

TOP TEN LIST

TEN BEST WAYS TO CREATE BAD DATA GRAPHICS

With apologies to David Letterman, thanks for editorial assistance to Elizabeth Kirby and thanks to my former colleagues at the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation, Arkansas Children's Hospital and University of Arkansas-Medical Sciences, especially Mark Clark, Jeff Marotte and Rebecca Dakota.

R.S. Kirby, 1992, updated August 2003

Top Ten List: Ten Best Ways to Create Bad Data Graphics

Number 10 Connecting to the grid, or 'We're in the same boat, brother'

Cause a power surge while printing to a high resolution laser printer!

Number 9

The Shell Game?

Prominently display your personal recycling symbol to show that you are environmentally friendly. If you don't have one, use your institutional logo instead.

Number 8

A rose is a rose is a rose is . . .

Label all your data points, whether there are a million, or four!

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Number 7

What you get is what you see

If there are fewer than twelve points, graph it anyway!



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Number 6

Graphs should be ten feet tall and bullet-proof

If there are only three points, use lots of bullets!



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Number 5

Can you say 'moiré'?

Patterns, patterns, patterns!



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Number 4

Sold by the Pie, Sold by the Slice

No matter what kind of data you have, use a pie chart!

Corollary: no matter what kind of data you **don't** have, use a pie chart!



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Number 3
Artistic License?

Forget scale: go for effect!

And while you are at it, mislabel both axes.



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Number 2
The Power and the Glory of the Multiple
Make 2D into 3D, and 3D into a mini-series!



Number 1

A Number is Worth a Thousand Pictures

Pay special attention to the over-application of multicolored chart junk!

Be sure the density of irrelevant material far outweighs the six pieces of statistical data on the graph.

