

Creating a Simple Bar Graph in Excel

And removing chart junk



1. Sort data using filters

- a. Select the row of variable names → Home → Sort & Filter → Filter → Select menu in column you want to sort → Sort in reverse order that you want data to display (smallest to largest)

2. Insert a bar graph

- a. Select data to be included in bar graph → Insert → Bar → 2D bar → Clustered bar (1st chart layout)

3. Resize graph

- a. Click on the bar chart so that the edges appear → click and hold the corners to resize so there's enough room for y-axis labels

4. Delete chart junk. Remove non-essential ink (labels and lines)

- a. Remove gridlines → Select gridlines → Delete
- b. Delete x-axis labels → Select x-axis values/labels → Delete
- c. Delete vertical line → Select y-axis values/labels → Right click → Format Axis → Line Color → No line
- d. Delete legend → Select legend → Delete
- e. Delete chart border → Select bar chart → Right click → Format Chart Area → Border Color → No Line

5. Emphasize key data with color. De-emphasize everything else.

- a. Right click to select all bars → Select a light grey from paint bucket
- b. Select bar(s) that is your story point → Right click → Select a deep/bright color from paint bucket to make bar visually stand out.

6. Embed labels in bars

- a. Click on bars so all are selected → Right click → Add Data Labels → Select labels → Right click → Format Data Labels → Label Position → Inside End
- b. Bold labels → Home → Bold
- c. Change label color (to make more legible against dark/light bar) → Home → Text color (A) → Select appropriate color from drop down menu

7. Change bar width. Make the bars more substantial.

- a. Right click on bars → Format Data Series → Reduce the gap width as desired.

8. Insert chart title

- a. Click on the title field and type in a compelling headline in sentence style (only first word is capitalized and ends with a period). → Home → Left justify text
- b. If there is no field, → Select bar chart → Chart Tools → Layout → Chart Title → Above Chart → Drag title field to top left corner → Home → Left justify text
- c. If longer title (and/or sub-header is needed), make title field as small and short as possible and insert text box over title field (to cover entirely) → Chart Tools → Text Box
- d. To link message to data, select key words that relate to the emphasized data → Home → Bold → Change font color to match key data

9. Adjust font size

- a. Increase the font size of the headline and labels, as needed → Select text field → Right click → Increase font size

BONUS:

Excel has some Chart Layout options that handle some of these steps all at once.
Select the bar graph → Chart Tools → Chart Layouts → Select various options

Resources

- Stephanie Evergreen blog, books, and Evergreen Data Academy: <http://stephanieevergreen.com/>
- Ann Emery workshops, blog, and other evaluation resources: <http://annkemery.com/workshops/>
- Mike “excelisfun” Girvin’s YouTube video tutorials: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ExcelsFun>
- Mr. Nystrom YouTube videos on Stats <https://www.youtube.com/user/MrNystrom>
- American Evaluation Association courses: http://comm.eval.org/coffee_break_webinars/estudy
- Tobacco Control Evaluation Center: www.tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu or 530-752-9951