

4.7.3: Placement, Style, and Coloring

Learning Outcome

- Describe the impact of placement, style, and coloring when incorporating graphics into a message

Once you've decided what graph or chart to use, we need to make sure it fits with our visual media usage standards. It needs to make your message more accessible by being:

- Clean and simple
- Uniform
- Persuasive
- On brand

Let's build a pie chart and apply each of these standards to it as we go along.

Say you want to give a quarter bonus to the best member of each department, and you have settled on giving a \$50 gift card for a movie theater. You have surveyed the company to determine which local cinemas are used by your employees to see movies. You have decided to make a pie chart from the results, because you're looking to show the composition of your employees and their movie-going preferences.

At the moment, your pie chart looks like this:

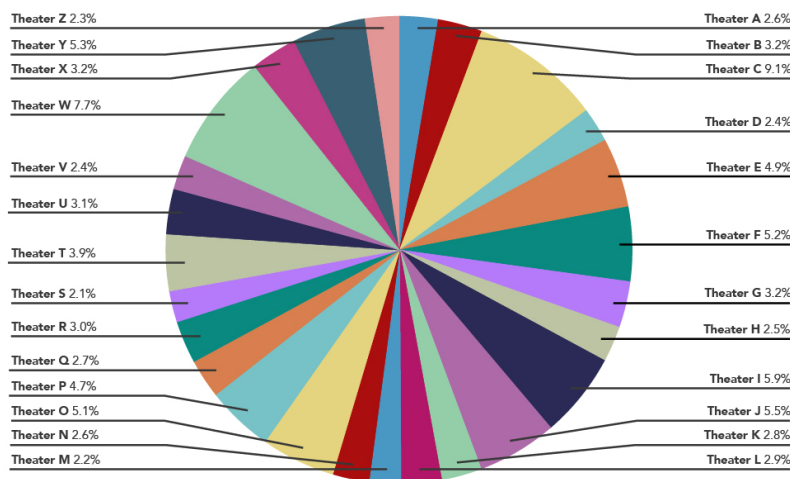


Figure 1. Which employees attend which theaters?

Figure 1 is definitely **not** clean and simple. There is so much to look at here that it's hard to see anything. No one will find this useful. In fact, a rule of thumb for pie charts is that if you have more than ten categories, you should present the information differently. (There's something called an [exploding pie chart](#) if you want to check that out.)

So how do we simplify the data? To begin with, we need to narrow down the categories. In this case, you could display theaters by company, rather than location, since all theaters of the same company will take the same gift card. Let's take a look at how the revised chart would look in Figure 2:

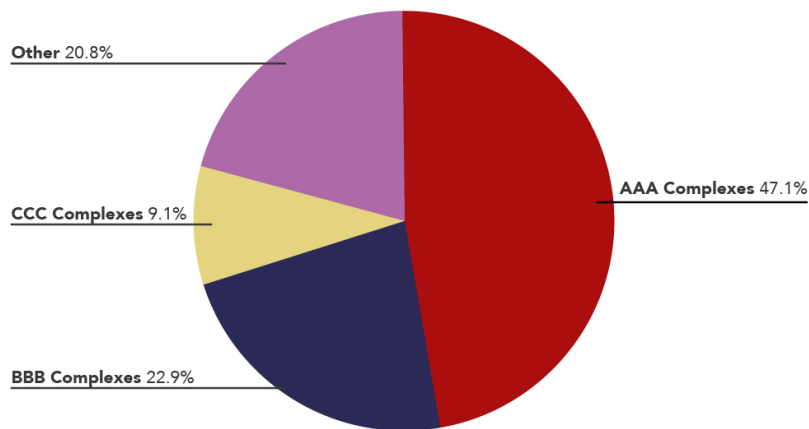


Figure 2. Which employees attend which theaters (by company)?

Now we're getting somewhere! This is a much easier chart to read. We can see at a glance that nearly half of our employees go to a movie theater owned by AAA, and smaller portions see films at the BBB and CCC theaters. This information has become way more accessible for the reader.

We've also chosen some bold, pleasing colors here. We can clearly tell what part of the pie belongs to BBB and what part belongs to the others. This is clean and simple!

Once we've achieved that, we must make it uniform. Do the rest of your charts, tables and graphs use the same bold, pleasing colors we use here? Have we chosen the same font size for our chart key? If the answer is yes, we can move on. We know that we are sharing information without distracting the reader.

Now we ask ourselves, is this data persuasive? Well, that depends on the story you're looking to tell. In this case, your best option is to purchase gift cards for AAA theaters because that is what your data is telling, since most of your employees enjoy seeing movies there. So let's give this a title:

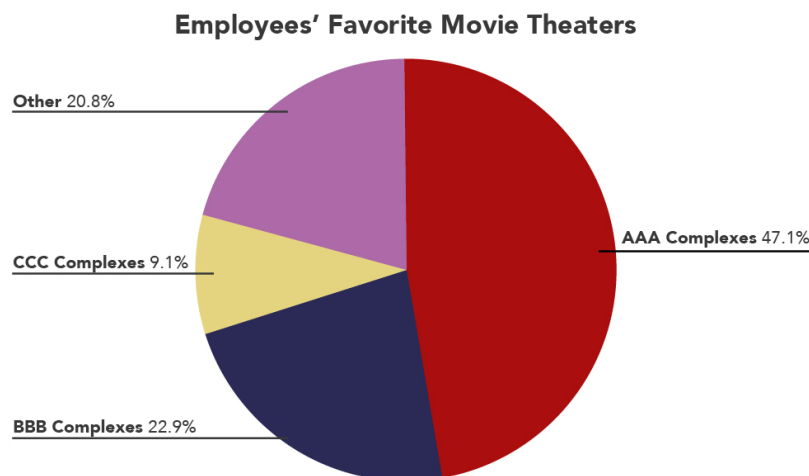


Figure 3: Your completed pie chart

Figure 3 a bit more persuasive. This immediately tells the reader "AAA Complexes are our employees' favorite movie theater."

Now, is your chart on brand? If your company's palette of colors includes blue, red, yellow and green, then yes! We are on brand. If your company uses different colors, go ahead and change them. A lot of companies have very specific color requirements, even for internal projects, so be sure to look out for your company's style requirements! For this project, it's as easy as that.

You've made the point of this communication very easy and accessible by making these changes and following our standards of visual media communication!

? Additional Resources

- Misleading Graphs: Real Life Examples
- Good Data, Bad Graphs

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