**Brief Biography**

“The Leonardo da Vinci of data,” as the New York Times calls him, Edward Tufte (pronounced TUFF-tee) has written several books on information design and using statistics to analyze political issues. He writes, designs, and self-publishes his books on analytical design, which have received more than 40 awards for content and design. He is Professor Emeritus at Yale University, where he taught courses in statistical evidence, information design, and interface design.

Tufte has successfully drawn the attention of countless people to issues of information design. Tufte presents a devastating critique of the way information is usually pictured to us. Bad graphics, according to Tufte, lie by distortion, obfuscate by omission and confuse by decoration. We have grown accustomed to awful information.

**A Simple Approach**

Tufte’s approach is deceptively simple. He teaches by visual example. Next to a bad example of a graph, he positions a sublimely clear treatment, often using the same data. Simple and effective.

“There is no such thing as information overload, there is only bad design. Reduce the clutter.”
**Tufte’s Top 5 List**

**Data-ink**
Tufte uses the term “data-ink ratio” to argue against including non-informative decoration in visual displays of quantitative information, and says that all ink not used to convey and display data should be eliminated.

**Chart Junk**
In dismantling some of the worst habits of two-dimensional design, he has framed a new analytical term, “chart junk,” it includes the ubiquitous, unneeded words and addenda that crowds the page, from PowerPoint to project management charts and financial reports. Most of this junk can be removed without diminishing understanding. “Clutter is a failure of design, not an attribute of information,” Envisioning Information.

**Sparklines**
Tufte innovated “sparklines,” they are intense, simple, word-size Graphics. “They can be embedded in-line in a sentence, summarizing millions of points of data in the space of a word,” says Tufte.

**The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint**
“PowerPoint is evil” – PowerPoint is a competent slide manager and projector. But rather than supplementing a presentation, it has become a substitute for it. Such misuse ignores the most important rule of speaking: Respect your audience.

**Escaping Flatland**
“We envision information in order to reason about, communicate, document, and preserve that knowledge, activities nearly always carried out on two-dimensional paper and computer screen. Escaping this flatland and enriching the density of data displays are the essential tasks of information design.” Envisioning Information.

“Don’t ask how visualization techniques can help display data. Ask how data can be best represented.”

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Information Design Index Cards is a set of cards designed and produced by the students of DAI 523, Information Design 1, a fourth-year course in the Design and Industry Department, San Francisco State University, Fall 2009. The set, by no means complete, is composed of 1+22 cards on Information Design topics. Coordinated by instructor Pino Trogu, each topic was chosen and researched by the students. DAI 523 provides students with an introduction to the field of information design, covering a variety of applications across print, screen and environmental media. This is card number 04 and it was designed by Rae Chu-Colwell.

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