Contents

The book is divided into four parts. The chapters within each part build on each other, but the parts can be read and taught in any order.

The parts proceed from the micro to the macro. Part I starts within your own brain and how it perceives data. Part II focuses on how to optimize an individual graph. Part III moves out to the structure and organization of an effective communication. Finally, Part IV ends with strategies to present data well and deal with the ultimate complexity: other people’s responses.

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1
  Who this book is for ........................................................................................................................... 1
  What makes this book different ......................................................................................................... 1
  How this book is organized ................................................................................................................ 2

PART I
Understanding Perception

How and why graphs work .................................................................................................................. 7
  Chapter 1
    Know Your Own Mind (in order to change others’) ................................................................. 8
      Understand the challenges of communicating data ............................................................. 10
      Shift your mindset to explain data to others ........................................................................... 16
  Chapter 2
    See How Graphs Work (inside your brain) ................................................................................. 20
      How we decode graphs .............................................................................................................. 22
      How graphs encode data ............................................................................................................ 28
      Exercise: Break down the graphs ............................................................................................. 41

PART II
Designing Your Data

How to design effective graphs and slides ...................................................................................... 45
  Chapter 3
    Choose the Right Graph (for your data) ..................................................................................... 46
      Pick the graph based on the relationship ............................................................................... 48
      Use taxonomies to expand your library of graph types ......................................................... 71
      Exercise: Categorize the relationships .................................................................................... 73
Chapter 4
Simplify to Amplify (your message) .......................................................................... 78
  Maximize the data–ink ratio ..................................................................................... 80
  Make the most important information the most salient ...................................... 86
  Exercise: Redraw the graph ................................................................................... 98

Chapter 5
Build Effective Slides (with the point in mind) ....................................................... 100
  Identify a single point for each slide ..................................................................... 102
  Write your point as a headline ............................................................................... 102
  Use headlines to clarify your graphs ..................................................................... 106
  Test your slides to maximize clarity and impact ..................................................... 109
  Exercise: Sketch the right slide for this headline .................................................... 121

PART III
Organizing Your Data
How to arrange data into compelling communications ........................................... 125

Chapter 6
Structure Your Data (so others can follow it) .......................................................... 126
  Begin with your ending in mind ............................................................................. 128
  Structure your communication with a Minto pyramid ........................................ 129
  Synthesize your key points into a single main idea .............................................. 133
  Maximize the impact of your points .................................................................... 138
  Support your points with sound reasoning .......................................................... 145
  Convert your Minto pyramid into a complete communication .......................... 150
  Exercise: Making the case at Craigstone—Part I ............................................... 157

Chapter 7
Frame the Data to Persuade (so the audience acts) .............................................. 160
  Audiences evaluate more than just the data ....................................................... 162
  Understand how audiences evaluate your ideas ............................................... 162
  Maximize the likelihood of central processing with the WIIFT ....................... 165
  Use story to create a compelling context ............................................................. 173
  Take advantage of peripheral processing signals .............................................. 177
  Exercise: Making the case at Craigstone—Part II ............................................. 184