

Good Tables

While graphs are long known to need care to make them effective, tables can use some love, too. The basic grid-like table with boxes between all cells is *not* the way to go.

- Remove any vertical lines. Vertical lines can almost always be removed. A good table will only have three horizontal lines - two to frame the table above and below and one to separate the header row from the table data.
- Add extra space between rows. This can more clearly separate data than, say, horizontal lines. If you really need a line beyond the main 3, consider a dashed line.
- Consider cell alignment. When in doubt, align on the left. But often numbers should be aligned on the right. Having equal precision after a decimal point can make right-aligned numbers easier to compare across rows.
- Have a caption which has the table number (e.g., Table 1) and that explains the data shown in the table. Table captions go *above* the table.
- Light gray can be used to separate regions of a table, especially for large tables or tables with lots of columns e.g., alternating white/gray by row or clusters of rows.
- Don't repeat text across columns or across rows. Use multi-row and multi-column cells instead.
- Keep the table on one page. i.e., make sure cells do not "orphan" to the following page.

Links

Markus Puschel. "Small Guide to Making Nice Tables", Online: <https://people.inf.ethz.ch/markusp/teaching/guides/guide-tables.pdf>

Stack overflow discussion: <https://tex.stackexchange.com/questions/112343/beautiful-table-samples>