

# Sparklines: Use tiny charts to show data trends

Quick Reference Card

## Sparkline best practices

- Keep your design simple.
- Try not to use a bunch of different formats and colors. As best you can, try to use somewhat muted, complementary colors.
- You want people to focus on the key data points, not the sparkline itself. So if possible, the colors you use for the high and low points should contrast with the more muted color of the sparkline itself.

## Create a sparkline

1. Select an empty cell or group of empty cells in which you want to insert one or more sparklines.
2. On the **Insert** tab, in the **Sparklines** group, click the type of sparkline that you want to create: **Line**, **Column**, or **Win/Loss**.
3. In the **Create Sparklines** dialog box, type the range of the cells that contain the data on which you want to base the sparklines. Or click and drag to select the range of cells.

After you create sparklines, the **Sparkline Tools** appear, displaying the **Design** tab. Use the commands on the **Design** tab to create a new sparkline, change its type, format it, show or hide data points on a line sparkline, or format the vertical axis in a sparkline group.

## Clear sparklines from spreadsheet cells

1. Select the sparkline or group of sparklines you want to delete.
2. On the **Design** tab, in the **Group** group, click the arrow on the **Clear** button, and then select either **Clear Selected Sparklines** or **Clear Selected Sparkline Groups**.

## Control which value points are shown in a line sparkline

- On the **Design** tab, in the **Show** group, to show:
  - All values, select the **Markers** check box.
  - Negative values, select the **Negative Points** check box.
  - The highest or the lowest values, select the **High Point** or **Low Point** check boxes.
  - The first or last values, select the **First Point** or **Last Point** check boxes.

## Change the style of or format sparklines

1. Select a single sparkline or a sparkline group.

2. To apply a predefined style, on the **Design** tab, in the **Style** group, click a style or click the arrow at the lower right corner of the box to see additional styles.
3. To apply specific formatting to a sparkline, use the **Sparkline Color** or the **Marker Color** commands.

### **Show irregular time periods in data**

- On the **Design** tab, in the **Group** group, click **Axis**, and then click **Date Axis Type** to format the shape of the chart in a sparkline to reflect any irregular time periods in the underlying data.
  - In a line sparkline, this can change the slope of a plotted line and the position of its data points in relation to each other.
  - In a column sparkline, this can change the width of and increase or decrease the distance between the columns.

### **Set minimum or maximum values for the vertical axis**

Setting these values helps you control the scale. For example, if a data marker is so small that it is hard to read, you might change the minimum value of the axis.

1. With the sparkline or sparkline group selected, on the **Design** tab, in the **Group** group, click **Axis**.
2. Under **Vertical Axis Minimum Value Options** or **Vertical Axis Maximum Value Options**, click **Custom Value**.
3. Set minimum or maximum values that you feel will best emphasize the values in the sparklines.

### **Emphasize negative values**

If there are negative values in your data, you can emphasize this by showing a horizontal axis in your sparkline.

1. With the sparkline or sparkline group selected, on the **Design** tab, in the **Group** group, click **Axis**.
2. Under **Horizontal Axis Options**, click **Show Axis**.  
Any sparklines that contain negative data will display a horizontal axis at 0.