

Effective data visualizations

It can be difficult to understand data insights by examining individual data points or a table of information. Often, insights become more obvious when presented in an effective visual format. You can use data visualization (often called “data viz”) techniques to help your audience interpret data in a concise, visual manner.

When creating data visualizations, you must strike a balance between presenting enough information for your audience to understand the meaning of the visualization and not overwhelming them with too much detail. In this reading, you’ll learn tips and techniques for crafting visualizations that are both impactful and effective. You’ll explore:

- Two frameworks for organizing data
- Pre-attentive attributes

Frameworks for organizing your thoughts about visualization

Frameworks help organize your thoughts about data visualization and give you a useful checklist to reference as you plan and evaluate your data visualization. Here are two frameworks that employ slightly different techniques. Both are intended to improve the quality of your visuals.

[The McCandless method](#)

You learned about the David McCandless method earlier in the course; as a refresher, the McCandless method lists four elements of good data visualization:

1. **Information:** the data with which you’re working
2. **Story:** a clear and compelling narrative or concept
3. **Goal:** a specific objective or function for the visual
4. **Visual form:** an effective use of metaphor or visual expression

The McCandless method provides terminology that isolates the specific elements of a graphic, allowing the person making a visual the ability to evaluate how well those criteria have been met. The aim when crafting a visualization is to incorporate all four elements effectively. Visualizations that fail to incorporate all four elements can be ineffective at communicating insights in various ways. For example, visual form without a goal, story, or data could be a sketch or even art. Data in visual form without a goal or function is just a pretty picture. Data with a goal but no story or visual