

CONTENTS

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION	xv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
The use of tables and graphs to communicate quantitative information is common practice in organizations today, yet few of us have learned the design practices that make them effective. This introductory chapter prepares the way for a journey of discovery that will enable you to become an exception to this unfortunate norm.	
Purpose	8
Scope	9
Intended readers	11
Content preview	11
Communication style	12
2. SIMPLE STATISTICS TO GET YOU STARTED	15
Quantitative information forms the core of what organizations must know to operate effectively. The current emphasis on metrics, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Balanced Scorecards, and performance dashboards demonstrates the importance of numbers to organizations today. Stories contained in numbers can be communicated most effectively when we understand the fundamental characteristics and meanings of simple statistics that are routinely used to make sense of numbers, as well as the fundamental principles of effective communication that apply specifically to quantitative information.	
Quantitative relationships	15
Numbers that summarize	21
Measures of money	35
3. DIFFERING ROLES OF TABLES AND GRAPHS	39
Tables and graphs are the two fundamental vehicles for presenting quantitative information. They have developed over time to the point that we now thoroughly understand which works best for different circumstances and why. This chapter introduces tables and graphs and gives simple guidelines for selecting which to use for your particular purpose.	
Quantities and categories	40
Choosing the best medium of communication	42
Tables defined	43
When to use tables	44
Graphs defined	45
A brief history of graphs	46
When to use graphs	48

4.	FUNDAMENTAL VARIATIONS OF TABLES	53
	Tables should be structured to suit the nature of the information they are meant to display. This chapter breaks tables down into their fundamental variations and provides simple rules of thumb for pairing your message with the best tabular means to communicate it.	
	Relationships in tables	53
	Variations in table design	57
	Table design solutions	59
5.	VISUAL PERCEPTION AND GRAPHICAL COMMUNICATION	61
	Because graphical communication is visual, it must express information in ways that human eyes can perceive and brains can understand. Our eyes and the parts of the brain that handle input from them work in particular ways. Thanks to science, how we see is now fairly well understood, from the initial information-carrying rays of light that enter our eyes to the interpretation of that information in the gray folds of the visual cortex. By understanding visual perception and its application to the graphical communication of quantitative information, you will learn what works, what doesn't, and why. This chapter brings the principles of graphical design for communication alive in ways that are practical and can be applied skillfully to real-world challenges in presenting quantitative information.	
	Mechanics of sight	63
	Attributes of preattentive processing	67
	Applying visual attributes to design	71
	Gestalt principles of visual perception	80
6.	FUNDAMENTAL VARIATIONS OF GRAPHS	87
	Different quantitative relationships require different types of graphs. This chapter explores the fundamental variations of graphs that correspond to different quantitative relationships and then pairs these variations with the visual components and techniques that can present them most effectively.	
	Encoding data in graphs	87
	Relationships in graphs	101
	Graph design solutions	105
	PRACTICE IN SELECTING TABLES AND GRAPHS	137
	Learning requires practice. Through practice you reinforce what you've learned by embedding it more securely in your memory and strengthen your ability to make connections between the concepts we've examined and their application to the real world.	

7. GENERAL DESIGN FOR COMMUNICATION	141
With a basic understanding of visual perception, we can build a set of visual design principles, beginning with those that apply equally to tables and graphs. Our primary visual design objectives will be to present content to readers in a manner that highlights what's important, arranges it for clarity, and leads them through it in the sequence that tells the story best.	
Highlight	141
Organize	144
Integrate tables, graphs, and text	148
8. TABLE DESIGN	155
Once you've determined that a table should be used to communicate your message and have chosen the type of table that will work best, you should refine your design so that it can be quickly and accurately read and understood.	
Structural components of tables	155
Table design best practices	158
PRACTICE IN TABLE DESIGN	185
Nothing helps learning take root like practice. You will strengthen your developing expertise in table design by working through a few real-world scenarios.	
9. GENERAL GRAPH DESIGN	191
The visual nature of graphs requires a number of unique design practices. The volume and complexity of quantitative information that you can communicate with a single graph are astounding but only if you recognize and avoid poor design practices that would undermine your story.	
Maintain visual correspondence to quantity	191
Avoid 3D	197
10. COMPONENT-LEVEL GRAPH DESIGN	205
Several visual and textual components work together in graphs to present quantitative information. If these components are out of balance or misused, the story suffers. For each component to serve its purpose, you must understand its role and the design practices that enable it to fulfill its role effectively.	
Primary data component design	205
Secondary data component design	224
Non-data component design	247

11. DISPLAYING MANY VARIABLES AT ONCE	257
<p>Graphs can be used to tell complex stories. When designed well, graphs can combine a host of data spread across multiple variables to make a complex message accessible. When designed poorly, graphs can bury even a simple message in a cloud of visual confusion. Excellent graph design is much like excellent cooking. With a clear vision of the end result and an intimate knowledge of the ingredients, you can create something that nourishes and inspires.</p>	
Combining multiple units of measure	257
Combining graphs in a series of small multiples	259
Other arrangements of multi-graph series	268
 12. SILLY GRAPHS THAT ARE BEST FORSAKEN	 271
<p>Several graphs that are readily available in software fail miserably at data presentation even though their popularity is growing. The stories that people attempt to tell with these graphs can be told simply and clearly using alternatives that are described in this chapter.</p>	
Donut charts	271
Radar charts	272
Stacked area graphs for combining part-to-whole and time-series relationships	275
Circle charts	277
Unit charts	278
Funnel charts	281
Waterfall charts for simple part-to-whole relationships	283
 PRACTICE IN GRAPH DESIGN	 287
<p>You've come far in your expedition into the world of graph design. It's now time for some practice to pull together and reinforce all that you've learned. Expert graph design requires that you adapt and apply what you've learned to a variety of real-world communication problems. Working through a few scenarios with a clear focus on the principles of effective graph design will strengthen your expertise and your confidence as well.</p>	
 13. TELLING COMPELLING STORIES WITH NUMBERS	 295
<p>Important stories live in the numbers that measure what's going on in the world. Before we can present quantitative information, we must first uncover and understand its stories. Once we know the stories, we can tell them in ways that help others to understand them as well.</p>	
Characteristics of well-told statistical stories	297
Stories in the wings	306

14. THE INTERPLAY OF STANDARDS AND INNOVATION	307
When you design tables and graphs, you face many choices. Of the available alternatives, some are bad, some are good, some are best, and others are simply a matter of preference among equally good choices. By developing and following standards for the visual display of quantitative information, you can eliminate all but good choices once and for all. This dramatically reduces the time it takes to produce tables and graphs as well as the time required by your readers to make good use of them. Doing this will free up time to put your creativity to use where it's most needed.	
APPENDICES	309
Table and Graph Design at a Glance	309
Recommended Reading	311
Adjusting for Inflation	313
Constructing Tables Lens Displays in Excel	315
Constructing Box Plots in Excel	318
Answers to Practice in Selecting Tables and Graphs	322
Answers to Practice in Table Design	325
Answers to Practice in Graph Design	333
Useful Color Palettes	344
INDEX	345