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Good tables

Numbers have an architecture

When do you use tables?

- 10 or fewer data points

- Exact numerical data

- Localized comparisons

Types of tables —

- Exploratory

- Resource

- Presentation

Data Field

- Keep the number of decimal places to a minimum
- Place notation on the labels not in the data field
- Keep the number of empty cells to a minimum

Table titles

- Briefly describe the data to be presented
- Clearly highlight the difference between this table and others
- Long enough to inform but short enough not to bore
- Do not include a description of every variable

Row labels

- Should be consistent from table to table
- Use indents to show subdivisions
- Create patterns in long lists by skipping a line or half line every fifth entry

Column heads

- Identify what the column is measuring
- Use the same units down the column
- Use simple but informative labels
- Avoid repetitious categories by spacing and grouping
- Make certain that both the numerator and denominator are clear

Create a logical visual pattern

- Order the content according to how the data will be used
  - — Presentation tables use rank order or other hierarchy
  - — Resource tables use alphabetical or other logical order
- Look to the numbers to carry out the ordering
- Make patterns and exceptions obvious at a glance
- Place figures that are to be compared close to one another
- Put summary data where you think it will be most useful

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