

Choosing an appropriate legend type

To choose an appropriate legend type, you need to understand what the cell values contained in your grid theme represent. Cell values can represent one of two data value types, discrete and continuous. Discrete data will always be stored as an integer grid theme. Continuous data can be stored as either an integer or floating point grid theme. Discrete values represent phenomena in categories. Examples of discrete value types are state names, land use type, soil type, zip codes, road types, and land ownership. Continuous values represent phenomena along a range. Examples of continuous value types are population density, pH, average income, speed limits, elevation, and the price of land.

Are your grid data values discrete, like soil type or zip code boundaries?

Use a Unique Values legend.

Are your grid data values continuous, like elevation or population density?

Use a Graduated Colors legend.

A continuous variable may be stored in discrete areas on your grid theme, such as average household income within tract boundaries. You would still want to use a Graduated Colors legend to symbolize this grid theme.