1. Keep it simple.

A. Aim to impart one or two key messages.
   » Did you highlight key patterns that seem to have meaning in the real world?
   » Can your viewers summarize your message(s) in a single sentence?
   » Try to impart something your audience will be drawn to, remember, and share. Know your audience.

B. Everything on your graphic should have a reason for being there.
   » Pretend ink is expensive, so use as little as possible to tell your story.
   » Use color to reinforce your message, not solely for design.
   » Use basic, intuitive representations.
   » Don’t include unnecessary dimensions of data (time, space, feature, etc.).

2. Tell the truth.

A. Keep it accurate.
   » Did you pull the numbers correctly?
   » Keep in mind where your data came from. How was it collected? Context is essential.
   » Did you cite your data sources?
   » Use labels to eliminate ambiguity.

B. Be fair.
   » Choose your statistics wisely. Mean/averages, medians, and percentages tell different stories.
   » Did you represent the numbers and scale accurately? Make things proportional and appropriate to the numbers.
   » Are you comparing like things (similar attribute, dimension, time scale, etc.)?
   » Dots, lines, area, and volume convey different messages. Consider carefully which you will use.
   » Be aware of ways your graphic could be misinterpreted. Do your graphs show what you think they show? (Challenge yourself to reinterpret your graphic.)

3. Blow them away.

   » Draw them in with interesting, innovative design.
   » Shake up traditional charts, graphs, maps, etc.
   » Draw viewers’ attention to the substance of the graphic.
   » Show data variation, not design variation.