

Choosing a Chart

Computing

Which chart answers which question — and the two to avoid.

The question you are answering decides the form.

Question	Chart
How has this changed over time?	Line
How do these categories compare?	Bar
What is the distribution?	Histogram or box plot
Do two variables relate?	Scatter
What are the parts of a whole?	Stacked bar (rarely pie)
Where is it, geographically?	Map
How do many pairs relate?	Heatmap

Avoid pie charts beyond three slices, and never use a 3-D chart: the perspective distorts the values it is meant to show.