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Curriculum

Professional Foundations

Average: 97.49%

Week 5

Improving Charts & Graphs: Titles

At last! Now comes the opportunity to tell your story in 1-2 lines of text using your chart title. The title should succinctly tell your reader what message this graph or chart has been designed to convey. It doesn't have to be a complete sentence, but it should be free of complicated language and syntax.

It's important to think about who your audience is and where your graph is going to be published when writing your chart title: are you a journalist adding the chart to an article, a blogger creating a very visual post, or perhaps a scientist going for a peer-reviewed publication? Scientists may need to clearly articulate the relationship displayed between their variables whereas a journalist may want to give some spin to the title to emphasize the message they want to share.

The most basic graph titles clearly state the relationship between the independent variable on the horizontal axis and the dependent variable on the vertical axis. For example, we called our medal count graph, ***"Countries With Most Medals at the Winter Olympic Games."*** This title tells the reader that we're looking at the total medals won (medal count) by country, limited to the top ten in the years between 1924 and 2018. Each element of the chart title we've created adds value and tells something to the reader. There's nothing wrong with titles like these: while somewhat dry, they're straightforward and clearly tell your reader what is on the graph.

You can also approach a title as an opportunity to state the conclusion your reader should draw from your graph. For example, take if we had chosen to highlight the Russia medal count. If you want to highlight that Russia ranked second in the overall medal count, you could title the graph, ***"Russia ranks second for most medals won in the Winter Olympics Games."*** Often you see these leading titles in newspapers and other publications telling a specific story. The chart title provides an extra opportunity to emphasize and amplify your message—use it!

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