

Tell an effective story with data

Today's lessons: **repetition** | **pictures** | **story**

repetition

The more we hear, see, read, and say things, the more likely they are to be remembered. Leverage repetition in structure and repetition in words through pithy repeatable phrases.

pictures

Use effective pictures—well designed graphs—so not only can your audience remember what they heard, but also what they saw. Three specific lessons for effective graphs: visualize, declutter, and focus.



visualize

Consider what you want to enable your audience to *do* with the data you show and choose a visual that will make this easy. Often, this means iterating and looking at different views of the data. Allow sufficient time for this important part of the process.

declutter

Identify any elements that aren't adding value and eliminate them. Use contrast strategically.



focus

Be thoughtful about where and how you direct your audience's attention. Employ the "where are your eyes drawn?" test to determine whether you're doing this effectively.

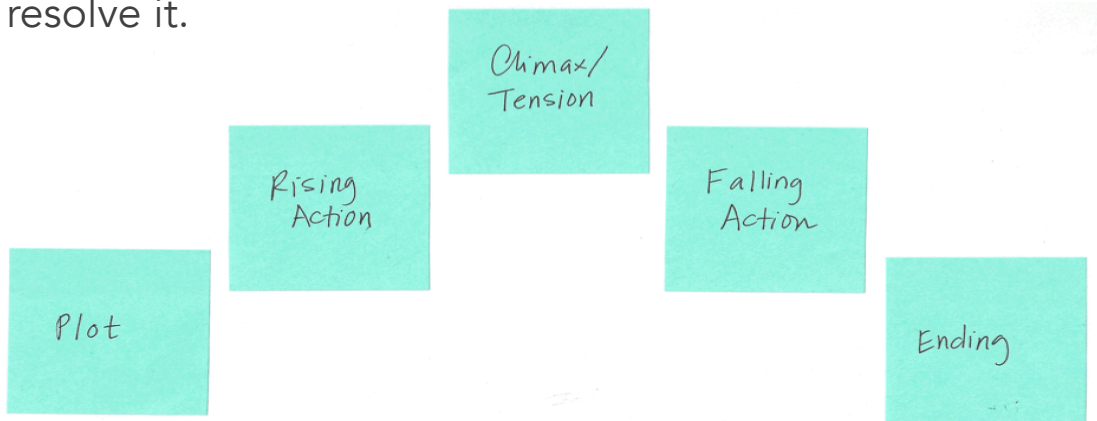


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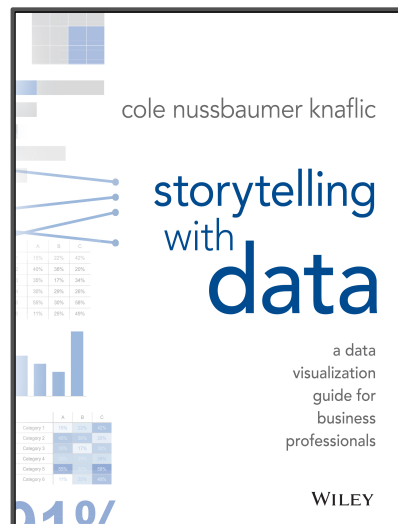
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story

"what's the story?" For every visual you show, clearly articulate the main takeaway in words, answering the question of "so what?" for your audience. **"what's the Story?"** Rather than the typical linear path, consider how you might make use of the narrative arc. Identify the tension that exists for your audience and help them see how to resolve it.



Don't simply show the data—make data a pivotal point in an overarching story!



where to learn more

The lessons covered today were a few highlights of content covered in much greater depth in the book *storytelling with data: a data visualization guide for business professionals* (available on Amazon) and in *storytelling with data* workshops. Additional resources—including many more before/after examples and downloadable Excel files—can be found at storytellingwithdata.com.