

# Gestalt Principles for Data Visualization

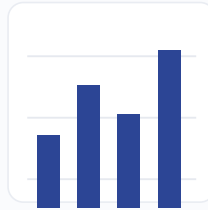
Use these perceptual principles to make patterns easier to see - and make the message of a chart easier to understand.

## Figure-ground

**Make the data stronger than the canvas.**

**APPLY** Mute gridlines, borders and backgrounds so data marks and key labels dominate.

**AVOID** Decoration that competes with the data.

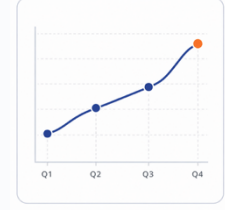


## Continuity

**Guide the eye along a logical path.**

**APPLY** Align axes and elements, order categories intentionally, and connect points only when sequence matters.

**AVOID** Layouts that make the eye jump around.

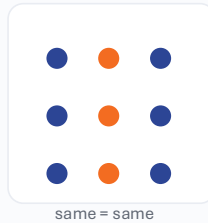


## Similarity

**Make the same treatment mean the same thing.**

**APPLY** Use the same color, shape and size for the same category or status; change them only for a real difference.

**AVOID** Variation used simply for variety.



## Closure

**Let whitespace and alignment do some of the work.**

**APPLY** Use whitespace and alignment instead of drawing every border or gridline.

**AVOID** Fully boxed tables and dense chart frames.

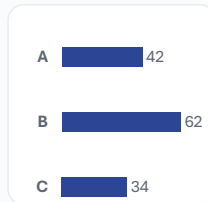
|    |    |
|----|----|
| Q1 | 42 |
| Q2 | 57 |
| Q3 | 61 |

## Proximity

**Keep related information close together.**

**APPLY** Keep labels, units and annotations close to the data they explain; add space between unrelated groups.

**AVOID** Legends or notes far from the marks.

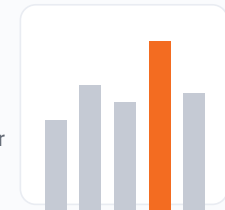


## Focal point

**Make the key takeaway easy to find.**

**APPLY** Use one accent color, annotation or weight change to highlight the key exception, target or insight.

**AVOID** Multiple competing highlights.

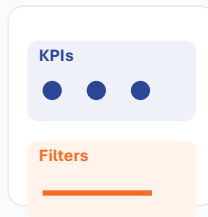


## Common region

**Use containers to show what belongs together.**

**APPLY** Use subtle panels or backgrounds to group related KPIs, small multiples or filter context.

**AVOID** Boxing every element.



## QUICK CHECK BEFORE YOU PUBLISH

- What should the viewer notice first?
- Does every visual difference encode meaning?
- Are related items grouped - and unrelated items separated?
- Can you remove a line, box, label or color without losing meaning?

*Goal: make the intended pattern obvious without making the chart feel over-designed.*