

Releasing statistics in spreadsheets

Good practice checklist

All users will require ...

A contents page, containing:

- **Title** of the release or data series, with time period and geographical region
- **Information** about each tab in the spreadsheet (with hyperlinks)
- A **link** to wider data series **homepage** (if available)
- A **link** to the **publication** itself

A notes or guidance page, containing:

- **Contact details** for responsible statistician and media enquiries
- **Date** of publication and next update
- **Glossary** of essential technical terms and acronyms (or link to)
- Link to **supporting metadata** and **methodological documents**

Clear and concise titles and headings

- Each individual table should have its own **title** (and subtitle if necessary)
- Titles should include a **summary** of main subject and breakdown categories including the i) time period, ii) regularity of the data, iii) type of data, iv) geographical region covered, iv) units used, v) adjustments made, and vi) status
- Titles should be in a **larger font** than headings
- Consider separating the title from the table with a **blank row**

Consistent symbols and codes

- Use **nationally recognised** classifications and geography codes
- Use GSS **standard symbols**

Communicating uncertainty

- **Confidence intervals** clearly displayed, in **separate cells** if possible
- **Explain** whether a change is statistically significant (using *), where appropriate and provide a plain English **description** of statistical significance

Formatting for presentation and re-use

Formatting for presentation

- Use **'freeze panes'** to keep row and column headings visible
- Consider **transposing** your table: scrolling down is easier than scrolling across
- **Divide** your tables across worksheets to assist reading.
- Summaries such as **averages and subtotals** help to set the context, but can hamper re-use if embedded in the body of the table
- **Adjust** row heights and column widths to create space, rather than inserting blank rows or columns, which can hamper re-use
- **Hard code** formula results to avoid accidental errors in use
- **Format numbers** as numbers and pay attention to the displayed rounding and precision so users can get a feel for the numbers

Formatting for easy re-use

- **No blank rows or columns** in the body of the table and no spaces in column headings
- Do not **merge** cells or **hide** columns or rows
- Provide a separate **metadata** document
- **Geographical codes** presented for each row
- Numbers **formatted** as numbers, with no presentation formatting

Finishing touches ...

- Sensibly named tabs which open in the correct place on the sheet
- Column/row widths which allow the whole cell contents to be read
- Wrapped text which doesn't split mid-word
- Correct spelling and grammar
- Underlying cell values which are un-rounded for re-use
- Sensible zoom levels. Set to optimise text size against maximising screen content - ideally set the same on all pages