

Polishing plots for presentation

Hadley Wickham

Assistant Professor / Dobelman Family Junior Chair
Department of Statistics / Rice University

June 12



Wednesday, June 13, 12

Communication graphics

When you need to **communicate** your findings, you need to spend a lot of time polishing your graphics to eliminate distractions and focus on the story.

Now it's time to pay attention to the small stuff: labels, colour choices, tick marks...

1. **Scales:** used to override default perceptual mappings, and tune parameters of axes and legends.
2. **Coordinate systems:** override default Cartesian coordinate system
3. **Themes:** control presentation of non-data elements.
4. **Saving your work:** to include in reports, presentations, etc.

Scales

Scales

Control how data is mapped to perceptual properties, and produce **guides** (axes and legends) which allow us to read the plot.

Important parameters: **name**, **breaks** & **labels**, **limits**.

Naming scheme: `scale_aesthetic_name`.

All default scales have name continuous or discrete.

```
# Default scales
```

```
scale_x_continuous()
```

```
scale_y_discrete()
```

```
scale_colour_discrete()
```

```
# Custom scales
```

```
scale_colour_hue()
```

```
scale_x_log10()
```

```
scale_fill_brewer()
```

```
# Scales with parameters
```

```
scale_x_continuous("X Label", limits = c(1, 10))
```

```
scale_colour_gradient(low = "blue", high = "red")
```

```
p <- qplot(cyl, displ, data = mpg)

# First argument (name) controls axis label
p + scale_y_continuous("Displacement (l)")
p + scale_x_continuous("Cylinders")

# Breaks and labels control tick marks
p + scale_x_continuous(breaks = c(4, 6, 8))
p + scale_x_continuous(breaks = c(4, 6, 8),
  labels = c("small", "medium", "big"))

# Limits control range of data
p + scale_y_continuous(limits = c(1, 8))
# same as:
p + ylim(1, 8)
```

Your turn

```
qplot(carat, price, data = diamonds, geom = "bin2d")
```

Manipulate the fill colour legend to:

- Change the title to “Count”
- Display breaks at 1000, 3500 & 7000
- Add commas to the keys (e.g. 1,000)
- Set the limit for the scale from 0 to 8000.


```
p <- qplot(carat, price, data = diamonds, geom = "")

# First argument (name) controls legend title
p + scale_fill_continuous("Count")

# Breaks and labels control legend keys
p + scale_fill_continuous(breaks = c(1000, 3500, 7000))
p + scale_fill_continuous(breaks = c(0, 4000, 8000))

# Why don't 0 and 8000 have colours?
p + scale_fill_continuous(breaks = c(0, 4000, 8000),
  limits = c(0, 8000))

# Can use labels to make more human readable
breaks <- c(0, 2000, 4000, 6000, 8000)
labels <- format(breaks, big.mark = ",")
p + scale_fill_continuous(breaks = breaks, labels = labels,
  limits = c(0, 8000))
```

```
p <- qplot(color, carat, data = diamonds)

# Basically the same for discrete variables
p + scale_x_discrete("Color")

# Except limits is now a character vector
p + scale_x_discrete(limits = c("D", "E", "F"))

# Should work for boxplots too
qplot(color, carat, data = diamonds,
      geom = "boxplot") +
  scale_x_discrete(limits = c("D", "E", "F"))
```

Alternate scales

Can also override the default choice of scales. You are most likely to want to do this with **colour**, as it is the most important aesthetic after position.

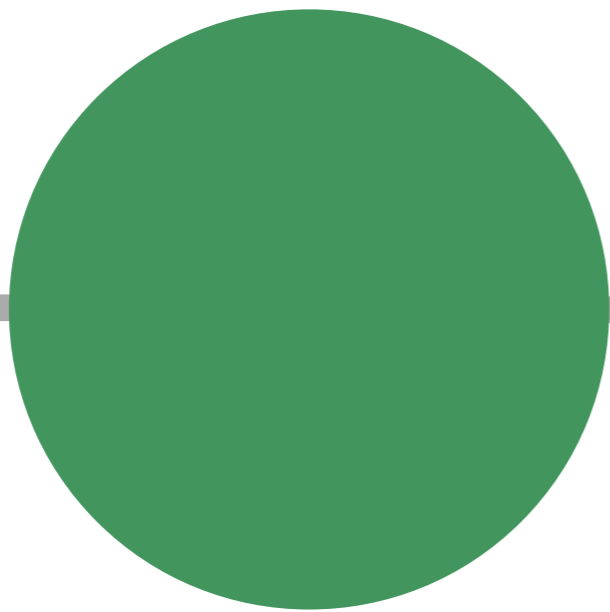
Need a little background to be able to use colour effectively: colour **spaces** & colour **blindness**.

Colour spaces

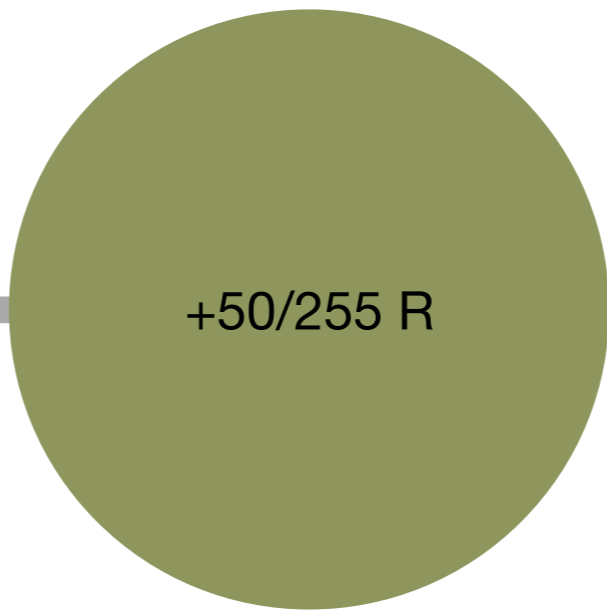
Most familiar is **rgb**: defines colour as mixture of **red**, **green** and **blue**. Matches the physics of eye, but the brain does a lot of post-processing, so it's hard to directly perceive these components.

A more useful colour space is hcl:
hue, chroma and luminance

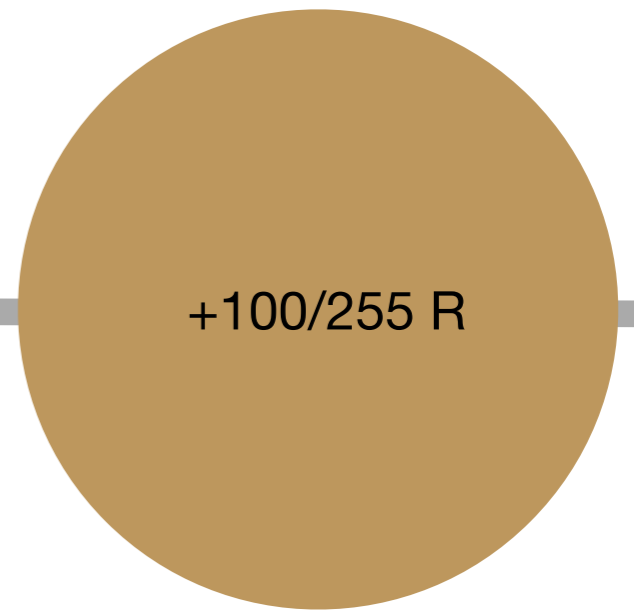
r



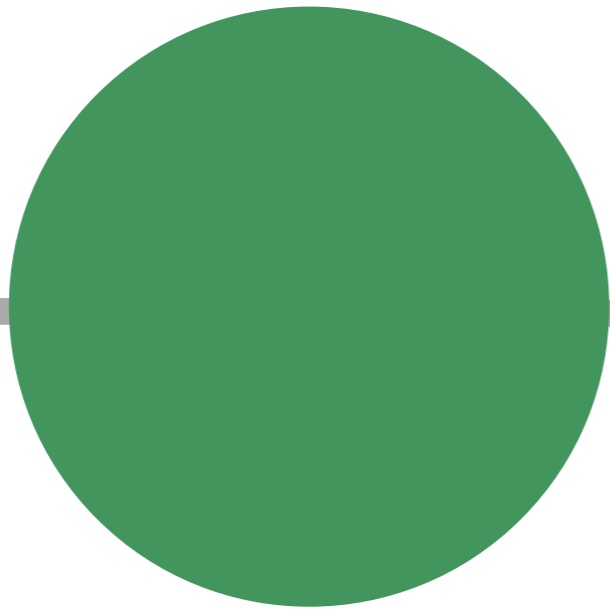
+50/255 R



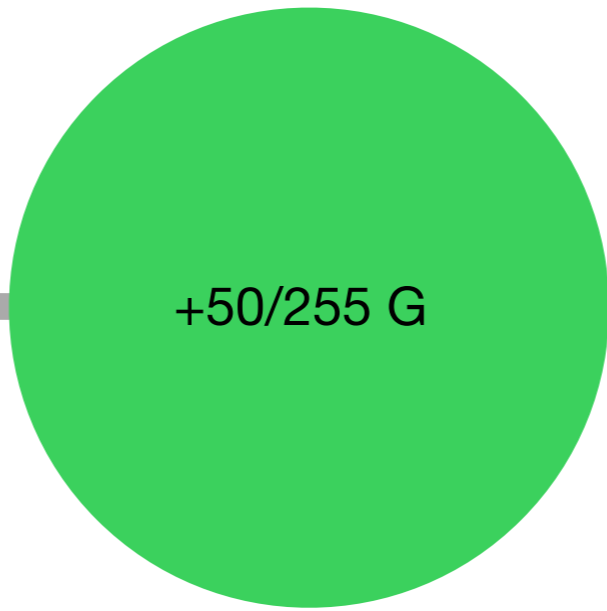
+100/255 R



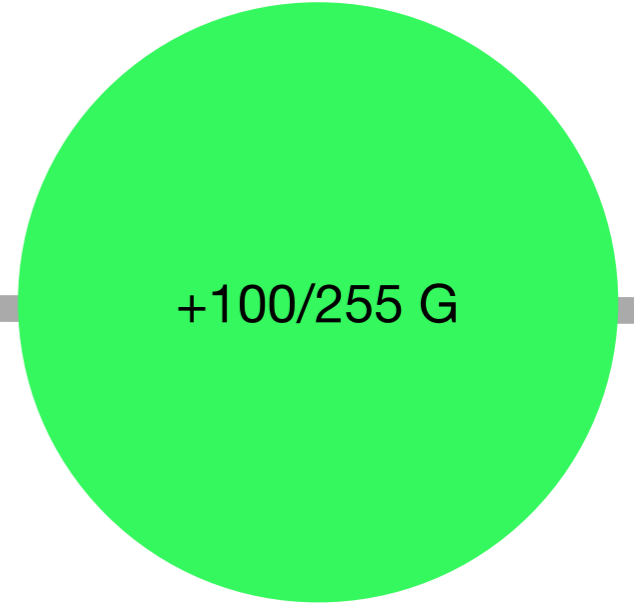
g



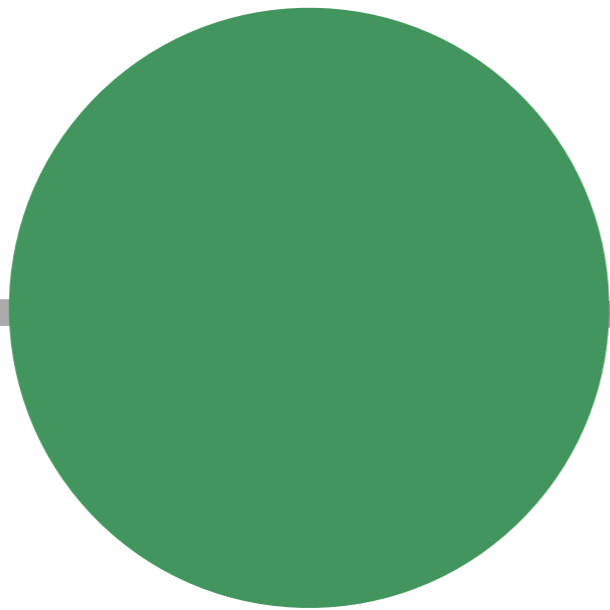
+50/255 G



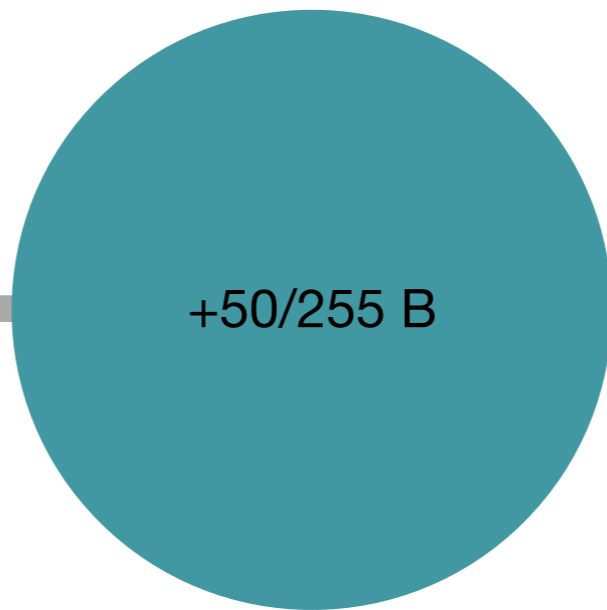
+100/255 G



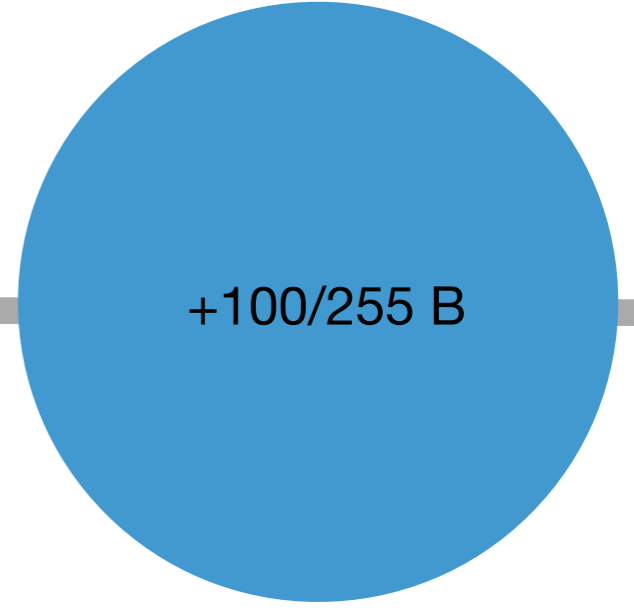
b



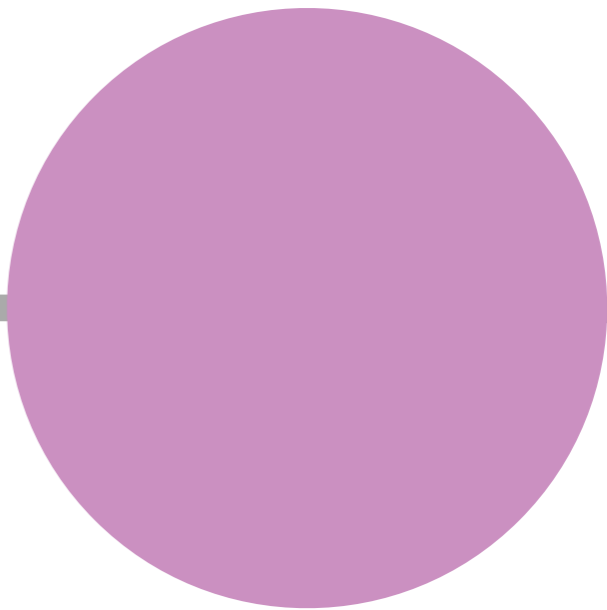
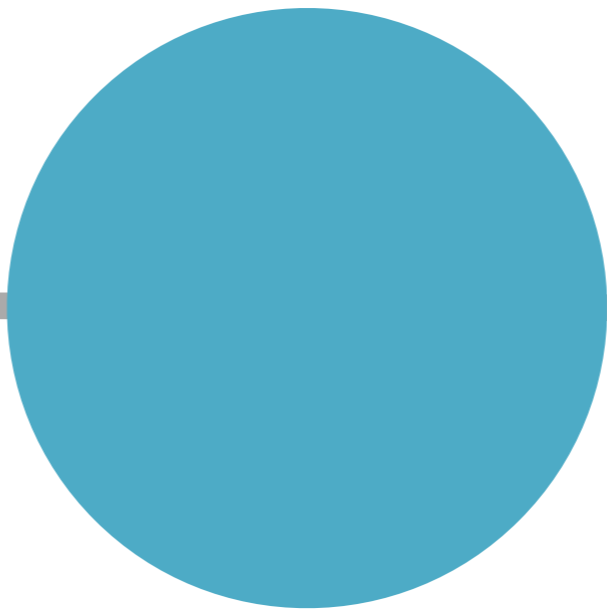
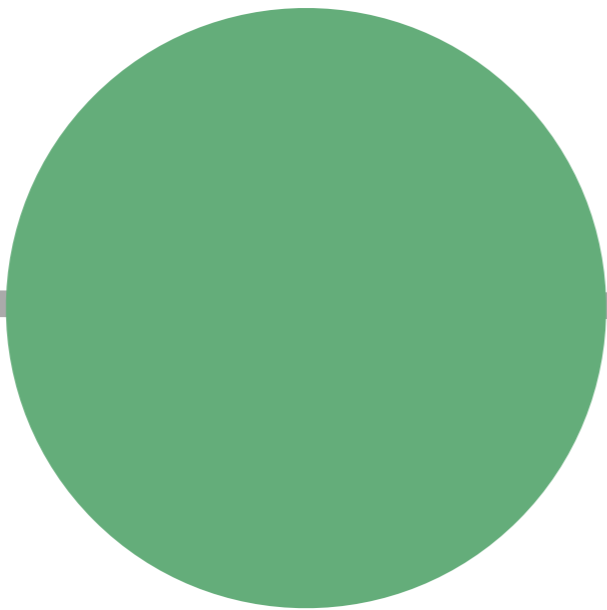
+50/255 B



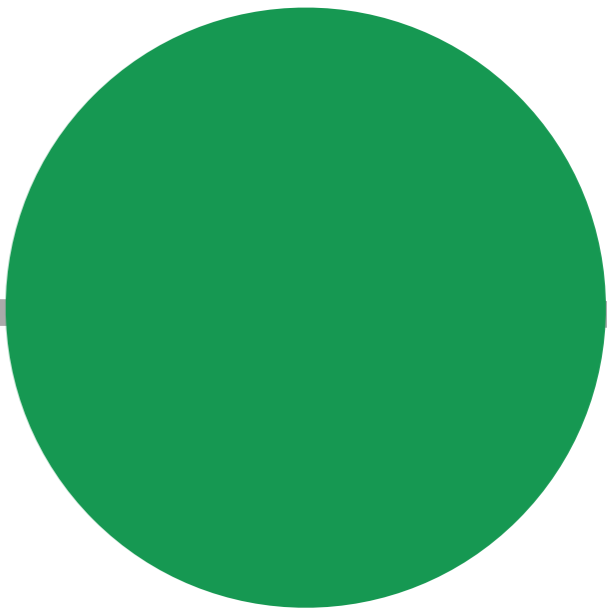
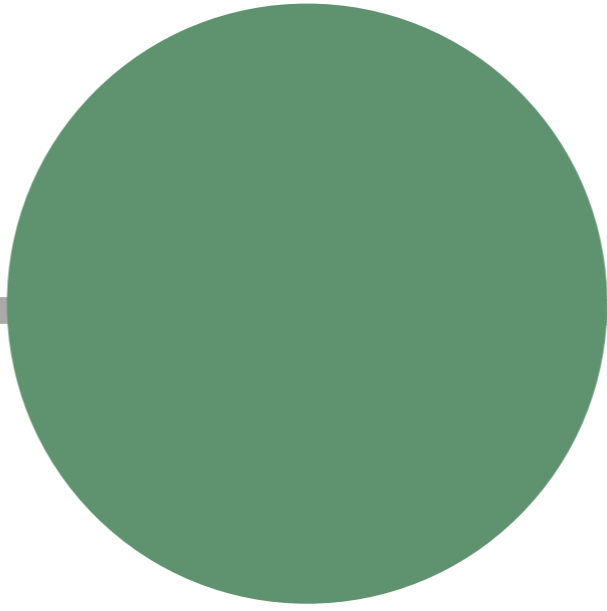
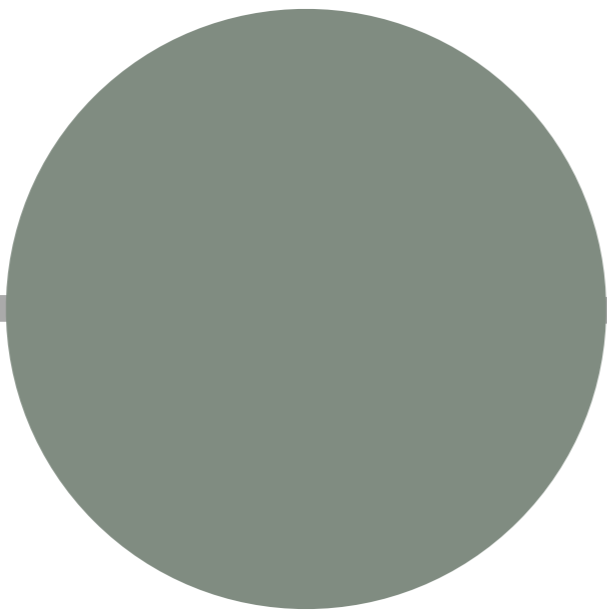
+100/255 B



h



c



l

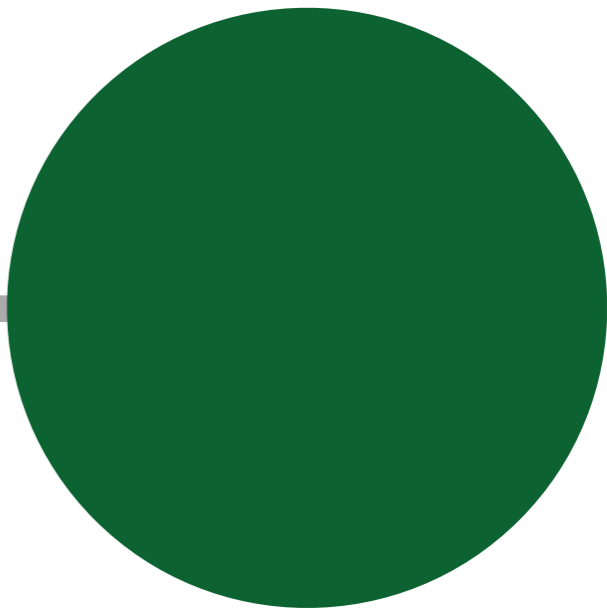
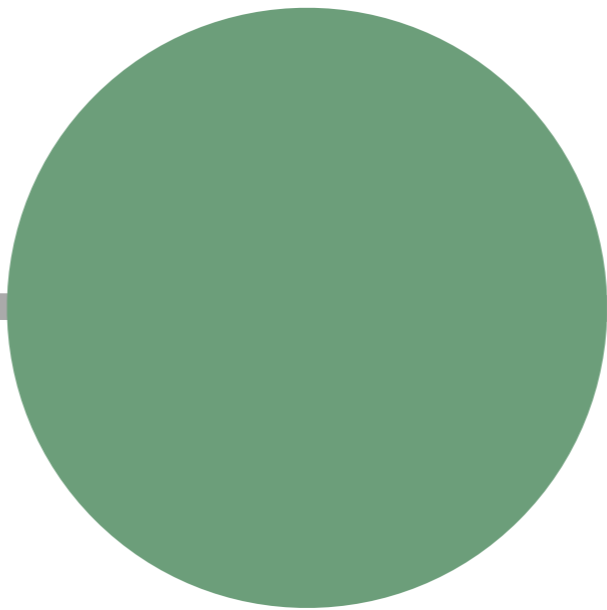
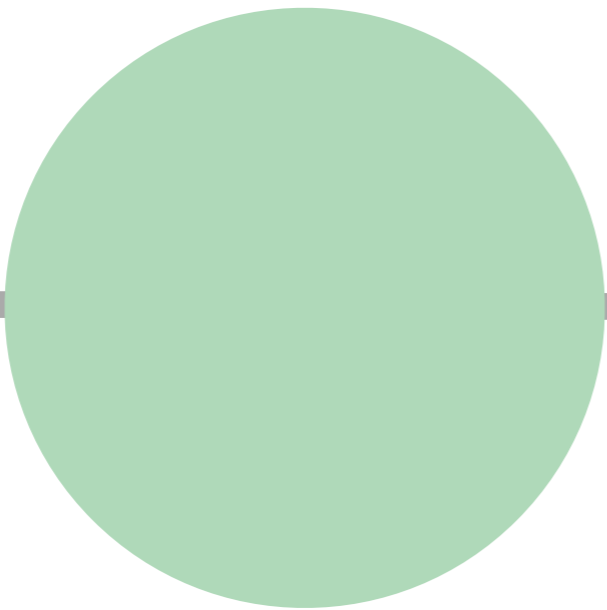
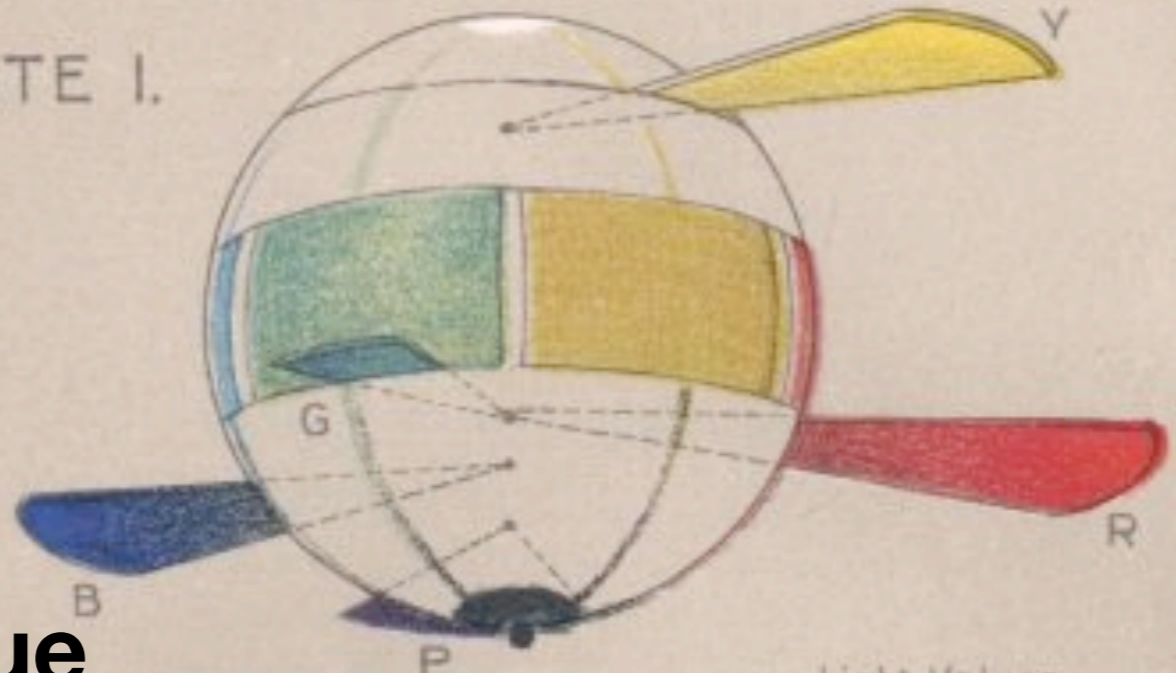


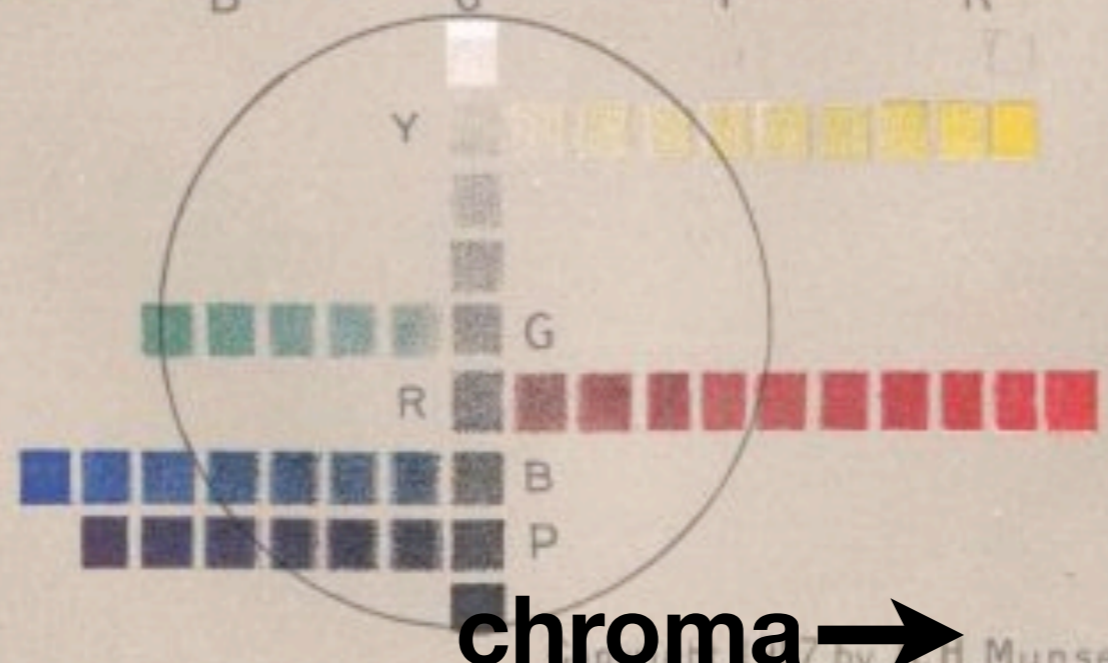
PLATE I.



hue



luminance →



chroma →

Copyright by W. Munsell.

Default colour scales

Discrete: evenly spaced hues of equal chroma and luminance. No colour appears more important than any other. Does not imply order.

Continuous: evenly spaced hues between two colours.

Alternatives

Discrete: brewer, grey

Continuous: gradient2, gradientn

Color brewer

Cynthia Brewer applied basics principles and then rigorously tested to produce selection of good palettes, particularly tailored for maps: <http://colorbrewer2.org/>

Can use `cut_interval()` or `cut_number()` to convert continuous to discrete.

Colour blindness

7-10% of men are red-green colour “blind”. (Many other rarer types of colour blindness)

Solutions: avoid red-green contrasts; use redundant mappings; **test**. I like color oracle: <http://colororacle.cartography.ch>

Your turn

Read through the examples for
`scale_colour_brewer`,
`scale_colour_gradient2` and
`scale_colour_gradientn`.

Experiment!

Coordinate systems

```
# For spatial data:
```

```
coord_map()
```

```
# To zoom in on plot
```

```
coord_cartesian(xlim = ..., ylim = ...)
```

```
# Polar coordinates
```

```
coord_polar()
```

```
# Equal coordinates
```

```
coord_equal()
```

Themes

Visual appearance

So far have only discussed how to get the data displayed the way you want, focussing on the essence of the plot.

Themes give you a huge amount of control over the appearance of the plot, the choice of background colours, fonts and so on.


```
# Two built in themes. The default:  
qplot(carat, price, data = diamonds)  
  
# And a theme with a white background:  
qplot(carat, price, data = diamonds) + theme_bw()  
  
# Use theme_set if you want it to apply to every  
# future plot.  
theme_set(theme_bw())  
  
# This is the best way of seeing all the default  
# options  
theme_bw()  
theme_grey()
```

Elements

You can also make your own theme, or modify an existing one.

Themes are made up of elements which can be one of: `theme_line`, `theme_segment`, `theme_text`, `theme_rect`, `theme_blank`

Gives you a lot of control over plot appearance.

Elements

Axis: axis.line, axis.text.x, axis.text.y,
axis.ticks, axis.title.x, axis.title.y

Legend: legend.background, legend.key,
legend.text, legend.title

Panel: panel.background, panel.border,
panel.grid.major, panel.grid.minor

Strip: strip.background, strip.text.x,
strip.text.y

```
p <- qplot(displ, hwy, data = mpg) +  
  opts(title = "Bigger engines are less efficient")  
  
# To modify a plot  
p  
p + opts(plot.title =  
  theme_text(size = 12, face = "bold"))  
p + opts(plot.title = theme_text(colour = "red"))  
p + opts(plot.title = theme_text(angle = 45))  
p + opts(plot.title = theme_text(hjust = 1))
```

Your turn

Fix the overlapping y labels on this plot:

```
qplot(reorder(model, hwy), hwy,  
data = mpg)
```

Rotate the labels on these strips so they are easier to read.

```
qplot(hwy, reorder(model, hwy), data =  
mpg) + facet_grid(manufacturer ~ .,  
scales = "free", space = "free")
```

**Saving
your work**

```
qplot(price, carat, data = diamonds)  
ggsave("diamonds.png")
```

```
# Selects graphics device based on extension  
ggsave("diamonds.png")  
ggsave("diamonds.pdf")
```

```
# Uses on-screen device size, or override with
# width & height (to be reproducible)
ggsave("diamonds.png", width = 6, height = 6)

# Outputs last plot by default, override
# with plot:
dplot <- qplot(carat, price, data = diamonds)
ggsave("diamonds.png", plot = dplot)

# Defaults to 300 dpi for png
ggsave("diamonds.png", dpi = 72)
```


Raster	Vector
pixel-based	instruction-based
png	pdf
for plots with many points	for all other plots
ms office, web	latex

Your turn

Save a pdf of a scatterplot of price vs carat. Open it up in adobe acrobat.

Save a png of the same scatterplot and embed it into a word or latex document.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 United States License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/us/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.