



Free Training Transcript:
Step and Jump Lines

Welcome to this video on Step and Jump lines in Tableau Desktop. You can download the Exercise workbook to follow along in your own copy of Tableau.

Line graphs are a wonderful way to show data over time, but if the data is only captured at discrete points in time, drawing a straight line between those points could be misleading. Data often doesn't change in a gradual, continuous manner, but rather makes a jump from one discrete value to another. Let's look at how we can plot this in Tableau.

Line Graphs

Building a line graph in Tableau Desktop is straightforward. Here, we have data on bestselling books. We're filtered to just the Trade Paperback Fiction list, and we're looking at one single book, *Ready Player One*.

Let's build a timeline for the rank of this book over time. We'll start by bring Week to the Columns shelf. By default this comes out as a discrete date part, starting with Year. But we want a continuous line across time, so we'll change this to be a Continuous Week by using the dropdown menu and selecting Week Number in the second section here, for date truncations.

Now we see the span of the data set, about 4 months.

Next, we want to see Rank over this timespan, so we'll bring Rank to Rows. The mark type is automatic, and we can see that it's a line. We could also force this to be a line graph by manually setting the mark type to Line in the dropdown.

Because a rank of 1 is better than a rank of 15, I want the axis to be switched so 1 is at the top. Right click on the axis and select Edit Axis, then check Reversed for the scale.

Now we have this timeline line graph and we can see there have been some ups and downs but this book peaked at #1 right around the time the movie came out at the end of March. But did it gradually move from #3 to #1? No, it was ranked 3rd for one week and ranked 1st the next in an abrupt shift.

Step and Jump Lines

A better way to show this data might be to use Step or Jump Lines. Unlike a regular line graph, which plots each value then draws a straight line between a set of points, a step line plots the value until it changes, then, like a staircase, shoots up to the next value at a

90 degree angle. This can be very useful for emphasizing the magnitude of the change.

A jump line does a similar thing, but doesn't draw the vertical line connecting the values, jumping from one to the next. This can be useful for emphasizing the duration of a value before it changes.

To change the line type between linear, step, and jump, click the Path shelf on the marks card and select the desired type.

The value markers can be toggled on and off by clicking the Color shelf and selecting the desired option.

Conclusion

Thank you for watching this video on line types. We invite you to continue with the Free Training videos to learn more about using Tableau.