



Bar Charts vs Pie Charts: Which One to Choose

KS3 Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

What Are Bar Charts and Pie Charts?

A **bar chart** uses rectangular bars of different heights to show data. A **pie chart** is a circle divided into slices, where each slice represents a portion of the whole. Both are ways to show information visually, but they work best in different situations.

When Pie Charts Work Well

Pie charts are great when you want to show how something is divided into parts that make up **100%**. For example, if you're showing what percentage of students in your class like different sports, a pie chart can show each sport as a slice of the whole class.

Think of it like a pizza: if you want to show that **half** your class likes football and a **quarter** like netball, the pie chart shows these portions as actual slices.

When Bar Charts Are Better

Use a **bar chart** when you need to **compare numbers** across different categories. If you're showing how many students like each sport (actual numbers, not percentages), a bar chart makes it much easier to see which sport is most popular.

Bar charts are also better when you have many categories to compare, or when you want to show changes over time. A **pie chart** becomes confusing and hard to read when you have too many slices.

Think of it like lining up your friends by height: with a bar chart, you can instantly see who's tallest and compare everyone at a glance. A pie chart would slice them into pieces, which doesn't help you compare!

Key Differences

Pie charts work best when you have fewer than **5 or 6** categories. **Bar charts** can handle many more categories and let readers see exact values more easily. When you

need precision and comparison, choose a **bar chart**. When you want to show proportions of a whole, choose a **pie chart**.

The golden rule: ask yourself, *"Do I want to compare different amounts, or show how parts make up a whole?"* Your answer tells you which chart to use.