



# Show Me the Numbers: Designing Tables and Graphs to Enlighten

*Stephen Few*

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## **Show Me the Numbers: Designing Tables and Graphs to Enlighten** Stephen Few

Addressing the prevalent issue of poorly designed quantitative information presentations, this accessible, practical, and comprehensive guide teaches how to properly create tables and graphs for effective and efficient communication. The critical numbers that measure the health, identify the opportunities, and forecast the future of organizations are often misrepresented because few people are trained to design accurate, informative materials, but this manual helps put an end to misinformation. This revised edition of the highly successful book includes updated figures and 91 additional pages of content, including new chapters about quantitative narrative and current misuses of graphs—such as donut, circle, unit, and funnel charts—and new appendices that cover constructing table lens displays and box plots in Excel and useful color palettes for presentation materials.

## **Show Me the Numbers: Designing Tables and Graphs to Enlighten Details**

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# From Reader Review Show Me the Numbers: Designing Tables and Graphs to Enlighten for online ebook

## Ariadna73 says

I love this author. He is fantastic writing super-clear books and papers and neatly designed documents. I liked his advice; many of which were about what kinds of charts and graphics are definitely not useful; such as pies and donuts (only good for dessert). I put some of his pages in ariadna73's account in scribbrd.

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## AJ says

Great book. This should be required reading for anybody who has to display information. Would be cool to see a chapter on presenting scientific data specifically.

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## Hilary says

It's all about enabling you to choose the best medium to communicate your message, and learning how to understand the needs of your audience; a weak graphic or table will obfuscate the message whereas a targeted one will immediately drive home your point, without need for detailed explanation. It also helps you understand when to use a graph, and when to use a table. Some of this may be obvious, and some is obvious once pointed out (those "Of course!" moments occurred frequently for me), but it's good to be consciously aware of all of it.

There is plenty of white space deliberately provided for your own notes. It begins with an overview, followed by a simple statistics chapter, useful as a refresher for some or as an introduction for newcomers, explaining concepts, basic use and warnings for various topics (averages, ratios, dealing with currencies, etc.) while demonstrating the best, and most straightforward, ways to deal with the data - and includes some "don't do this" examples too.

Each chapter includes little "test your skills" sections (with answers provided) which encourage you to think through what you've just read and apply it, finally ending with a short bullet-point summary, to reinforce and allow for more self-testing. It's concisely written, but easy to follow and understand. New concepts are well-explained and - as you'd expect - the book's layout is both visually pleasing and useful, catering to almost all learning styles. (Except auditory learners, for obvious reasons.)

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## Shimona Hirschberg says

not the right book for my needs/interests, so just skimmed/flipped through

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## Tom says

Excellent practical application of the principles espoused by Edward Tufte in his classic texts. Few takes Tufte's ideas and gives very practical advice and guidelines on how to apply them for displaying data for best communications.

Highly recommended for anyone preparing tables or graphs for almost any purpose.

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## Clifton Franklund says

This is a terrific book on the graphic design of data presentation. I wish that I had read it much earlier. Now some of the graphs and tables in my already published work make me cringe a little. It has me also reconsidering most of my lecture materials.

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## Andrew Saul says

Simply an excellent resource whether you are looking to start to learn data visualisation, or looking to improve what you do now. I can not recommend it more highly.

The kind of book you find yourself going back to time and time again whenever you have a problem you can't quite work out, or you just want a bit of inspiration.

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## Max Lybbert says

Few describes *Show Me the Numbers* as an introduction to making good, informative charts and graphs. Personally, I believe Few's charts and graphs are as informative as any that Tufte recommends. But Few goes into the nuts and bolts details, while Tufte generally shows examples and discusses the charts and graphs the same way an artist might discuss exhibits in an art museum.

Also, unlike Tufte, there is a good chance that you can learn something from this book, even if you've read some of Few's other books. And, although Few describes *Show Me the Numbers* as an introduction, I learned much even after having read *Information Dashboard Design: The Effective Visual Communication of Data*, *Visualizing Data* and several Tufte books.

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## Michael Scott says

+++ Good overview of what we know about information visualization.

+++ Excellent references: Edward R. Tufte (design of graphs and visual information elements), William S. Cleveland (design and interpretation of visual information artifacts), Colin Ware (human perception and

memory model associated with visualization), John W. Tukey (statistics). Also some good references, less known: Gene Zelazny (practical guidelines on charts and slideware), Jonathan G. Koomey (high-level process from data to knowledge), Robert L. Harris (reference), Manfredo Massironi (psychology), Nancy Duarte (slideware presentations).

--/+ Reads like a good, but obvious rehash of what the others have said. Useful to traverse once.

-- Poor book design, with large imagery competing for attention with the many sections elements, and the bulleted lists often obfuscating what is actually being said.

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## Sean says

This book is a lot bigger than it needs to be. The pages are made of thick paper and the book is huge, but about 1/3 of it is white space. The best advice in the book is to go read Tufte's book. Most of the rest of the book is really obvious stuff, stated over and over. Fortunately, the information is correct, so if you don't know **anything** about making readable tables and charts, it's a good start.

Advanced charting techniques are either beyond the scope of the book or more generally outright discouraged.

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## Lars says

This is an absolutely fantastic book. It is fluff free, explained in a crystal clear manner, and full of advice that is nine times out of ten directly applicable to real-life work situations. The anti-Tufte, if you will. Yes, I went there.

At my job (banking analyst) I am exposed on a daily basis to output from internal and external equity and credit research departments. Most of the visual presentation is of a very amateurish standard, even from high-profile institutions. OTOH, when you do come across reports where some thought has been put into the visualization, they immediately stand out and the content sticks.

Even applying the most rudimentary techniques from this book, such as using sorted vertical bar charts for comparisons, can help lift the quality of a report drastically. Often the content is extremely useful simply by virtue of telling you what not to do, helping you eliminate many of the virtually endless options you are given in data visualization packages.

I simply cannot recommend this book enough. It is a revelation and worth its (substantial) weight in gold.

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## Alex Leonov says

It is a horrible book. Starting from misinformation and bad advice, through the numerous unsubstantiated opinions posed as truth, to many outright idiotic claims and suggestions, this is one of the worst books I have ever read. More than that, applying many principles and suggestions from it is dangerous and can seriously harm the work you are trying to illustrate. Despite a few pieces of good advice that may make a positive impression, you should run away from this book as far as you can. If you want to read it anyway, try to find illogical and inconsistent statements throughout to have a good laugh. Then run away.

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**Leslie Ann says**

This awesome book is a must-read (and -buy) for anyone who has to design tables or graphs for work. Few's advice is accessible, practical, and supported by relevant examples. I will definitely include some of his points in my teaching.

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**Cassandralynn says**

I use this book every day at work. Seriously. Every single day. It has the most simple explanations for why to use a table or chart and what it should look like. I say this is a must have for any data analyst and I wish more people in graduate school would take the time to hone this skill! Best book buy for me this year!

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**Carmen Foglia says**

This is a MUST for any person working with data.  
This is my most valuable book for everyday work as a Data Scientist.

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