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Curriculum

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Week 5 ≡

Improving Charts & Graphs: Labeling

Once you've built a draft of your chart, the next step in creating an impactful visualisation is making sure all of its elements are labelled appropriately. The text components of a graph give your reader visual clues that help your data tell a story and should allow your graph to stand alone, outside of any supporting narrative.

Labeling Categories and Axes

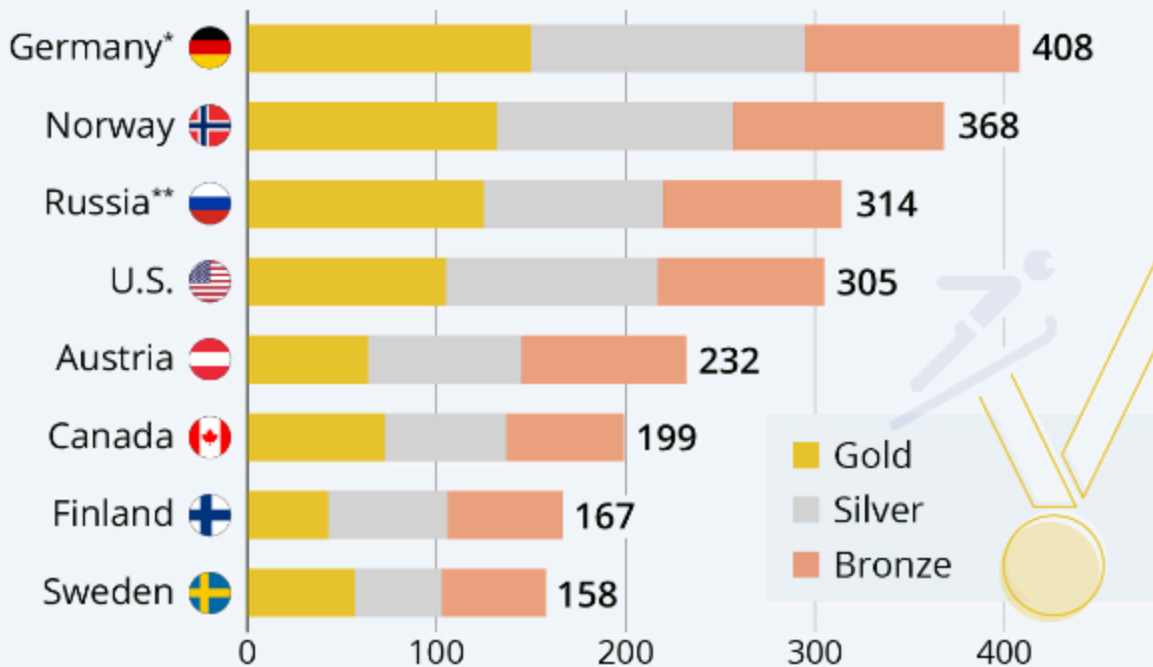
It's important to find a balance between giving enough information to your audience and keeping your text simple. Make sure you include enough information to explain the data you're presenting while keeping the text simple enough so it doesn't clutter the graph.



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The Most Successful Nations at the Olympic Winter Games

Winter Olympics all-time medal table (1924-2018)



* includes GDR ** includes Soviet Union

Source: IOC



statista

You will find more infographics at [Statista](https://www.statista.com/chartoftheday/). (<https://www.statista.com/chartoftheday/>)

In our Winter Olympic Games example, the horizontal axis shows the number of medals won by each country over the years. When creating a graph, it's common to go through a couple of iterations of the axis labels and chart titles. Once you've picked an axis title, think about how your reader could interpret that information. An axis title of "Medals" seems straightforward enough, but what exactly do we mean? Medals won? Medals lost? Medals won in 2018 alone? Medals won in any Winter Olympic games? Your chart title can help clarify these questions, and your axis title also allows you to tell your story.

Instead of Medals, let's title the horizontal axis with "Total Olympic Medals Won (1924 to 2018)." Using the word "total" ensures the reader knows you're talking about all medals, not only one kind (gold, silver, or bronze) or from one event. "Olympic" ensures your reader knows that you've shared only the Olympic medals, not a total of Olympic and Paralympic medals. And finally, "1924-2018" reminds your reader of what years the medals were won. Alternately, as we've shown here, you can include some of those details in the chart title, which we'll talk about later in this chapter.

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