



Ways to Tell Your Story

pick an appropriate technique

Once you have found a story to tell in your data, and you know your audience and goals, it's time to pick a presentation technique! There are no right answers, but there are guidelines that can help. This handout describes a few techniques and when it might be appropriate to pick them.

Showcase a Personal Story

A personal story can be a photo, video, or quote. Sharing a real person's story can catch people's attention, giving you a few minutes to convince them that your data story is worth listening to. This technique is a fantastic way to mix qualitative and quantitative data.

When can this help?

- You want to connect your audience with the reality behind your data
- Your data is about people, not things
- It might be to get your audience interested in your topic



By the Numbers
The Guardian, 2016

Only the female nominees for the 2016 Oscars are highlighted in this picture (roughly 1 in 5).

Make a Data Sculpture

A data sculpture is a physical version of your data story. This could be a complicated sculpture, an interactive physical object, or just a simple collection of things glued together. The goal is to bring your data off the page, into the physical world. We live in a three dimensional world, interacting with real objects using our sight, hearing, touch, and more. Take advantage of this by building a data sculpture.

When can this help?

- You want to encourage questions
- You are presenting public square or street corner
- You want to collaboratively build the data presentation with other people
- You want to have fun
- You're looking for a way to engage mixed ages



Black Cloud
Ogilvy/Beijing, 2007

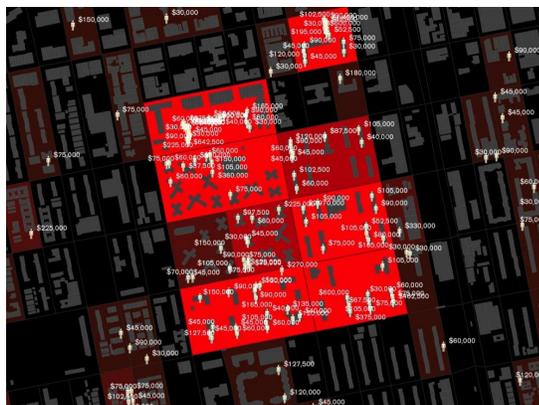
The amount of pollution emitted by a car in one day was made visible with a giant balloon connected to the tailpipe of the car (placed outside the climate talks).

Make a Map

A map is a visual interpretation of the physical layout of an space in the real world. Maps are sometimes thought to be neutral things, but in fact they often carry a lot of political biases. People's ability to read maps varies quite a bit.

When can this help?

- Your data story is connected to an actual place, or is about geographic differences
- Your audience is able to read maps
- You want your audience to trust your data is accurate and authoritative



Million Dollar Blocks
Spatial Information Design Lab, 2012

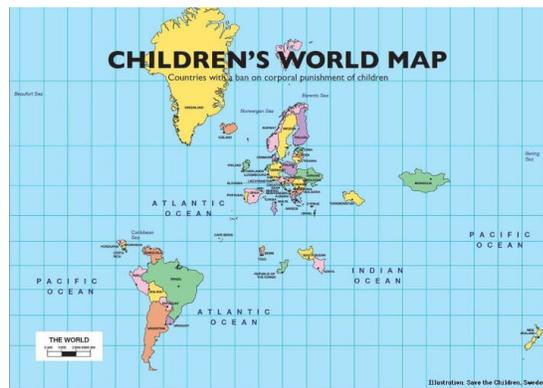
Mapping the home address of prison inmates in New York state revealed individual blocks where more than 1 million US dollars a year was spent incarcerating residents from those blocks.

Make a Creative Map

A “creative map” uses the visual design elements of a map to make a less traditional representation of space. This can include things like leaving out some parts or changing the sizes of others. You can start with a real map, and then change some of the rules.

When can this help?

- You want to highlight a particular piece of data about the places
- Your audience is interested enough to learn how to “read” your new map
- You want to have some fun with an old technique
- You want to encourage a discussion



*Children’s World Map
Save the Children (Sweden)*

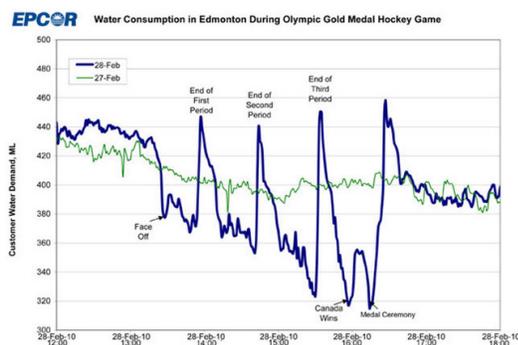
Countries that show up on the map have federal laws against corporal punishment of children. Missing countries do not have such laws.

Chart Your Data

Traditional charts include things like bar-charts, pie-charts, line-graphs and others. These designs have a long history and are taught in lots of school systems around the world.

When can this help?

- You are talking with your audience in a professional setting
- You want your audience to assume you are right, rather than asking you questions
- Your audience knows how to read traditional charts



*Water Consumption in Edmonton
EPCOR, 2010*

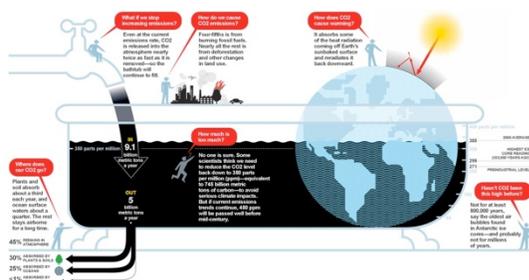
Simple annotations tell the story of water use dropping significantly during game time of the Olympic gold medal hockey game (and spiking between periods).

Make a Creative Chart

A “creative chart” uses the visual language of traditional charts, but breaks some of the rules. Traditional charts and graphs have established a vocabulary of design that many people know how to read. You can repurpose it to surprise and engage your audience.

When can this help?

- Your audience is interested enough in your topic already to learn how to read your new chart
- You have a chance to walk your audience through how to read it
- Your audience likes cool new ways to present stories
- You want to have some fun



The Carbon Bathtub
Nigel Holmes (National Geographic) 2017

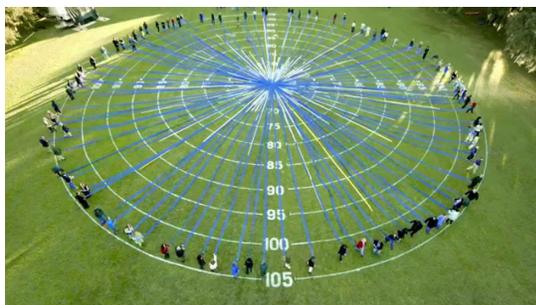
An annotated bathtub metaphor explains carbon emissions are exceeding out planet’s capacity to absorb and process them.

Make a Data Game

A data game is about letting your audience interact with the data some way. This could be as simple as raising their hands to show their point of view on a question, or it could involve them moving around and creating things. Letting people be the data connects them with the information in a real way.

When can this help?

- Your audience could be bored
- You have a space your audience can move around in
- You want to encourage questions and interaction with your audience



The Ribbons Experiment
Prof. Dan Gilbert & Prudential, 2015

Participants are given a ribbon whose length is based on their estimate for retirement savings needs. Walking from the center, their ribbon runs out at a certain age, indicating their estimate’s shortfall.