

Will a Chart or Graph Help or Hinder?

By **Dianna Booher**

One benefit of charts and graphs is that they make facts or statistics more explicit and memorable by showing relationships. They tell readers how to interpret the data—what the facts or numbers mean.

On the other hand, some writers approach the question of charts and graphs haphazardly and wind up adding far too many, simply because they find them easy to create with their favorite software package.

Use the following checklist to cull unnecessary graphics from your documents:

- Does the chart or graph emphasize trivial or irrelevant information?
- Can the information be included in another graphic without cluttering it?
- Does the information confuse rather than clarify?
- Has the information already been included simply and emphatically in the text?

Like Goldilocks' porridge, your use of visuals to convey your message should be “just right.”

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145 words

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For more on business writing, see *E-Writing: 21st-Century Tools for Effective Communication* (Simon & Schuster/Pocket Books) by Dianna Booher.