

How to Easily Create a Quadrant Chart in Google Sheets

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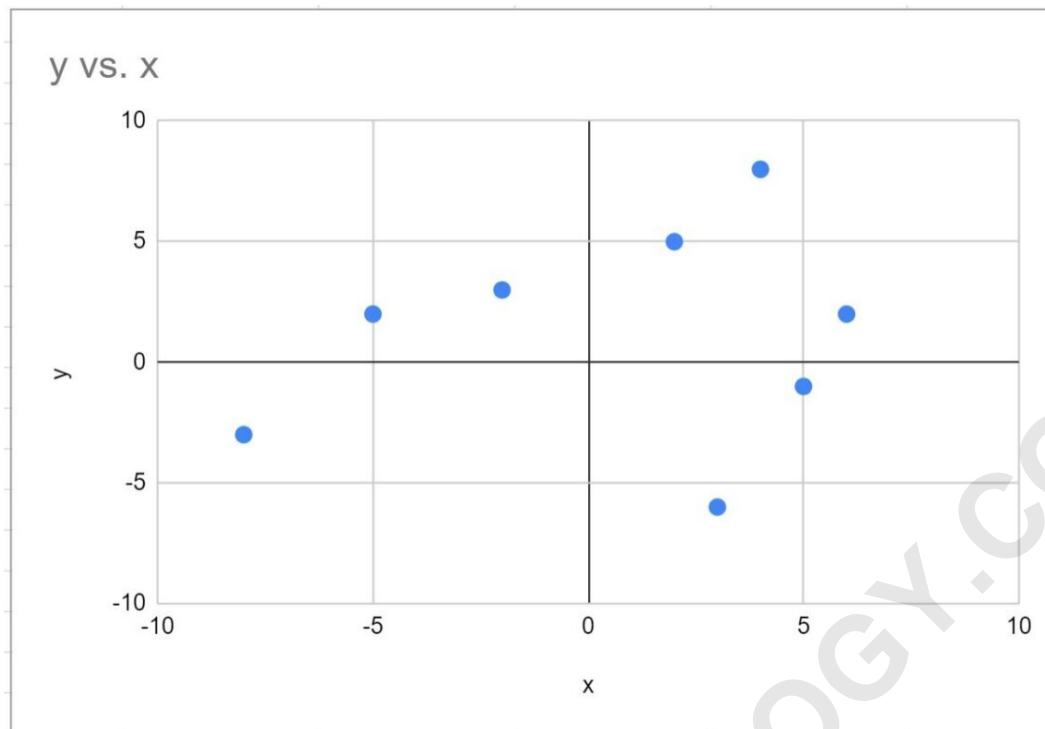
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PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=102247>

Welcome to this comprehensive guide on generating a functional and insightful quadrant chart using Google Sheets. A quadrant chart is an exceptional tool used in business analysis and data science to simultaneously visualize two variables, grouping data points into four distinct categories based on predefined thresholds or averages. This technique helps stakeholders quickly identify which data points require immediate attention, which are performing well, and which fall into standard categories.

To initiate the process, you must first prepare your source data. Once the data is structured, the procedure involves inserting a standard scatter plot and subsequently modifying the axis scales to ensure the plot is centered, resulting in the desired four equal quadrants. This tutorial will walk you through the necessary customization steps to transform a basic plot into a robust analytical quadrant chart.

A quadrant chart is fundamentally a modification of a two-dimensional scatter plot. Its defining characteristic is the division of the plotting area into four equally sized regions, or quadrants, typically achieved by centering the horizontal (X) and vertical (Y) axes around a significant midpoint, often zero or an average value relevant to the dataset. These quadrants facilitate immediate qualitative assessment of the data points.

For example, in business contexts, these quadrants might represent: (1) High Impact/High Effort (Top Right), (2) Low Impact/High Effort (Top Left), (3) High Impact/Low Effort (Bottom Right), and (4) Low Impact/Low Effort (Bottom Left). The power of this visualization lies in its ability to condense complex, bivariate relationships into actionable insights. This comprehensive tutorial provides a rigorous, step-by-step methodology for configuring the required settings to create the final chart structure shown below in Google Sheets:



Prerequisites: Understanding Data Structure for Bivariate Visualization

Before initiating the chart creation, it is crucial to understand that a quadrant chart requires paired numerical data. Each row must contain two corresponding values: one for the horizontal axis (X-value) and one for the vertical axis (Y-value). These pairs represent the coordinates of the points you wish to visualize.

The significance of the quadrant structure is derived from the centralized axes. Therefore, when preparing your data, ensure that the numerical range of your chosen variables allows for both positive and negative interpretation relative to a central threshold. If your raw data is exclusively positive (e.g., costs or sales figures), you may need to normalize or standardize the data around a zero mean for the quadrant separation to be meaningful, though in many cases, a simple deviation from the average (e.g., using the average as the center line) suffices.

For this specific example, we will utilize a dataset that inherently contains both positive and negative values for clarity in demonstrating the axis customization steps required to center the chart effectively. This setup ensures that we cover the entire coordinate plane, which is essential for a true quadrant display.

Step 1: Structuring and Inputting the Source Data

The foundational step in creating any visualization is the precise input of data into your

spreadsheet. For a scatter plot, the arrangement should consist of two adjacent columns representing the independent and dependent variables, respectively.

We begin by inputting a sample dataset, which includes paired X and Y values, into a new sheet within Google Sheets. It is important to label the columns appropriately (e.g., 'X-Value' and 'Y-Value') in the header row (A1 and B1) to ensure the chart editor correctly interprets the data series. The inclusion of headers is highly recommended for clarity and ease of use when configuring the chart.

Please enter the following coordinates into your Google Sheets document, starting from row 2:

	A	B	C	D
1	x	y		
2	-8	-3		
3	-5	2		
4	-2	3		
5	2	5		
6	4	8		
7	3	-7		
8	5	-1		
9	6	2		
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

This dataset spans a variety of negative and positive integer values across both axes, providing a clear demonstration of how points fall into different quadrants once the chart is properly centered. The next steps will focus on ensuring these points are accurately mapped onto the graphical interface.

Step 2: Inserting the Initial Scatter Plot

With the data properly structured, the next action is to insert the base chart type, which must be a scatter plot. This chart type is the only one in Google Sheets that naturally maps paired numerical coordinates onto a Cartesian plane, making it the essential starting point for creating a quadrant view.

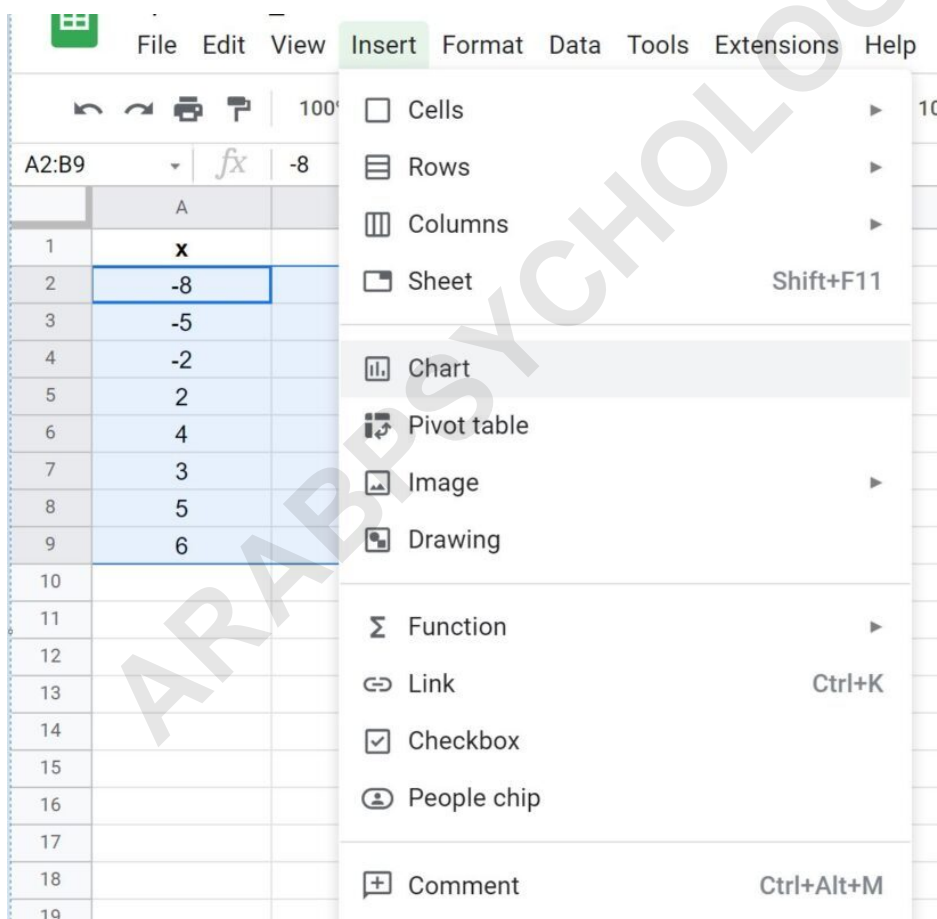
Follow these specific instructions to generate the initial scatter plot:

Highlight the Data Range: Select the cells containing your numerical data, which, according to our example, is the range **A2:B9**. Exclude the header row from this initial selection to ensure only coordinate pairs are plotted.

Access the Chart Menu: Navigate to the **Insert** tab located in the main menu bar of Google Sheets.

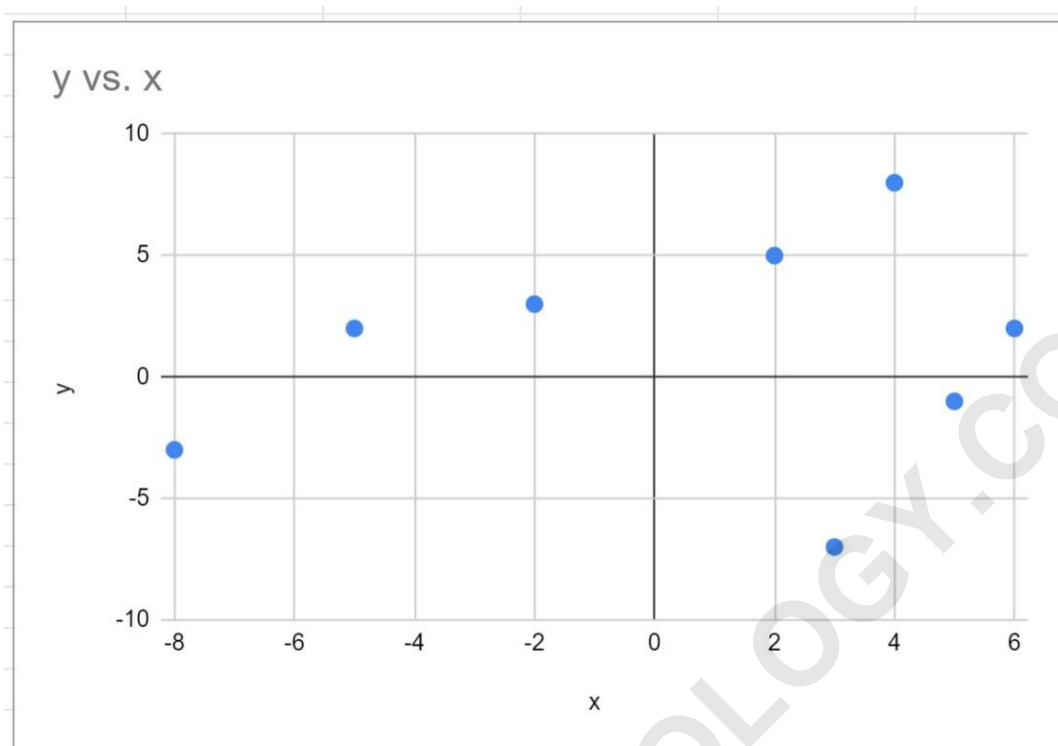
Select Chart: Click on the **Chart** option within the Insert menu. This action automatically opens the Chart Editor panel on the right side of your screen and typically inserts a default chart type.

If Google Sheets does not automatically select the Scatter Chart type, you must manually adjust this setting in the Chart Editor. Under the **Setup** tab, look for the 'Chart type' dropdown menu and explicitly select 'Scatter chart'.



Upon execution, Google Sheets will automatically insert a preliminary scatter plot. Notice that while the points are correctly mapped, the default scaling of the axes is optimized to fit the data boundaries precisely, which is not ideal for quadrant analysis. This results in an asymmetrical

appearance, as shown below:



Step 3: Understanding the Need for Axis Standardization

The chart displayed in Step 2 is technically correct based on the input data, but it is not yet a true quadrant chart. A proper quadrant chart requires that the zero point (or the chosen threshold for division) be perfectly centered, dividing the visualization area into four equal squares.

In the automatically generated plot, observe the ranges defined by the axes. The X-axis (Horizontal axis) currently ranges approximately from **-8** to **6**, while the Y-axis (Vertical axis) ranges from **-10** to **10**. Since the numerical boundaries are different (specifically for the X-axis), the zero-point is not centered within the visual space, and the four resulting sections are not of equal size or definition.

To accurately create four distinct and comparable quadrants, we must standardize both the minimum (Min) and maximum (Max) values of both axes. The goal is to set a symmetrical range, such as -10 to 10, for both the X and Y axes. This standardization ensures that the zero intersection truly bisects the chart area horizontally and vertically, thus forming the standardized quadrants necessary for reliable comparative analysis.

Step 4: Customizing the Horizontal (X) Axis Range

The primary task now is to manually adjust the horizontal axis parameters within the Chart Editor.

This step forces the chart to display a fixed, symmetrical range centered around zero, irrespective of the minimum and maximum values present in the original dataset.

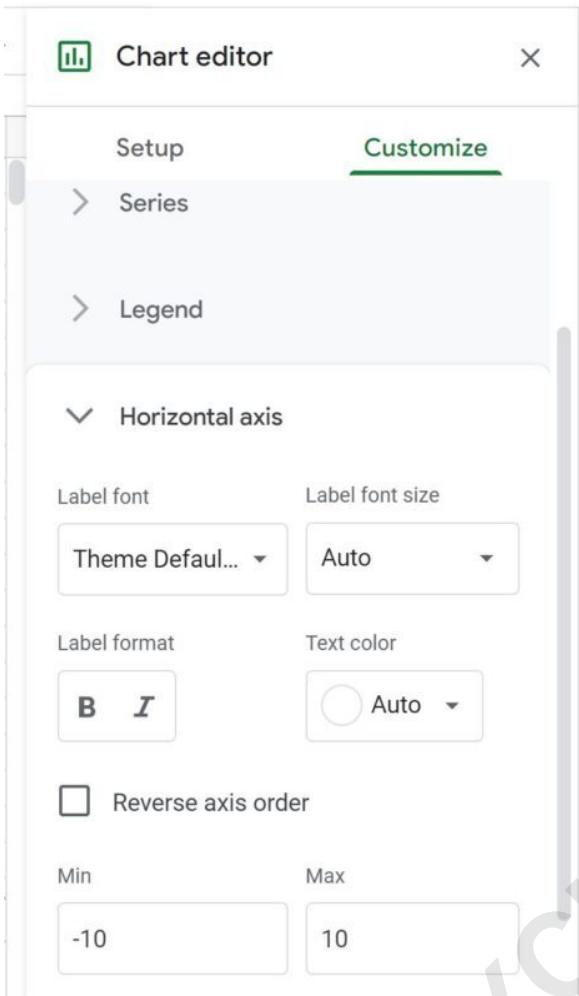
To begin the customization process, double-click anywhere on the newly created chart. This action activates the **Chart Editor** panel on the right side of the screen, if it is not already visible. Once the editor is open, follow these precise navigation steps to modify the X-axis:

Select the Customize Tab: Within the Chart Editor, click the **Customize** tab.

Navigate to Axis Settings: Scroll down and select the **Horizontal axis** dropdown menu.

Define the Range: Locate the **Min** and **Max** value fields. We must set these values symmetrically to ensure the zero origin is centered. Based on the overall spread of our data, choosing a range of -10 to 10 for both axes is appropriate, as it encompasses all existing data points while maintaining symmetry.

Change the **Min** value to **-10** and the **Max** value to **10**. As soon as you input these values, you will observe the chart dynamically updating. Specifically, the X-axis scale will shift, visually centering the chart and preparing the structure for the vertical axis adjustment.



Step 5: Customizing the Vertical (Y) Axis Range

Although the Vertical Y-axis might already be symmetrical (as it was in our example, ranging from -10 to 10 by default), it is a best practice to explicitly check and confirm its settings to guarantee absolute symmetry with the horizontal axis.

A true quadrant chart necessitates not only that the axes are centered at zero but also that the scaling of the X-axis matches the scaling of the Y-axis. If the X-axis spans 20 units (-10 to 10) and the Y-axis spans only 10 units (-5 to 5), the resulting quadrants will be rectangular, not square, leading to a distorted visual representation of the relationship between the two variables.

While still in the **Customize** tab of the Chart Editor, navigate to the settings for the Vertical axis:

Select the Vertical Axis: Scroll down and click the **Vertical axis** dropdown menu.

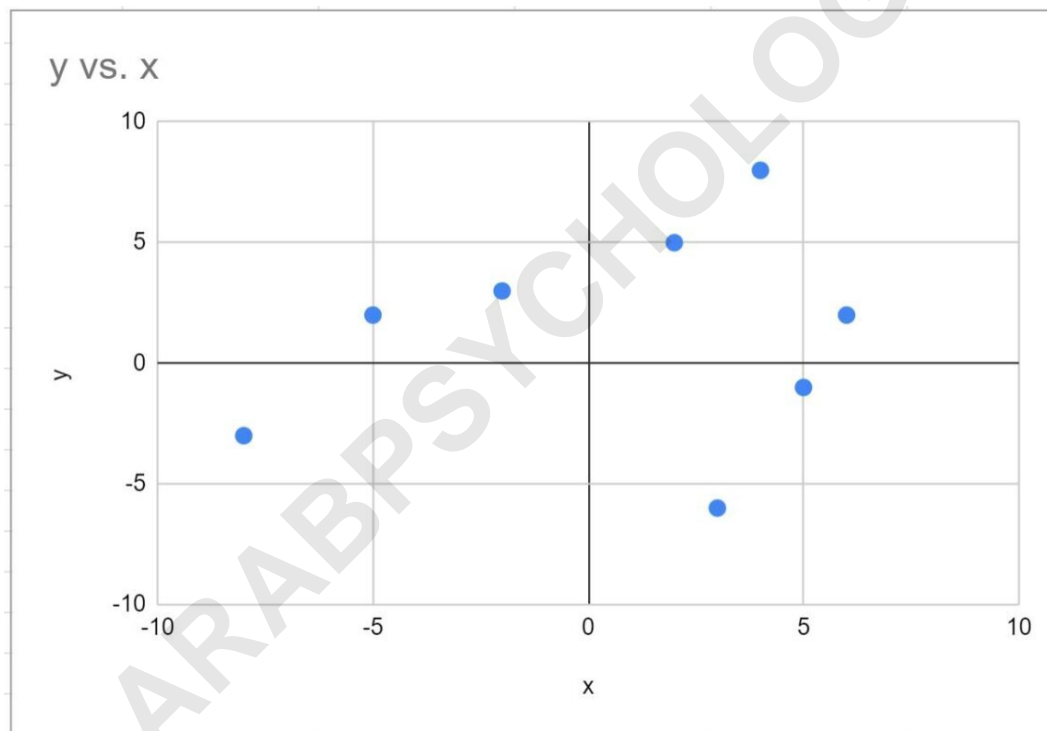
Set Symmetrical Boundaries: Locate the **Min** and **Max** value fields for the vertical axis.

Confirm that the **Min** value is set to **-10** and the **Max** value is set to **10**. If the values were different, manually adjust them now. This synchronization of ranges ensures that the graphical representation adheres to the true definition of a four-quadrant split where the unit distances along both axes are visually equivalent.

Step 6: Final Review and Interpretation of the Quadrant Chart

Once both the Horizontal and Vertical axes have been customized to the symmetrical range of -10 to 10, the transformation is complete. You now have a properly formatted quadrant chart.

The resulting visual confirmation will show the clear division of the plotting area into four equal sections, with the X-axis and Y-axis intersecting precisely at the center point (0, 0) of the visualization area. This precise centering is what enables meaningful quadrant analysis. Observe the final chart structure:



You can now clearly distinguish four distinct **quadrants** in the chart, each representing a unique combination of the two variables:

Quadrant I (Top Right): Positive X values and Positive Y values.

Quadrant II (Top Left): Negative X values and Positive Y values.

Quadrant III (Bottom Left): Negative X values and Negative Y values.

Quadrant IV (Bottom Right): Positive X values and Negative Y values.

Each data point from your original table now falls unambiguously into one of these four distinct regions, facilitating rapid qualitative assessment and strategic decision-making based on the combined characteristics of the paired variables. This final output represents a clean and highly functional bivariate visualization.

Step 7: Enhancing Clarity and Aesthetics (Optional Customization)

While the chart is now structurally sound, an expert content writer knows that aesthetics significantly improve readability and impact. There are several optional steps you can take within the Chart Editor to refine the appearance of your quadrant chart, primarily focusing on gridlines and labeling.

To further emphasize the quadrant boundaries, navigate back to the **Customize** tab and explore the **Gridlines & Ticks** section. Here, you can adjust the appearance of the major and minor gridlines for both the horizontal and vertical axes. Specifically, ensure that the major gridlines passing through the origin (0, 0) are highlighted or thicker than others. This enhancement immediately draws the viewer's eye to the division point, reinforcing the quadrant structure.

Furthermore, consider adding meaningful labels. Use the **Chart & axis titles** section to provide a clear title for the overall visualization and descriptive titles for the horizontal and vertical axes. If your data represents concepts like "Impact" and "Effort," use these labels instead of generic "X-Value" and "Y-Value." Finally, if you need to visualize the labels of the individual data points (e.g., product names or project IDs), you can add a third data series in the Setup tab and configure it to be used as data labels, although this level of detail can sometimes clutter the chart if there are many points.