

# Translating Data Into Information: Displaying the Data

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## Key Points

- Visual presentations are powerful tools for communicating quality information. It is critical to make the graphs and tables in your report as user-friendly as possible.
- One way to make graphics user-friendly is to make them as self-explanatory as possible. Titles, legends, and other explanatory information can help users “decode” charts with minimal effort. Tactics for making bar charts easier to interpret include limiting what’s shown, presenting results in rank order, and using color selectively. Explore ways to [Make Graphics Self-Explanatory](#).
- When used appropriately, symbols can be effective in conveying relative performance. Research with word icons suggests that they help users reach more accurate conclusions about good and bad performers. It is important to test the symbols you plan to use or take advantage of symbols that have been tested extensively with positive results. Explore this topic in [Providing Self-Explanatory Symbols](#).
- Some readers will find it difficult to interpret the information in a chart. You may need to explain what they should focus on and what the key points are. Explore ways to [Show the User How To Read and Interpret the Chart](#).
- You can also help readers understand a chart more readily by minimizing the use of abbreviations and jargon. Explore this topic in [Avoid Abbreviations and Jargon](#).
- If you are using tables to show your information, you may want to consider breaking the information into “chunks” to make it easier for users to find what they need and process it. Explore this topic in [Keep Tables a Manageable Size](#).

To learn more, go to [Displaying the Data](#).

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## Questions and Tasks

- What kinds of displays could you use for the data in your report (e.g., tables with symbols, bar graphs)?  
*Type your response here.*
- Which displays seem most appropriate for the information you want to present to your audience? Are there reasons to favor one approach over another?  
*Type your response here.*
- What steps can you take to make your graphics self-explanatory?  
*Type your response here.*
- If you plan to use symbols to represent relative performance, which symbol would you use? Are word icons an option for your report?  
*Type your response here.*

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- If you are using tables, in what ways could you break a large table into more manageable “chunks?”

*Type your response here.*

- How will you test the data display options you have chosen for your report? Document your findings, noting how audiences responded and how you will address the issues raised by your audience.

*Type your response here.*

- Learn more about [Translating Data Into Information](#).
- List [all topics in the Checklist](#).