

Line Graphs

5th Grade

The graph for data that changes over time — and when not to use one.

A line graph shows change over time. If your x-axis is not time, you probably want a bar chart.

1 TIME GOES ALONG THE BOTTOM

Always the x-axis: days, months, years.

2 PICK A SENSIBLE SCALE

Even intervals. Starting somewhere other than zero exaggerates changes.

3 PLOT AND JOIN

A dot per reading, joined with straight lines.

4 READ THE SLOPE

Steep up means fast increase. Flat means no change.

A truncated y-axis is the commonest way graphs mislead. Always check where the scale starts.