Aesthetic and Informational Visuals in Professional Writing

The primary purpose of **aesthetic visuals** is to contribute to the overall "look" and tone that a document intends to express for its intended audience.

The primary purpose of **informational visuals** is to express some aspect of a document's essential information for the document's intended audience in a more accessible and usable fashion than text alone would allow. While the terms graph and chart are often used interchangeably, **chart** is the broader term, while **graph** refers specifically to informational visuals that plot information on an x- and y-axis (at least).

Visual	Rhetorical Purpose
Icons and symbols	Very simplified forms of what they represent. Icons tend to resemble what they represent. (Terms often used interchangeably)
Table	Facilitates access to dense textual information (like this!)
Simple line graph	Illustrates a trend over time
Multiline graph	Same as above, but enables comparison of multiple trends
Band graph	A shaded version of a line graph, usually done with multiple bands, to further enable comparison
Bar graph	Displays a trend or theme
Multiple bar graph	Same as above, but enables comparison of multiple trends
Deviation bar graph	A bar graph that also allows for the display of negative values
Pie chart	Shows distribution of a whole, allowing comparison of the different slices
Gantt chart	Depicts how component parts of a concept, idea, or process relate to each other. Especially useful for scheduling and project management.
Pictogram	A version of a bar chart that uses icons, symbols, and other graphic elements to depict the information it represents
Tree chart	Illustrates organizational relationships (typically ins some hierarchical fashion)
Flow chart	Illustrates the order of steps in the completion of a process

Illustration	Provides a visual of what something looks like, displayed at some greater level of simplicity than a photograph allows
Photograph	Provides a visual of what something looks like in actuality
Diagram	Illustrates a device or part of a device
Exploded diagram	Illustrates a disassembled device to show how components fit together or how it should be assembled
Cutaway diagram	Illustrates what's inside a device, perhaps helping to explain how it functions
Wordless instruction	Illustrates how to complete a procedure without using words
Map	Illustrates positions and locations