

## Data charts

In using data charts or spread sheets, provide handouts in addition to showing the PPT slide. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Pie charts – use to show percentages, limit to 4-6 slices
- Vertical bar charts – use to show changes over time – such as year to year, limit the number to 6-8.
- Horizontal bar charts – use to compare quantities such as comparing wheat yields among different regions in a county.
- Line charts – use to indicate trends. Example is a weight chart or growth chart in a child.
- Tables – use for side by side comparisons of data.

Here are a few more tips on data charts from the *University of Minnesota ITV website*:

- Don't try to graph all data from a table in one chart. Select a subset that illustrates one point you want to make.
- Use horizontal rather than vertical labels for easier reading.
- Label bars, lines, and other data directly. Keys and legends are hard to read on a monitor.
- Keep "chart junk" such as tick marks, grids, labels, and decorations to a minimum. Emphasize the data, not the design.
- Use a dull color such as gray for tick marks, axes, and grids so these less important elements will not detract from the data.
- Divide the axis into units that are multiples of two, five, or ten for easier interpretation.
- Maintain consistent units of measurement on the axis from chart to chart. For example, don't switch from thousands to millions of dollars in a series of related charts.
- Begin the axes at zero or show a break in the axis to indicate a non-zero baseline when making comparisons. (Retrieved from the World Wide Web on 8/28/02, <http://umrtv.cee.umn.edu/UMTIV/mat.htm>)

