

Don't Forget...

- **What's the story?** The aim of the publication is to draw out the information that is hidden within the numbers. What is the main message? What are the key changes? What is behind those changes and how do they fit into the longer term picture? Or is the story in the fact that there hasn't been any significant change?
- **Write for a non-technical audience** and use plain English. Avoid technical terms (both statistical and topic specific) altogether or explain them in the flow of the text.
- **Add insight.** Don't just state what has gone up, what has gone down. If someone who knows very little about the topic could write what you have written, what value have you added?
- **Frame the numbers in the right context.** Why are they collected? Who uses them? What are the relevant policies and targets? How do they relate to the wider economy and society? What's the international picture?
- **Convey that the statistics are estimates** and the extent of any uncertainty. Be clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics.

If you feel like you can't see the wood for the trees, ask a colleague to take a look. Getting a different perspective is an easy way to find out if your publication is interesting and easy to understand.

Read [Peer Review – Hints and Tips](#) for more ideas on how to use peer review to improve your publication.

Structuring Your Publication

Structure the publication so that it is accessible and presents the most important information first. This is one possible way to structure the front page but other formats may be equally as effective. Remember, clearly convey what the data tells you.

Title – Give the publication a title that tells the reader what it is about, not a cryptic title that only those 'in the know' will understand.

Introduction – Include a short paragraph that explains what the publication covers, why the statistics are important and perhaps the source. This paragraph should set the context for the publication. It might also point out any important limitations in how the statistics can be interpreted.

Key Points – The main findings should be just that – main findings. Don't try to summarise the whole publication. Concentrate on the most important findings. It is often better to use words to describe what is going on, rather than numbers. Place latest findings in the longer term picture. If someone remembers just 3 things from your publication, the first 3 key points are what you want them to know.

Graphics – Try to include a chart or other graphic that illustrates the key long term trend. Keep it simple.

If there are important limitations or weaknesses in the statistics that affect their use, or if the statistics are subject to revision, be sure to draw attention to this early in the publication.

Read [Writing about Statistics](#) to learn more and see examples of good (and not so good) commentary.