

FLOWCHARTS

Flowcharts are often used at workplaces to show the steps that need to be taken, and the order in which they need to be taken, to complete a task or respond to an emergency or other critical situation. Flowcharts are also useful for providing a visual description of a process or procedure.



KEY POINTS





Flowcharts:

- are diagrams that represent actions or movements to be taken to complete a process
- are intended to show a complete process “at a glance”
- can help simplify complex procedures into easier-to-follow, step-by-step images
- are usually read left to right and top to bottom

Common features of flowcharts are:

- titles to indicate what process is being described
- short, concise text
- abbreviations to save space
- standardized symbols that represent different actions or steps in a process

Common flowchart symbols:

Symbol	Name	What it means
	Start/Stop	A circle, oval or rounded rectangle starts or ends the process.
	Step/Task	A rectangle means a step in the process or a task. Slanted rectangles usually mean sub-steps or sub-processes.
	Process Direction	Arrows and lines indicate the order of the steps.
	Decision Point	A diamond shape means that you need to make a choice or decision.



STEPS

1. Check the title to make sure the flowchart refers to the process you need to understand.
2. Look for the start (often at the top of the page). If formal symbols are being used the start will be shown as a circle, oval or rounded rectangle.
3. Scan the flowchart for steps that you must complete and for what comes before and after your responsibilities.
4. Follow the process.

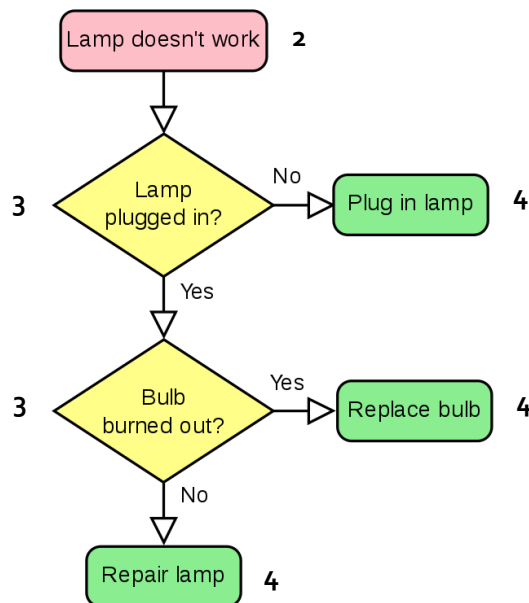


EXAMPLES

The flowchart below contains a number of the common elements of a flowchart.

1. There is a title - Desk Lamp Repair Procedure
2. The start of the process is described in a rounded rectangle shape. In the case of this flowchart, the first step is only taken, if the lamp doesn't work.
3. There are 2 decision points, shown in diamond shapes. In the first, the user needs to decide if the lamp is plugged in in the second, if the bulb is burned out.
4. There are 3 possible ends to the flowchart and each is shown as a rounded rectangle. If the lamp is not plugged in and it works once it is, the process ends. If the bulb is burned out and it the lamp works after the bulb is replaced, the process ends. If the lamp does not work after being plugged in and having the bulb changed, the process ends with the instruction to get the lamp repaired.

1 Desk Lamp Repair Procedure



Think you understand how to read flowcharts?

Try it yourself on the next page.

USING THE SKILL



In the Workplace: Flowcharts can help workers to follow processes and make important decisions, so that they are more effective, efficient, and safe, on the job.

QUESTIONS

Test your understanding of how to read flowcharts by locating the answers to the following questions in the flowchart on the next page.

1. What title would you give to this flowchart?
2. What is the process being described by this flowchart?
3. What symbol should be used with the text "*Owner hires design professional (DP) to modify a building*"?
4. What happens if the application is incomplete?
5. Who performs the inspection?
6. What should the DP do if the work does not pass inspection?
7. What symbol should be used with the text "*Work passes inspection*"?



REFLECTION

How do you use flowcharts at work? When do you use them?

