

## English 314

### Visual Aid Activity: Developing an Effective Data Display

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#### Task

Your task in this short activity is to develop an effective data display for the information used in each of the scenarios described below. Hopefully, this will give you some practice in creating effective displays that clearly communicate and illustrate relationships between data in differing types of situations. Because of the flexible nature of documents, there is no single “correct” design or idealized standard that you should be striving for (though there are a number of display approaches that are clearly poorer choices than others). Simply create a display that you believe is pleasing and effective, based upon the principles that we’ve discussed in recent sessions.

You should be able to complete this activity upon any computer that’s equipped with a reasonably powerful spreadsheet program like Microsoft *Excel*.

#### Background Information

Heartland Realty is a large farm investment firm located in central Iowa. It sells shares in its farmland holdings to a variety of investors—farmers, real estate developers, doctors, and other professionals. Listed below are the average farmland values (in dollars/acre) over the past 11 years for the four counties that Heartland owns land in:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Boone</b>	4953	5540	5577	5590	5727	5858	6032	6160	6865	7645	8025
<b>Greene</b>	4962	5456	5492	5502	5536	5639	5708	5793	6530	7220	7670
<b>Story</b>	5108	5598	5638	5654	5792	5928	6118	6355	7315	8135	8510
<b>Dallas</b>	4753	5248	5278	5296	5419	5523	5618	5708	6485	7390	7955

#### Exercise

Display these data visually in two different forms, one for each scenario outlined below.

1. In this situation, the graphic you develop will be included in an annual report to investors who will want to see a strong steady gain in land values. If investors (and potential investors) think that their investments aren’t paying off with strong returns—especially in the last few years, when other investments like the stock market have been booming—they may withdraw their money from Heartland and invest it elsewhere. Moving their money out of Heartland would jeopardize the company’s financial stability. The graphic, therefore, needs to persuade investors that farmland values are rising quickly; that way, investors will keep their money in Heartland and not be tempted to put it in the stock market.
2. In this situation, the graphic will be included in a report from the new Heartland President to the Board of Directors. The President wants to convince the Board that Heartland needs to change its investment strategies because farm values aren’t keeping pace with other investments. The President would like the board to approve her new strategy of diversifying investments to other areas besides farmland. Hence, she’ll want Board members to see a very slow rise in land values and consequently approve her plans to diversify Heartland’s investments. The graphic, therefore, needs to persuade the Board that farmland values are rising steadily but slowly—too slowly for investors to put all of their eggs in the farmland basket.