

Tips on presenting your data with tables and graphs



The key to effectively presenting the significance of your data is the medium used to display it. For instance, do you want to use a table or a graph, and which type of those is most appropriate to what you are trying to communicate? Ask, "What is my message?" "Who is my audience and what will work best for them?"

A **table** works best for your audience when:

- They will use it to look up individual values, such as total circulation figures
- They want to compare these individual values
- The values need to be stated precisely

Graphs are effective visual tools when you want to present information quickly and easily. Sometimes, data can be better understood when presented by a graph than by a table because the graph can easily reveal a *trend, pattern, or comparison*. When would a graph be inappropriate?

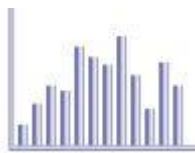
When the data are extremely dispersed

There is too little data (only one or two data points)

There is too much data

The data show little or no variation

It is crucial to know what type of graph to use with what type of information.



A **vertical bar or column graph** is often used to compare unique data sets, to show the relationship between a number of items at one time. For example, show the total number of reference transactions per year for a five-year period.

A **pie chart** is a whole. For your total compared to technology. You can also use a bar chart to express this relationship.



used to compare data sets as percentages of example, you want to show how much of budget is used to purchase library media, salaries and wages, facilities expenses, and

Use a **line graph** to express the rise and fall of values over time, especially if you have a number of frequency intervals. Tracking the rise and fall of circulation over a number of years would be one example of when to use a line graph



These are just a few of the charts and graphs that can be used to illustrate your data, but the most important tip is to Keep It Simple. The best charts attract attention, but also deliver information quickly and clearly. Keep the readers' attention on the data, not on the graph's design.