Presenting Data in Tables

- Tables are the most effective way to present data for reference purposes.
- A table should always be given a meaningful, self-explanatory title.
- Each part of a table should be labeled clearly and abbreviations should be avoided.
- The number of digits and decimal places presented should be consistent and should be the minimum number that is compatible with the purpose of the table.
- It is usually better to convert counts into percentages, unless providing a simple frequencies table. More readers will care that 78% of students agreed with a statement rather than 325 students agreed.
- It is always important to include information in a table about the size of the sample from which a percentage is derived.
- A table should be constructed so that it is easy for readers to see differences and trends. If a table is presenting results from two or more different groups, years or survey cycles, it is good to include a column that indicates either the percentage change or the significance of differences observed.

Table 1

Comparison of Course Satisfaction Measures for Course X
2008 vs 2009

Satisfaction Measure	2009	2008
Applicability of Material Covered	88%	86%
Access to Professor	79%	68%
Course Content	72%	67%
Course Organization	56%	53%
Class Size	43%	44%

Improved Version of Table 1

Comparison of Course Satisfaction Measures for Course X
2008 vs 2009
(% "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied")

Satisfaction Measure	2009 (N = 134)	2008 (N = 123)	Difference
Applicability of Material Covered	88%	86%	**2**
Access to Professor	79%	68%	**11**
Course Content	72%	67%	**5**
Course Organization	56%	53%	**3**
Class Size	43%	44%	**-1**

Note: Data taken from 2008 and 2009 end of term course evaluations for Course X

- It is best to present information in an order that makes sense to the reader by sorting from most frequently chosen response or highest score to lowest (see tables above).
- A table should draw attention to the most salient points. Use boldface, italics, borders, and/or colors to draw attention to the most important figures, and put totals in boldface (see tables above).
- Always note the source of data presented in a table (see tables above).

- More complex tables that organize information by more than one level should be constructed to best reflect how data are grouped. It is best to merge cells that apply to more than one column in a table, rather than repeating the grouping information in more than one column. Shading can also provide greater organization and distinction between groups of data (see tables below).

Table 2

2008 vs 2009 Divisional Enrollments by Gender

Academic Division	2009	2009	2008	2008
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Physical Sciences	368	182	355	173
Natural Sciences	658	495	642	505
Humanities	352	435	375	415
Social Sciences	786	962	801	1002
Total	**2164**	**2074**	**2173**	**2095**

Improved Version of Table 2

2008 vs 2009 Divisional Enrollments by Gender

	2009		2008	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Physical Sciences	368	182	355	173
Natural Sciences	658	495	642	505
Humanities	352	435	375	415
Social Sciences	786	962	801	1002
Total	**2164**	**2074**	**2173**	**2095**