# Principles of good visual representation

Tips and examples of how to make concepts and processes speak for themselves

*For visualization of figurative data, see …*

Dirk De Weerdt
www.ddwdesign.be

Main purposes

- Keep it simple and clear
- Keep it visual
- Keep it logical

Use of color

- In general, the use of very intense and contrasting colors could absorb too much of the reader's attention. I advise to use a calming range of soft colors reflecting our natural environment.
- A good idea is to show the main element on a white background, surrounded by soft shading. Don't use dark backgrounds.

Graphic effects

- Your purpose is to convey and idea, a message. All the rest is decoration. Leave out what is not essential. Similar to strong colors, special effects like perspective, see-through, sophisticated textures could potentially distract from your purpose. Use them with care.

Keep it simple and clear

- Avoid detours. Put information where it is needed. For example, when a drawing is filled up with abbreviations or codes that are explained elsewhere, your eyes have to make lots of detours on reading. Try to avoid this and work straightforward. If you can't avoid coding, choose codes that are easy to recognize.
- Align where possible. Don't mess up a scheme with plural elements that differ just slightly in size or are almost aligned.

Keep it logical

- Flow of information. In the western culture, we are used to read from left to right and from top to bottom. Build up your drawing according to this.
- Don't reverse the reading or thinking process. For example, a control or placebo sample should get an empty color, the treated samples being colored in an intensity according to their dose.

See also wiki: Infographics (information graphics)