




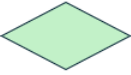

4.3: Basic Flowchart Symbols

Flowchart Symbols

One reason why flowcharts are so popular is because they use standardized shapes that almost anyone can instantly recognize.

Here are the five most common shapes used in a flowchart.

- **Oval** (Terminal symbol)
- **Rectangle** (Process symbol)
- **Arrow** (Arrow Symbol)
- **Diamond** (Decision symbol)
- **Parallelogram** (Input/Output symbol)

Symbol	Name	Function
	Oval	Represents the start or end of a process
	Rectangle	Denotes a process or operation step
	Arrow	Indicates the flow between steps
	Diamond	Signifies a point requiring a yes/no
	Parallelogram	Used for input or output operations

List of flowchart symbols and their meanings

Every shape found in a flowchart has a use case (it's not just a design preference!)

In this section, I'll first name the shape, show it to you, and then describe its function.

1. Oval/Pill (Terminal symbol)



The oval shape, also known as the terminal symbol, is as an elongated circle or an ellipse.

Its function is to provide a visual reference of the start or end of a flowchart.

To make sure readers understand the start and endpoint correctly, you should verbally communicate "Start" and "End".

2. Rectangle (Process symbol)

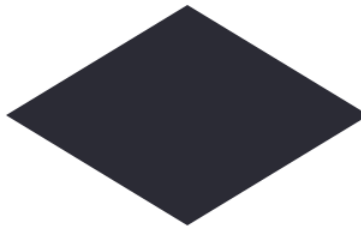


A rectangle is used to highlight each specific task or action within a process.

Also known as the process symbol, the rectangle is fundamental to mapping out the sequence of actions or operations that take place from the start to the end of a process.

By placing tasks within a rectangle, flowcharts make it easy to understand, follow, and analyze individual tasks that contribute to the overall workflow.

3. Diamond (Decision symbol)



A diamond or a rhombus highlights a decision point in a flowchart and hence is also known as the decision symbol.

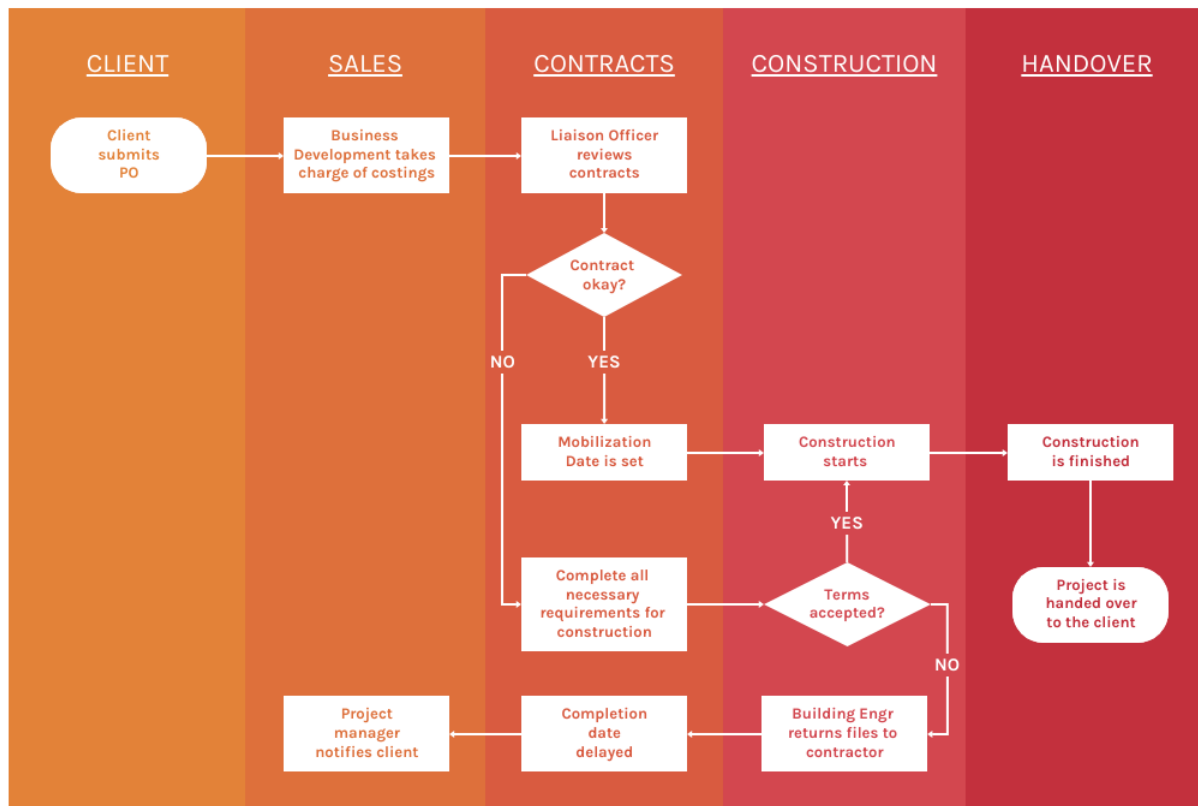
Diamonds are usually present when there is a conditional statement such as a “Yes” or “No” or “True” or “False” question.

As a result, two or more paths always branch out from this symbol.

Here’s a great example:

SWIMLANE ACTIVITY DIAGRAM: Engineering Workflow Distribution 2024

START / END PROCESS DECISION



(opens

in new window)

CREATE THIS TEMPLATE

4. Parallelogram (Input/output symbol)



A parallelogram in flowchart represents both input and output processes within a system.

This means it marks the point in a process where a user has to enter data into a system, such as an online shopper entering their name, address, and payment details, into the system.

But the parallelogram can also refer to a point when system generates data such as an order confirmation number from the example above.

Therefore, it's good practice to indicate whether the process is an input or an output using labels or arrows.

5. Arrow



An arrow usually connects two rectangles, parallelograms or diamond symbols to highlight a sequence flow between the two.

The sole purpose of arrows is to provide visual direction to your flowchart.

Source: Ramuthi, Danesh. "Flowchart Symbols and Meaning: A Complete Guide (2024)." Vengage.com, <https://venngage.com/blog/flowchart-symbols/>. 09/12/2024.

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