**Aesthetic Properties I: the Menu**

3 min

We've covered how we use chart type to highlight a relationship in the data. Now we'll talk about how we use aesthetic properties to further clarify and visualize the "details" of the data.

Aesthetic properties are the attributes we use to communicate data visually:

- Position

- Size

- Shape

- Color / pattern

Most of us are already familiar with this concept, even if we've never seen it put into words before. Let's walk through a visualization together to see how its aesthetic properties help us understand the data story.

This visualization published by The New York Times in 2012 shows different tech IPOs (initial public offering, or when a formerly-private company becomes available as a publicly traded stock).

Take a minute to look at the graph and see how position, size, shape, and color are used. What does it mean for a data point to be up and to the right versus down and to the left? What do bigger and smaller signify? How does shape come into play? What does color mean?

Okay, let's walk through it together now.

We can start with position: from left to right (the x-axis), the graph measures time. From bottom to top (the y-axis) the graph measures company value in billions of dollars.

As far as shape goes, there's only one here – circles.

Moving on to size, it looks like the size of each circle tracks with its company value. Companies with a larger IPO amount get a bigger circle.

Finally, color corresponds to time. Earlier corresponds to red, and later to blue. The middle portion, around 1995, is purple. This visually separates the three decades into three general zones.

# The Facebook Offering: How It Compares

**Company value**
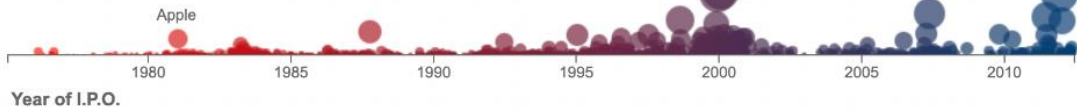In billions of today's dollars

100 —

80 —

60 —

40 —

20 —

**Facebook**

Facebook's offer price was $38 a share, giving the company a valuation of $104 billion, nearly four times larger than Google in 2004.

Facebook

Google

Apple

1980    1985    1990    1995    2000    2005    2010

**Year of I.P.O.**