and approved. A document has been finalized when the following are true:

- Paragraph and character styles are correctly applied in the Word file to facilitate a smooth layout process.
- The textual content is complete and approved by the necessary parties. In other words, no further revisions are needed.
- Any figures (including images and graphics) have been approved by the necessary parties and are not expected to be removed or replaced.
- All graphics that convey information (e.g., graphs, maps) have been reviewed for accessibility and meet Section 508 standards.
- Permissions to use any figures that are not BTS- or government-owned have been obtained and the associated Permissions Table (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) is complete.
- Alternate text captions are complete, have been reviewed for accessibility, and approved by the necessary parties.

12.2. LAYOUT FORMATTING

It is best practice for the designer to use a BTS-approved template. In the event a template is not available, the designer must abide by the styling and branding noted in this style manual and do their best to apply similar styles as available in approved BTS templates (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A).

Part 4.
Web Production

13. Choosing the Right Platform

When preparing content for online publication, content owners must first decide which BTS web platform will host the content. This decision must be made in conjunction with the respective BTS Product Manager and the BTS Statistical Program Coordination Director. This section outlines and describes these various platforms to help you identify and choose the right one for creating and/or hosting your content.

> All datasets, regardless of the platform selected, must also be added to the Information Gallery on www.bts.gov. Refer to Section 13.2 Drupal Information Gallery for more information.

13.1. PLATFORMS AND CRITERIA

13.1.1. www.bts.gov (Drupal)

The flagship BTS website (www.bts.gov) uses the Drupal platform. This platform is the USDOT default web platform managed by the Office of Chief Information Officer, and its content types and formatting options are locked down. It features the simplest content management system (CMS) of BTS platforms and offers basic pages (the “article” content type) and PDF hosting (the “document” content type) as well as complex pages with datasets and embedded off-platform visualizations (the “advanced article” content type). The Drupal CMS also allows the ability to embed Excel spreadsheets (the “simple dataset” content type), data.bts.gov data tables and visualizations (the “medium dataset” content type), and explore.dot.gov visualizations and their supporting data (the “complex dataset” content type).

13.1.2. transtats.bts.gov (No CMS)

The Transtats platform (transtats.bts.gov) is almost exclusively used for the release of aviation dataset updates for public download. When publishing new content, be aware that Transtats is not user-friendly for the BTS audience and offers no CMS for BTS content creators.

13.1.3. data.bts.gov (Tyler/Socrata)

The Tyler platform (data.bts.gov), also known as Socrata, can host BTS datasets and easy-to-create visualizations using said datasets. It also allows the public to manipulate data, create and share their own visualizations inside the platform, and connect to BTS datasets via oData. Additionally, Tyler also offers the “Socrata story” page type where BTS content can be arranged on a visually pleasing page with images and visualizations embedded with greater flexibility than on www.bts.gov.

13.1.4. explore.dot.gov (Tableau)

The explore.dot.gov platform, also known as Tableau, is a tool for creating individual visualizations and dashboards with multiple visualizations. The tool allows for simple or complex visualizations that can be embedded into pages on other online BTS platforms. Note that this platform has a steep learning curve.

13.1.5. geodata.bts.gov (ArcGIS/Esri)

The geodata.bts.gov platform uses the ArcGIS/Esri CMS exclusively to manage the publication of geocoded data as well as maps using said data. Anyone seeking access to this platform must contact the BTS Office of Spatial Analysis and Visualization.

13.1.6. maps.dot.gov (ArcGIS/Esri)

The maps.dot.gov platform is another platform for geocoded data visualizations that also uses the ArcGIS/Esri CMS.

13.1.6.1. Story Maps

Story maps are a special content type within Esri that allow creative pages featuring geocoded content. Consult the BTS Office of Spatial Analysis and Visualization for more information.

13.2. DRUPAL INFORMATION GALLERY

The Information Gallery is a special page on the BTS Drupal platform that is intended to be a one-stop-shop where the public can access a catalog of all publicly accessible BTS datasets. As noted previously, regardless of what platform is hosting them, all datasets and their published visualizations should be added to the Information Gallery via creation of a simple, medium, or complex dataset.

14. Web Styles and Formatting

This section details the proper styling and formatting of web content under the BTS banner. For all pages and platforms, consult the BTS color palette (Figure 1 and Figure 2) for approved color combinations.

For all platforms discussed in this section, readers benefit when offered opportunities for further exploration of your topic. To that end, when appropriate, add calls-to-action that encourage your audience to click for more content. Consult the BTS Web Coordinator for suggestions.

For all platforms, when adding images, you are required by law and common courtesy to add descriptive alt text. Further, BTS must have permission or license to use any image posted on a BTS site. Refer to Section 5.2. Alternative Text Captions and Section 5.1.2. Attribution, respectively, for more information.

14.1. WWW.BTS.GOV

The BTS Drupal CMS has limited formatting options and requires following a specific set a guidelines and rules for creating, formatting, and posting content. Consult the BTS Drupal Guide (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) for such guidance.

All BTS Drupal pages offer the opportunity to include tags and related articles, which invites users to access content related to your page. To help users and to drive up engagement, you should add tags and related content to the page. If you are not familiar with what related content is available, please work with your office director. Consult the BTS Drupal Guide (available on the BTS Style Hub; refer to Appendix A) for tagging guidance.

14.1.1. Data Spotlights

Data spotlights are a special content series hosted on www.bts.gov that leverage the front-page real estate of the website to demonstrate the value-add of BTS. Spotlights should have a focused topic and should use 3–5 visualizations connected by a textual narrative of 500 or fewer words with a particular news hook or some other angle that connects with the interests of BTS audiences. The content should provide an in-depth look at a single topic and link to several different BTS information sources to allow users to pursue deeper exploration of that topic.

14.1.2. PDFs

To avoid redundancy, do not use the “document” content type for PDFs that are already published or soon to be published in the NTL catalog; documents residing in the NTL can be linked to other content pages without duplicating file storage.

At its simplest, the “document” content type provides the document title, a link to the PDF, and a statement of the document’s compliance with accessibility regulations. However, to improve the user experience of the BTS audience, adding a summary of what the reader will find in the document is advised.

14.2. DATA.BTS.GOV

Datasets on the Tyler/Socrata platform don't provide formatting options.

Socrata stories offer a variety of page layouts. Any typeface choices available should approximate Open Sans as closely as possible for cross-platform consistency. Headings and other special text should use the platform's defaults wherever available.

Avoid lengthy blocks of uninterrupted text.

For multipage Socrata stories, the first page should offer readers an index or table of contents to aid navigation. Additionally, ensure that readers have clear and adequate navigation options at the bottom of each subsequent page, including a return to the first page.

For Socrata "measures," in addition to adhering to the BTS color palette and accessibility guidelines, ensure that color choices are consistent with reader expectations (e.g., an indicator showing fuel prices should not use green to indicate an increase in prices at the pump).

14.3. EXPLORE.DOT.GOV

The Tableau platform has fewer defaults than Tyler/Socrata and Drupal. For Tableau visualizations, use typefaces as close as possible to Open Sans (e.g., Tableau Book). Line colors should adhere to both the BTS color palette and accessibility guidelines.

Tableau allows for the creation of simple visualizations as well as highly complex visualizations. When working with the platform, a bias toward simplicity is encouraged as crowding and cluttering of information will muddle the story the visualization conveys to the reader. When trying to visualize data to convey multiple story lines, consider using multiple visualizations.

The most common problem with Tableau visualizations and dashboards is excessive complexity. Ensure the effect of filters and sorting options are clear to the user and that visualizations use fonts large enough to tell their story clearly and legibly.

14.4. MAPS.DOT.GOV AND GEODATA.BTS.GOV

Whenever possible, use typefaces that approximate Open Sans and adhere to the BTS color palette and accessibility guidelines.

14.4.1. Story Maps in ESRI

The Esri story map tool is a powerful way to use a single page to take a user through a series of maps and visualizations. However, before pursuing this rarely used route, consider whether a Socrata story, which is much simpler, will achieve the same effect.

15. Production to Publication

This section outlines the production-to-publication process for web content as well as post-publication activities.

15.1. PRODUCTION-TO-PUBLICATION PROCESS

When web content is ready, use the following process for gaining the necessary approvals before posting:

1. Send to the BTS Supervisor/Product Manager for review/revision.
2. Send to the Director of Statistical Program Coordination for review/revision.
3. As needed, send to the Deputy Director for review/revision.
4. As needed, send to the Director for final approval.

15.2. POST-PUBLICATION EXPORTS

15.2.1. PDFs and Considerations

Whether the web product created must also be archived as a PDF (e.g., for transmittal to Congress or for NTL) is a decision to be made in conjunction with the BTS Product Manager, NTL, and the Deputy Director.

Note that producing a PDF "printout" of a web page can create a host of accessibility challenges because of the way a browser might arrange content blocks and the reading order of complicated pages. If pursuing this method, you'll need to ensure the PDF is remediated for accessibility.

15.2.2. NTL Entry

DOIs are provided by NTL staff. Contact their Data Curation/Data Management Team to request a DOI.

Appendix A. BTS Style Hub

The BTS Style Hub is a repository of templates and helpful resources for use by BTS staff and contractors creating content for BTS. This repository, which is maintained by BTS, contains resources like this style manual and other helpful guides; a plethora of templates, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, InDesign, and more; helpful checklists for authors, editors, and designers; informational resources on topics like accessibility; logos and other graphic files; and more.

Visit the BTS Style Hub to access these resources!

Note that the BTS Style Hub is only available to those who have access to the USDOT network. To access these resources without USDOT network access, contact your COR for assistance.

Appendix B. Legal Requirements

SECTION 508 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. The law (Title 29 U.S.C. § 794 (d)) applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. Under Section 508, agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information comparable to the access available to others who are not disabled.

In general, detailed descriptions of data charts, graphics, or images need to be included in each document so users with visual challenges can understand the document's content.

PLAIN WRITING ACT OF 2010

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires Federal agencies' publications to be written in plain language. The act's purpose is to "improve the effectiveness and accountability of Federal agencies to the public by promoting clear Government communication that the public can understand and use."

The act defines plain language as writing that is "clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience."

To ensure clear and accessible content, the act provides the following guidelines:

- Use short sentences.
- Use short paragraphs.
- Use everyday words.
- Avoid technical jargon; if you must use it, explain it in everyday words.

List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

BTS	Bureau of Transportation Statistics
CMS	content management system
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
GPO	Government Publishing Office
NTL	National Transportation Library
OST	Office of the Secretary
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation