

Creating an Overlapping Bar Chart in Excel



For comparing multiple data points across two categories or points in time

With a slopegraph, there is no need to sort the data in a particular order before creating the visual.

1. Insert chart

- a. In Excel spreadsheet, highlight rows and columns of data (including column headers) → Home menu bar → Insert Charts → Line → 2D (first chart type)
- b. NOTE: you may have to rename your two column headers if they are dates or numbers. You can rename later

2. Switch rows/columns

NOTE that Excel didn't set up the legend and labels correctly.

- a. In toolbar, select Switch Row/Column

3. Resize graph

- a. Unlike bar charts, slopegraphs are tall and skinny → Use corner handles to resize area as vertical rectangle.

4. Remove unnecessary chart junk

- a. Select gridlines → Delete
- b. Select y-axis → Delete
- c. Select legend → Delete

5. Make room for labels

- a. Remove extra space on either side of vertical lines → Highlight x-axis → Right click → Select Format Axis → Axis Position → Select On Tick Marks
- b. Make space for labels → Select chart area → Drag left handle a bit to the right, leaving enough space for left labels

6. Directly label each trend line

- a. Select first line → Right click → Select Add Data Labels
- b. Left click two times slowly on left label (to uncouple right and left labels from each other) →

- c. Right click on left label → Format Data Label → Label Position → Select Left → Label Options → Label Contains → Check Series Name → Uncheck Show Leader Lines → Separator → Change to (space)

7. Add emphasis

Use line color and width and label color, font size and bolding to draw attention to main data points and grey out less important data. Match label text color of label to line color.

- a. To change line color → Right click each line one at a time → Format Data Series → Line Color → Paint bucket → Change color from drop down menu
- b. To change line thickness → Right click each line one at a time → Format Data Series → Line Style → Width → Increase point size
- c. To change font size, color or style → Select one set of labels at a time → Right click → Change font size, color or bolding with appropriate drop down menu. If increasing the font size splits label onto two lines, → Chart Tools → Layout (menu bar at top) → Select spot outside of chart area → Text box → Type label → Resize to proper shape so label fits on one line → Reposition to cover over existing label

8. Reposition labels

- a. If labels overlap, select label → Drag to reposition

9. Delete any leader lines

- a. Select label → Right click → Format Data Labels → Label Options → De-select Show Leader Lines

10. Delete unnecessary x-axis line

- a. Select x-axis → Right click → Format Axis → Line Color → Select No Line

11. Visually define chart area

- a. To create visual “goal posts” between two points/categories → Select x-axis → Right click → In right click menu, Add Major Gridlines

12. Insert chart title

- a. In toolbar → Chart Tools → Design → Add Chart Element (at far left) → Chart Title → Type headline using sentence style

Resources

- Stephanie Evergreen blog, books, and Evergreen Data Academy: <http://stephanieevergreen.com/>
- Ann Emery workshops, blog, and other evaluation resources: <http://annkemery.com/workshops/>
- Mike “excelisfun” Girvin’s YouTube video tutorials: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ExcelsFun>
- Mr. Nystrom YouTube videos on Stats <https://www.youtube.com/user/MrNystrom>
- American Evaluation Association courses: http://comm.eval.org/coffee_break_webinars/estudy
- Tobacco Control Evaluation Center: www.tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu or 530-752-9951