

Python Visualization Basics

From notebooks → web-ready charts: SVG/HTML outputs, interactive graphics, and modern chart components.

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DATA101 — De La Salle University

Today's Plan

01 · WEB OUTPUTS

HTML, CSS, SVG

What the browser actually renders.

02 · PYTHON WORKFLOW

Notebook → chart → export

Reproducible visuals you can ship.

03 · MODERN COMPONENTS

Scales, marks, guides

A reusable mental model.

04 · INTERACTIVITY

Selections + tooltips

When interactivity is worth it.

Learning Outcomes

WEB

Explain SVG vs PNG vs HTML

And choose the right export format.

PYTHON

Build a reproducible chart workflow

Data → transforms → plot → export.

DESIGN

Name modern chart components

Scales, axes, marks, guides, interactions.

PRACTICE

Write code that produces legible outputs

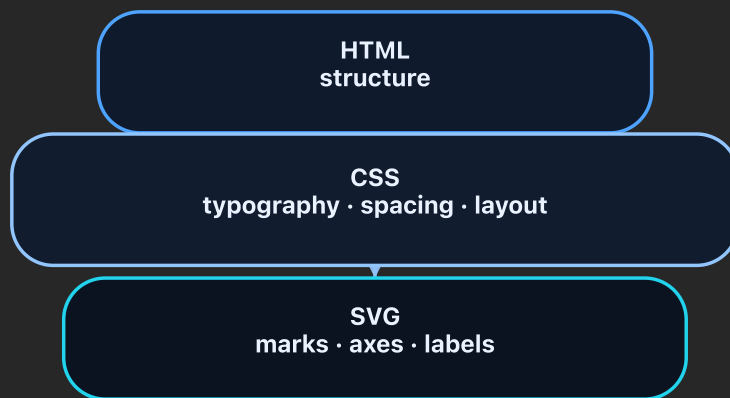
Readable on slides, PDFs, and web pages.

PART 1 · WEB OUTPUTS

What the browser understands

HTML + CSS + SVG as the delivery layer for charts

The Web Output Stack (for Charts)



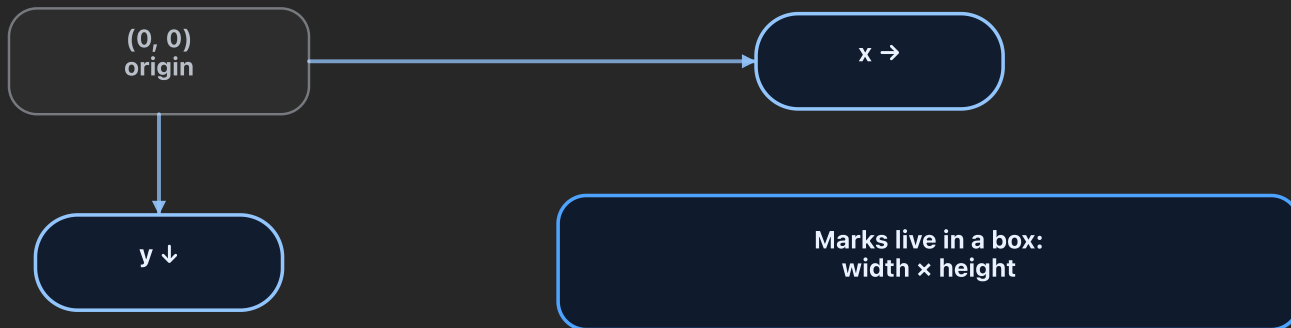
SVG: The “Native” Format of Many Charts

WHY SVG

- Scales crisply (great for slides and PDFs)
- Text remains selectable and searchable
- Shapes are editable (Illustrator/Figma)

WHEN NOT SVG

- Huge point clouds (file size)
- Complex maps with many paths
- Photographic backgrounds



CSS: The Hidden Part of “Professional”

CSS CONTROLS

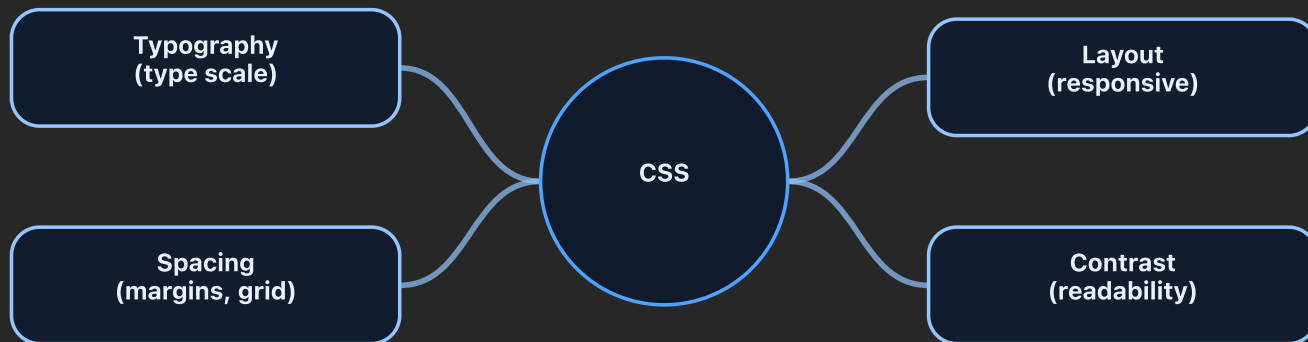
Hierarchy + spacing + readability

Font sizes, line heights, margins, contrast.

CHART IMPLICATION

Your chart lives inside a layout

So it must be responsive and legible.

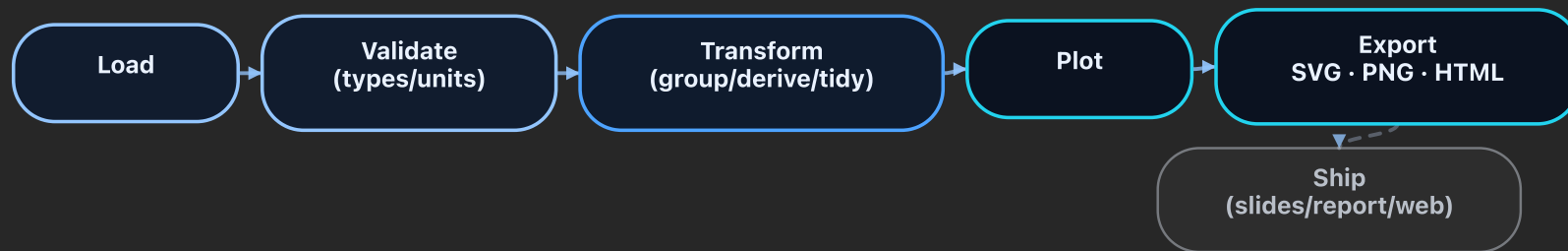


PART 2 · PYTHON WORKFLOW

Notebook → chart → export

Reproducible visuals you can ship

A Repeatable Python Visualization Pipeline



Pandas as the “Chart Data Engine”

COMMON TRANSFORMS

- `groupby` + aggregate
- derive rates and deltas
- `melt` / tidy reshape
- sort for ranking

WHY IT MATTERS

Most chart bugs are data bugs

Wrong denominator, wrong unit, wrong grain.

Raw data
(messy)

Tidy table
(one row = one observation)

Encode
(field → channel)

Chart
(legible)

Code Demo A: Make a Chart-Ready Table

RUNNABLE PYTHON

Copy into a notebook and run.

```
import pandas as pd

df = pd.DataFrame(
    {
        "program": ["A", "A", "B", "B", "C", "C"],
        "week": [1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2],
        "n_pass": [70, 62, 90, 88, 40, 44],
        "n_students": [100, 100, 120, 120, 50, 50],
    }
)

df["pass_rate"] = df["n_pass"] / df["n_students"]

weekly = (
    df.sort_values(["program", "week"])
    .assign(delta=lambda d: d.groupby("program")["pass_rate"]
)

print(weekly.to_string(index=False))
```

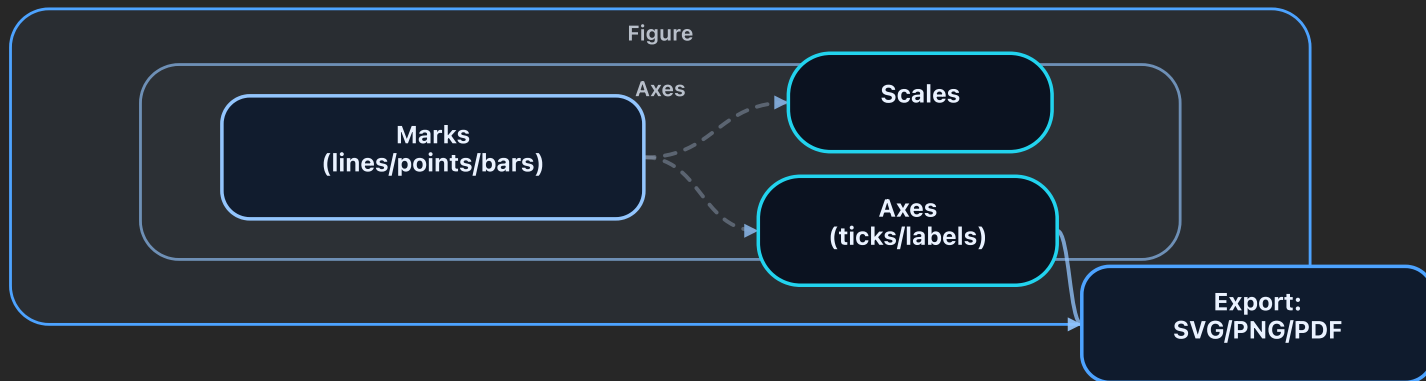
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OUTPUT YOU SHOULD SEE

A tidy table with a derived rate + delta.

program	week	n_pass	n_students	pass_rate	delta
A	1	70	100	0.7	—
A	2	62	100	0.62	-0.08
B	1	90	120	0.75	—
B	2	88	120	0.733	-0.017
C	1	40	50	0.8	—
C	2	44	50	0.88	0.08

Matplotlib: The “Artist” Model (Mental Map)



Code Demo B: Matplotlib → SVG Export

RUNNABLE PYTHON

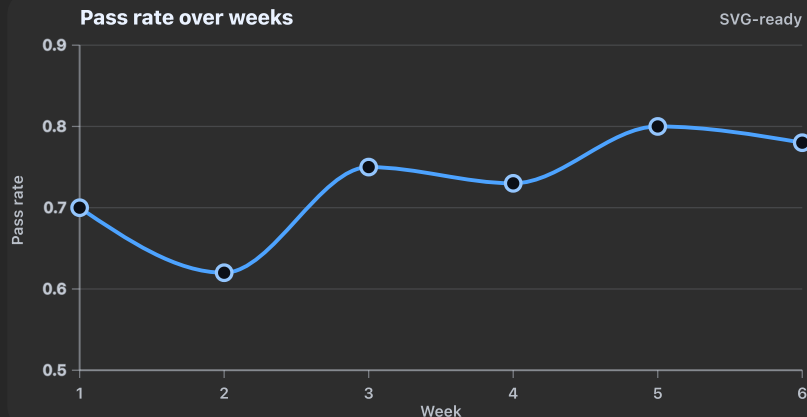
Produces a plot and exports SVG text (web-ready).

```
import io
import numpy as np
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
x = np.arange(1, 7)
y = np.array([0.70, 0.62, 0.75, 0.73, 0.80, 0.78])
fig, ax = plt.subplots(figsize=(7.2, 3.2))
ax.plot(x, y, marker="o", linewidth=2)
ax.set_title("Pass rate over weeks")
ax.set_xlabel("Week")
ax.set_ylabel("Pass rate")
ax.set_ylim(0.5, 0.9)
ax.grid(True, alpha=0.25)
fig.tight_layout()

buf = io.StringIO()
fig.savefig(buf, format="svg")
svg = buf.getvalue()
print("SVG chars:", len(svg))
```

RENDERED RESULT (ILLUSTRATION)

Your SVG will scale crisply in slides.



Seaborn: Statistics Defaults + Cleaner Styles

WHAT IT ADDS

- Statistical plots (distributions, categories)
- Reasonable default aesthetics
- Easy small multiples (FacetGrid)

COMMON TRAP

Pretty defaults \neq correct story

Always check units, bins, and baselines.



Code Demo C: Faceted Histograms

RUNNABLE PYTHON

Shows why distribution beats averages.

```
import numpy as np, pandas as pd
import seaborn as sns
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

rng=np.random.default_rng(7)
program=np.repeat(list("ABC"), 250)
score=np.r_[rng.normal(76, 6, 250), rng.normal(76, 14, 250),
df=pd.DataFrame({"program": program, "score": score})

sns.displot(
    df, x="score", col="program", bins=18,
    facet_kws=dict(sharex=True, sharey=True),
    height=3, aspect=1.1
)
print(df.groupby("program")["score"].agg(["mean","std"]).rou
plt.show()
```

ModuleNotFoundError: No module named 'numpy'
Tip: This may be because of this package is not a Pyodide
builtin package.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Panels share axes (fair comparison)
- Shape shows variance (not just the mean)
- Bins + scale are design decisions

Code Demo C (Output): Small Multiples Reveal Spread

INTERPRETATION

Same mean, different risk

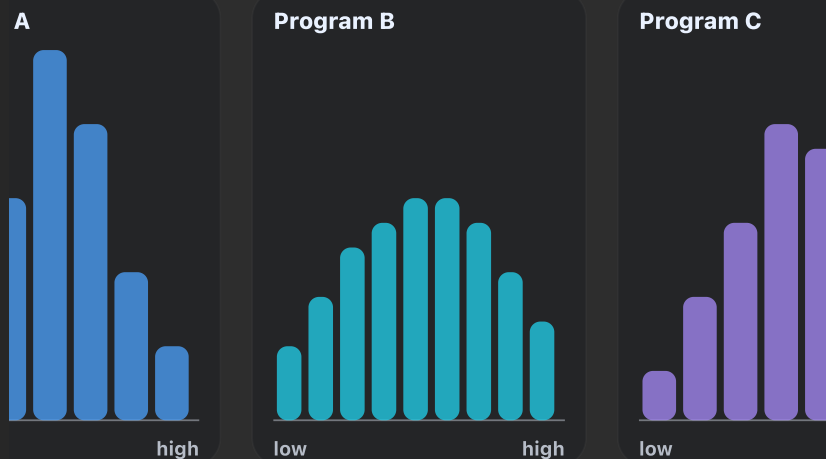
- Wider distributions imply more extreme outcomes
- Aligned panels make differences obvious
- Label bins and units when you publish

RENDERED RESULT (ILLUSTRATION)

This is what your FacetGrid histogram should resemble.

distributions (small multiples)

els reveal spread differences

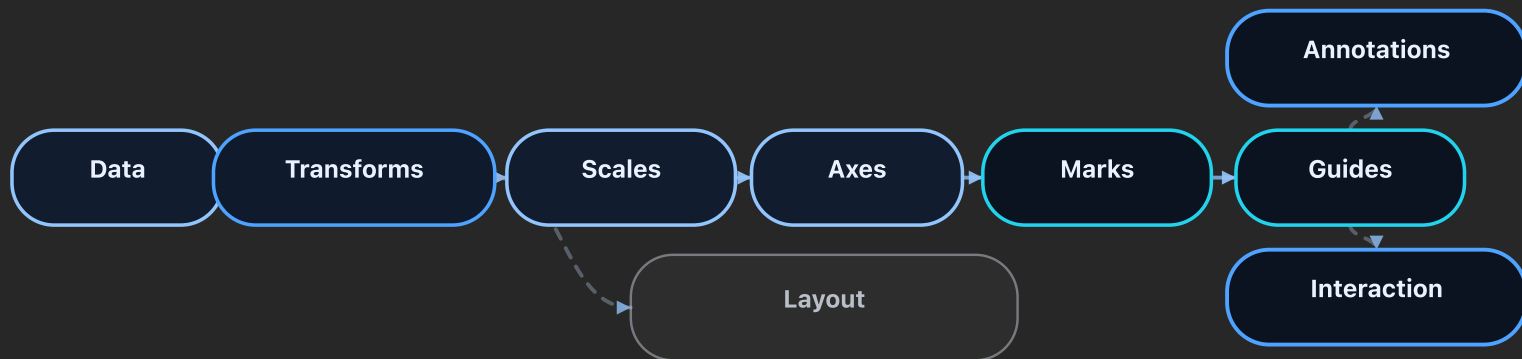


PART 3 · MODERN COMPONENTS

Think in chart parts

Build charts like reusable UI components

The Modern Chart Component Checklist



"D3 Concepts" in a Python World

CORE IDEA

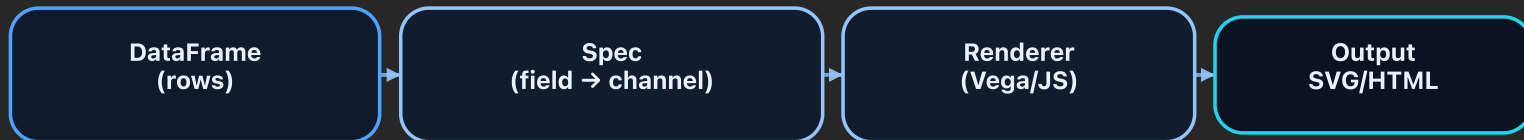
Data ↔ marks mapping

Bind rows to marks; encode columns to channels.

PYTHON ANALOGY

DataFrame → spec → renderer

Altair/Plotly generate web renderers.



Code Demo D: Altair Encodings

RUNNABLE PYTHON

Data → encoding → interactive tooltip.

```
import pandas as pd
import json

df=pd.DataFrame({
    "x": [1,2,3,4,5,6],
    "y": [0.70,0.62,0.75,0.73,0.80,0.78],
    "term": ["baseline"]*3 + ["current"]*3
})

spec={"mark":{"type":"circle","size":110},
      "encoding":{"x":{"field":"x","type":"quantitative"},
                  "y":{"field":"y","type":"quantitative"},
                  "color":{"field":"term","type":"nominal"},
                  "tooltip": [{"field":"x"}, {"field":"y"}, {"field":"term"}]
                })

print("First 3 rows:")
print(df.head(3).to_string(index=False))
print("\nEncoding spec (Vega-Lite style, excerpt):")
```

WHAT TO WATCH

- Domains are explicit (comparison-friendly)
- Color encodes category, not magnitude
- Tooltip adds detail without clutter

Code Demo D (Output): Encoded Scatter + Tooltip

DESIGN NOTE

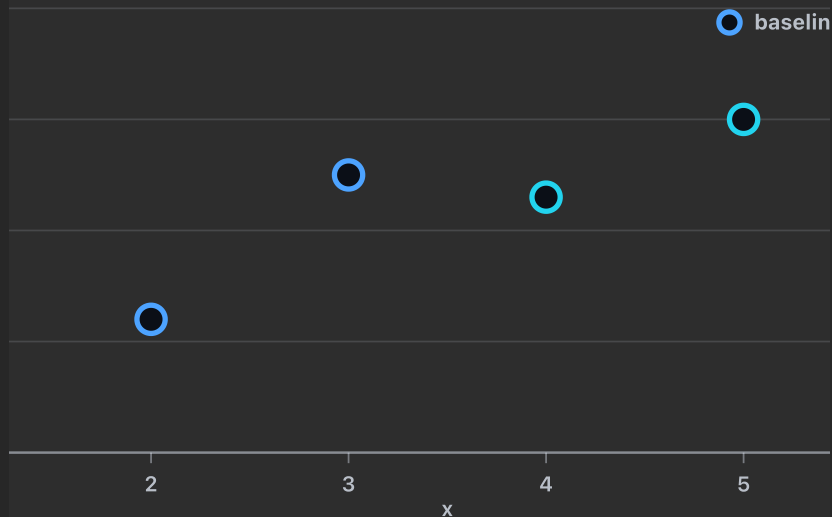
Encoding is a contract

- Quantitative → position/scale
- Categorical → hue/grouping
- Set domains when comparisons matter

RENDERED RESULT (ILLUSTRATION)

Your Altair chart should match this structure.

Encoded scatter



PART 4 · INTERACTIVITY

Interactivity with purpose

Tooltips, selection, filtering, and readable dashboards

Tooltips Are “Details on Demand”

GOOD TOOLTIP

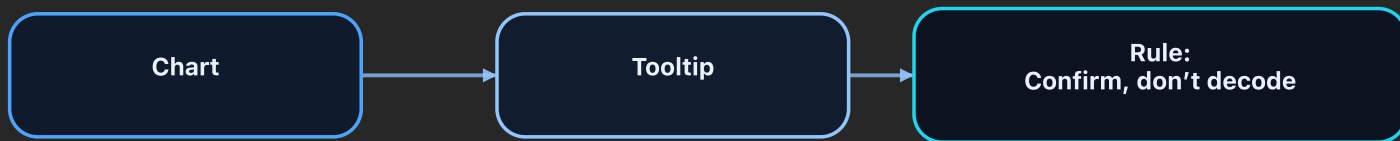
Confirms values

Units, exact numbers, IDs for traceability.

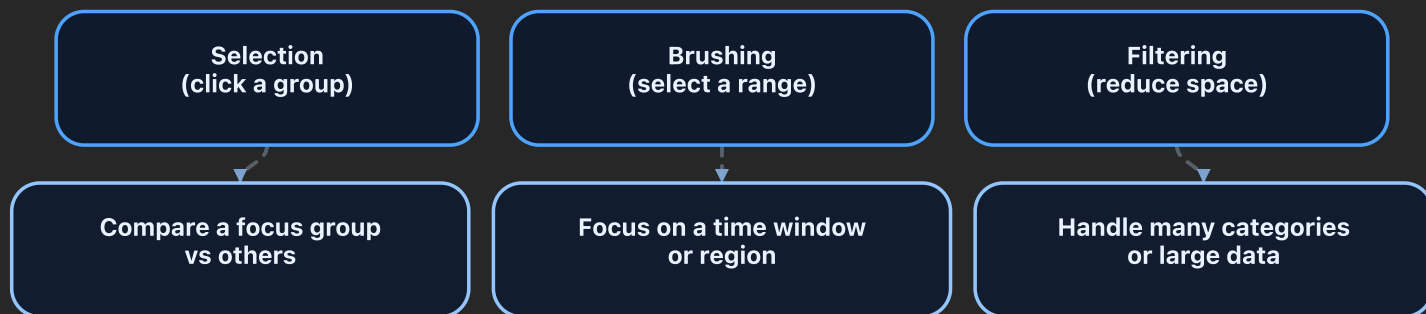
BAD TOOLTIP

Replaces the chart

If you need to hover everything, redesign.



Selections, Brushing, and Filtering (Task-Driven)



Code Demo E: Plotly for Interactive HTML

RUNNABLE PYTHON

Exports an interactive chart to HTML.

```
import pandas as pd
import plotly.express as px

df = pd.DataFrame(
    {
        "week": [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6],
        "pass_rate": [0.70, 0.62, 0.75, 0.73, 0.80, 0.78],
    }
)

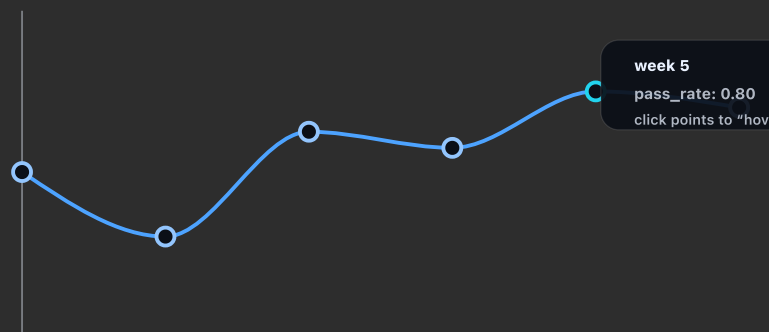
fig = px.line(df, x="week", y="pass_rate", markers=True, ti
fig.update_yaxes(range=[0.5, 0.9])
fig.write_html("pass_rate.html", include_plotlyjs="cdn")
fig
```

RENDERED RESULT (ILLUSTRATION)

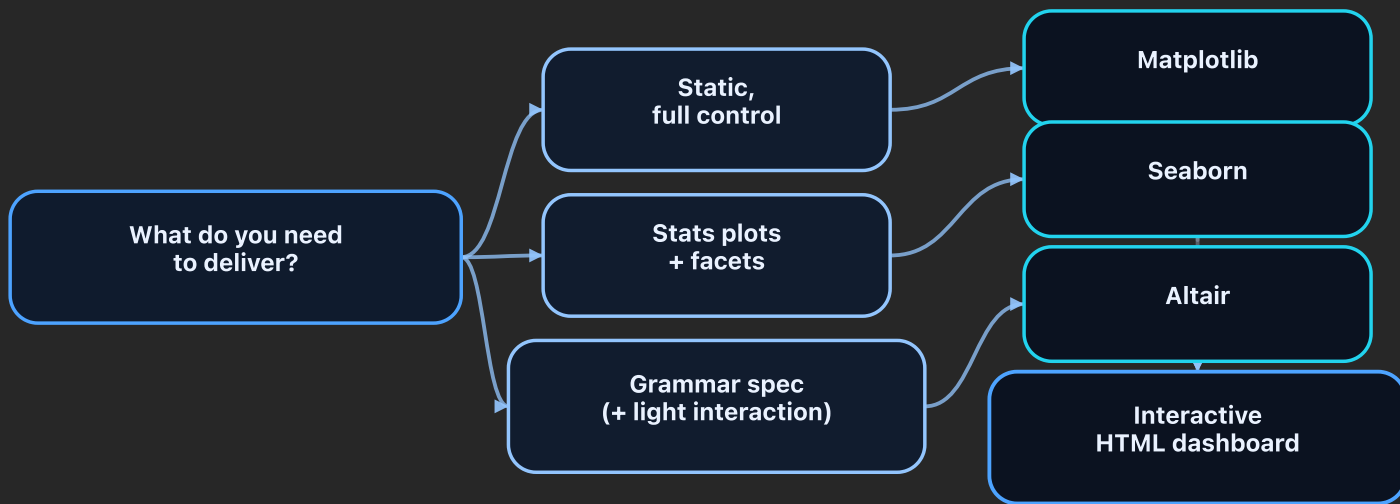
Hover + zoom are built in.

Interactive line (HTML)

tooltip + zoom



Choosing the Right Tool (A Practical Heuristic)



Export Formats: What You Hand In (and Why)

SVG

Slides + print

Crisp, editable, searchable.

PNG

Fixed images

Good for dense marks; stable layout.

HTML

Interactive

Tooltips, zoom, filters.

RULE

Choose format based on **use case, not preference.**

Micro-Checklist: "Looks Professional" in Practice

TYPOGRAPHY

- Readable title (claim or task)
- Axis labels with units
- Limited tick density

GRAPHICS

- Aligned scales for comparisons
- Legend only if necessary
- One clear emphasis (not rainbow)

DATA

- Rates vs counts handled
- Missingness shown explicitly
- Aggregation explained

EXPORT

- SVG/PNG/HTML matches use case
- Consistent sizing across figures
- Works on dark backgrounds

Practice (In Class): Make One Chart, Three Exports

TASK

Create one chart and export it as SVG, PNG, and HTML.

Then explain which format you would submit for: slides, a PDF report, and an interactive critique.

- Pick a simple dataset (10–200 rows)
- Include units and a baseline if relevant
- Write 2–3 sentences justifying your export choices

layout: section

Python-first visualization craft

Make charts that ship: readable, accessible, reusable.

Styling is a constraint, not decoration

PROFESSIONAL HABIT

Use one theme across charts

Typography, sizes, gridlines, colors.

WHY IT MATTERS

Consistency builds trust

Viewers stop re-learning your chart style each slide.

DESIGN RULE

Make the data loud. Keep the scaffolding quiet.

Live Python: A consistent Matplotlib style

RUNNABLE PYTHON

Sets a small style system and draws a chart.

```
import io
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
import numpy as np

plt.rcParams.update({"figure.dpi": 120, "font.size": 12})

x = np.arange(1, 9)
y = np.array([72, 71, 74, 76, 75, 78, 80, 79])

fig, ax = plt.subplots(figsize=(7.2, 2.8))
ax.plot(x, y, marker="o", linewidth=2)
ax.set_title("Consistent style: readable by default")
ax.set_xlabel("Week")
ax.set_ylabel("Score")
ax.grid(True, alpha=0.25)

buf = io.StringIO()
fig.savefig(buf, format="svg")
print("SVG length:", len(buf.getvalue()))
```

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WHAT TO NOTICE

- Font sizes are intentional
- Gridlines are subtle
- Labels are complete (units when needed)

Color is a data encoding (not a theme)

MATCH MEANING

Type → palette

Categorical, ordered magnitude, baseline differences.

COMMON FAILURE

Pretty ≠ interpretable

If the scale is wrong, the chart is wrong.

Matplotlib colormaps: choose by semantics

SEQUENTIAL

Magnitude: low → high

Use lightness ramps so order is visible.

Lightness ramp (ordered magnitude)



Example: same values as a heatmap (higher = lighter)



DIVERGING

Difference: below ↔ above baseline

Only when the midpoint is meaningful.

Centered midpoint (baseline = 0)



Example: negative vs positive differences around the baseline



Live Python: sampling colors from a colormap

WHY THIS MATTERS

Colormaps are functions. You can sample them, test them, and keep them consistent across plots.

RUNNABLE PYTHON

Prints a few RGBA samples from a Matplotlib colormap.

```
import matplotlib.cm as cm

cmap = cm.get_cmap("viridis")
samples = [cmap(i / 4) for i in range(5)]

for i, rgba in enumerate(samples):
    print(i, tuple(round(x, 3) for x in rgba))
```

ModuleNotFoundError: No module named 'matplotlib'

Tip: This may be because this package is not a Pyodide builtin package.

You may need to install it by adding the package name to the `python.installs` array in your headmatter.

Accessibility basics for color

DO

Add redundancy

Labels, position, shape—don't rely on color alone.

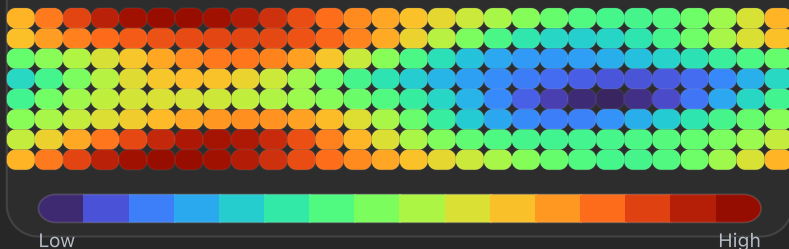
AVOID

Red/green-only meaning

Many viewers cannot reliably distinguish it.

Rainbow-like

Creates false boundaries



Perceptual

Order visible in lightness

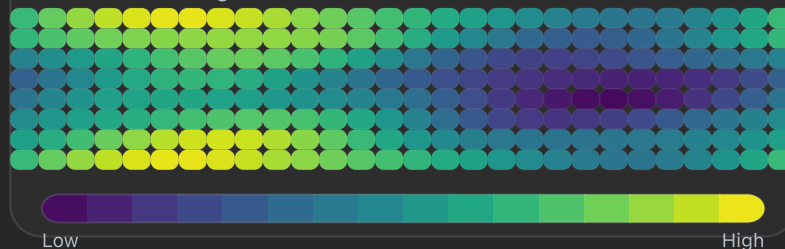


Chart components as reusable code

INPUT

DataFrame

Types + units + grain.

PROCESS

Transform + encode

Compute chart-ready
columns.

OUTPUT

Figure object

Exportable + consistent.

If your chart can't be wrapped as a function, it won't scale to a project.

Live Python: a reusable chart function (template)

RUNNABLE PYTHON

A minimal “chart component” pattern.

```
from dataclasses import dataclass

@dataclass
class ChartSpec:
    title: str
    x: str
    y: str

def describe_chart(spec: ChartSpec) -> str:
    return f"{spec.title} | x={spec.x} | y={spec.y}"

print(describe_chart(ChartSpec("Pass rate trend", "week", "p

Pass rate trend | x=week | y=pass_rate
```

HOW TO USE IT

Turn repeated chart decisions into parameters (titles, fields, scales, annotations).

Layout matters (even in notebooks)

GOOD LAYOUT

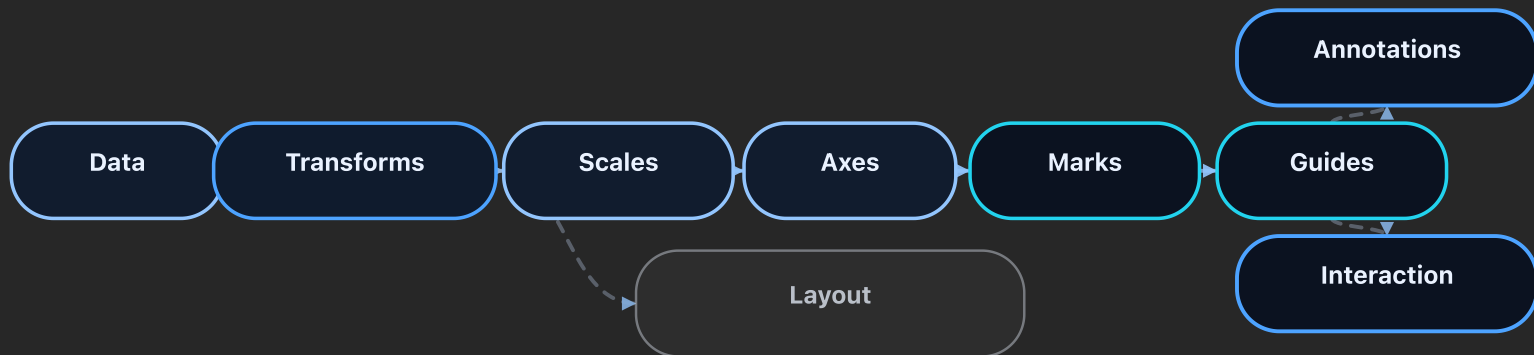
Aligned comparisons

Shared scales; predictable reading order.

BAD LAYOUT

Legend hunting

Too many colors; misaligned axes; crowded labels.



Performance: reduce complexity before you draw

WHEN DATA IS LARGE

Aggregate or bin

Histograms, hexbin, summaries.

WHEN DATA IS DENSE

Sample or faceting

Downsample; split into panels.

If you draw every point, you are encoding latency.

Publishing checklist (before you export)

TEXT

- Readable title + labels
- Units included
- Consistent font sizes

SCALES

- Baselines correct
- Domains chosen intentionally
- Comparisons are aligned

COLOR

- Meaning matches palette
- Contrast is sufficient
- No color-only decoding

EXPORT

- SVG for vector (slides)
- PNG for raster (photos)
- HTML for interaction

Mini exercise (in-class)

PROMPT

Turn one messy table into a chart-ready table.

Then choose a single chart and justify it in 4 sentences.

DELIVERABLE

A tidy table + one exported figure (SVG or PNG).

JUSTIFICATION

Task → transform → encoding → why it's readable.

Export formats: choose the right artifact

SVG

Slides + print

- Crisp at any zoom
- Searchable/selectable text
- Editable in Figma/Illustrator

Use when marks + labels must stay sharp.

PNG

Screens + photos

- Reliable everywhere
- Good for raster layers (maps)
- Predictable file size

Use when you have imagery or heavy density.

HTML

Interaction

- Tooltips + selections
- Responsive layouts
- Shareable dashboards

Use when interaction supports a task.

RULE OF THUMB

If it needs to be read, prefer `SVG`. If it needs to be explored, prefer `HTML`. If it's an image, prefer `PNG`.

Web-ready exports: what “done” looks like

SHIP WITH CONTEXT

- A one-sentence caption (what + why)
- Units + time window + data source
- A note for missing data / caveats

A chart without context is a decoration.

SHIP WITH STRUCTURE

- Consistent title sizing
- Aligned margins across figures
- Filenames: `topic_metric_scope_date.svg`

The “professional” look is mostly layout discipline.

EXPORT

Save at intended size (don’t “resize later”).

CHECK

Open the file and verify labels/units are intact.

EMBED

Place it into the final layout (slides, PDF, web page).

Accessibility basics (for charts you publish)

LEGIBILITY

- Contrast passes “squint test”
- Text is large enough at 100% zoom
- Direct labels when possible

ROBUSTNESS

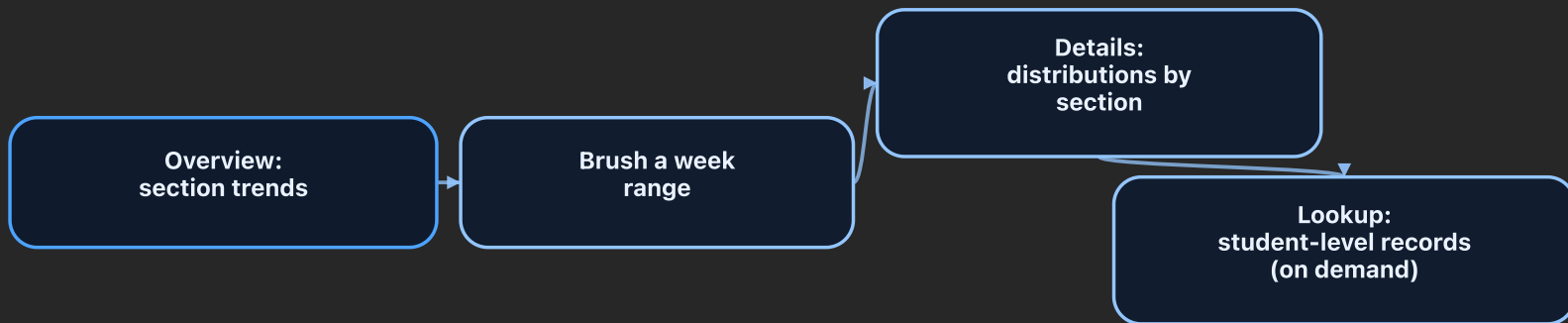
- No color-only meaning
- Patterns/markers for redundancy
- Clear “no data” encoding

PROFESSIONAL HABIT

Assume your chart will be viewed in bad conditions.

Low brightness, projector washout, grayscale print, or viewers with color-vision differences.

Case study: from overview to actionable detail



WHY THIS PATTERN WORKS

Start broad (see trends), then narrow (choose a range), then inspect (compare distributions), then lookup only when necessary.

Common export bugs (and quick fixes)

BUG

Tiny text in the final file

It looked fine in the notebook, then became unreadable.

FIX

Set figure size + font sizes explicitly before export.

BUG

Cropping / clipped labels

Axis labels or legends get cut off.

FIX

Use ``tight_layout()`` / constrained layout and verify the file.

BUG

Misleading scales after export

Domains/baselines changed across charts.

FIX

Lock domains for comparisons; label units; avoid implicit defaults.

RULE

Always open the exported file and proofread it like a report.

Exit ticket (2 minutes)

1

What is your dataset's "grain" after your transform?

Example: one row = program × week.

2

Which channel is doing the "hard work"?

Position? Length? Lightness? (Name it.)

3

What did you export, and why that format?

SVG vs PNG vs HTML.

4

One improvement you would make next iteration

Labeling, domain, transform, or layout.

Key Takeaways

- Web outputs matter: SVG/HTML are common “final forms”
- Python workflow: data → transforms → chart → export
- Modern charts are components: scales, marks, axes, guides, interaction
- Interactivity is only “professional” when it supports a task

References (Recommended)

Matplotlib documentation

Figure/Axes model, export formats, styling

<https://matplotlib.org/stable/>

Altair documentation

Grammar of graphics + interactive selections

<https://altair-viz.github.io/>

Plotly documentation

Interactive charts + HTML export

<https://plotly.com/python/>

Wickham (2014)

Tidy data as a foundation for chart-ready tables

<https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v059.i10>