

Charting: 5 things to ask yourself

Five things to ask yourself when charting. The goal: Presenting the data in the clearest, fairest way.

1
Are you tempted by the "2 for 1 sale"?

Is something important happening at the cross?

No! Crossing is arbitrary. With different scales:

Better: 2 charts, 1 story, no headaches for readers

2
Are you stretching the truth?

Did meat consumption fall by half?

If we don't break the scale, a more truthful picture:

That's still a lotta meat! A pointer pops takeaway

3
Are you living only in the present?

Is this the whole story?

What if we go back a decade?

Ahhh! Now here's a story. History gives context.

4
Are special effects stealing the show?

Which is the biggest piece?

In journalism, straightforward is better.

Bars may be a better show to show a clear winner

5
Are you charting with your eyes closed?

Which had the bigger market gain this day?

Percentage change tells a different story

Rescale so increase is proportional to % gain