

The three numbers first, and everything else lower

A reader gives a dashboard about eight seconds before deciding whether it is for them. What they see in those eight seconds is decided by the top of the page, and most dashboards spend it on a logo, a date range picker and a total.

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Lesson 2 of 8

Dashboards and Reporting — What it is for

What this lesson covers

- The order a page is read in
- The tile
- What goes behind a link
- The five-second test, applied to a page
- Print, and the phone
- What the layout cannot fix
- Report it whole
- What comes next

The order a page is read in

Position	Carries
Title and one line	What this is and what it decides
The tiles	The three or four numbers the decision turns on
The table	The disaggregation the decision needs
The figure	A shape a table cannot show
The context	Who it is for and what they are deciding
The method and the limits	What it does not show

The order a page is read in

- Every dashboard on this platform is in that order — and the order is the same in both languages because it is about. . .
- The two things that usually occupy the top and should not — a logo, and a filter control

The tile — Example

56.3%

Basic service

improved and within 30 minutes

The tile

- The value, large — One number, at the precision the interval supports
- The label, plain — What it is, in the words the audience uses
- The note, small — The definition compressed to a clause — "improved and within 30 minutes" — because the tile is where. . .
- Colour only where it is a state — The dashboards here use the signal band on a tile only when the number is a severity. . .

What goes behind a link

On the page	Behind a link
Three headline numbers	Every indicator in the logframe
One disaggregation	Every disaggregation
The current round	The historic series, as a CSV
The finding	The notebook that produced it
What it does not show	The technical documentation that says why

What goes behind a link

- A static page can do all of this with an anchor tag — and it survives being printed, emailed and opened offline — which. . .
- This is a real trade and it is worth naming — An interactive dashboard lets a reader ask their own question; a static. . .

The five-second test, applied to a page

- If they read the tiles and state the finding, it works
- If they ask "what am I looking at", the title is a file name — "WASH coverage and water quality by district" tells a...
- If they start scrolling immediately, the tiles are not the numbers they need
- If they ask what the number means, the tile has no note

Print, and the phone — Example

```
@media print {  
  body { background: #fff; padding: 0; font-size: 11pt; }  
}
```

Print, and the phone — In R

A dashboard that cannot be printed is one that cannot go in a meeting pack.

Print, and the phone

- Somebody will print it — It goes into a meeting pack, it gets photocopied, and the version everyone in the room holds. . .
- And somebody will open it on a phone — Tiles in a grid that reflows to one column, a table that scrolls horizontally. . .

What the layout cannot fix

- A page whose question is wrong — Ordering the wrong three numbers well produces a well-ordered wrong page, and the last. . .
- A number nobody trusts — Layout does not create confidence; provenance does, and that is the next lesson
- A finding nobody wants — A dashboard cannot make an unwelcome result welcome, and the attempt — burying it below the. . .

Report it whole — Example

Dashboard layout

Reading order: title and purpose, four tiles, district table, figure, commissioning context, method and limits.

Tiles carry a value at the precision the interval supports, a plain label, and a one-clause definition. Signal colours appear only where the value is a severity or a quality flag.

The historic series, the full indicator set and the analysis notebook are linked rather than embedded. The page is 8 kB, prints to one side of A4 in greyscale, and reflows to a single column below 640 px.

Report it whole

- The size is worth stating — Eight kilobytes is a number a reader on a metered connection can weigh, and it is a claim. . .

What comes next

- A well-laid-out number that nobody can source is a number that gets challenged every month.

Read the full lesson, with runnable code

[https://data-analysis.cassion.dev/courses/dashboards-and-reporting/
dash-02-layout-for-a-decision](https://data-analysis.cassion.dev/courses/dashboards-and-reporting/dash-02-layout-for-a-decision)