Looker ⟶ Metabase

How to use Metabase if you know Looker?

What's it called in Metabase?

Looker	Metabase
Looks	Question
Explore	Query builder
Folder	Collections
Calculated field	Custom columns
Tile	Card
View	Table
Access control	Permissions
Scheduler	Alerts and subscriptions
Drill	Drill-through

How does the workflow differ?

Looker

You use **LookML** to model your data and then you use Explore to build queries and save the results as Looks. These Looks can then be organized into folders and added to Dashboards.

Metabase

You use the **Query builder** to aggregate your data and save the results as Questions. You can then organize these Questions by saving them in Collections or directly into Dashboards.

How to browse data?

Looker

1. Go to an **Explore** from the menu.
2. Select an Explore to see available fields.
3. Click a field to view details or inspect its LookML metadata.

Metabase

1. Go to **Databases** from the sidebar.
2. Select your database to see a list of tables.
3. Click the table name to view data, or click the book icon to view and edit metadata.

Metabase features

Querying

Query builder — Instead of Looker's **Explore**, Metabase's Query builder lets you visually build queries.

Questions — A question is a saved query and its results displayed as a table and a chart.

Model — A saved, reusable query you can use as a starting point to create more detailed analyses.

Metrics — Pre-defined calculations for consistent, reusable measures.

Dashboard — A collection of questions organized into tabs on a single page.

SQL editor — A built-in editor for writing and running SQL queries.

Organizing and sharing

Collections — Like folders with permissions where you can organize your dashboards, questions, models, and metrics.

Embedding — Embed dashboards into external sites.

Public sharing — Create a shareable public link for dashboards.

Permissions — Control who can view, edit, and interact with specific data and collections.

Administration

Caching — Speed up performance by temporarily storing query results, reducing load times on repeated queries.

Usage analytics — Track activity within Metabase, giving insights into how people interact with data.

X-rays — Automatically generates insights to help you find patterns and trends in your data.

Data modeling

Looker

In Looker, you use **LookML** to define how your data is structured. It acts as a semantic layer where you write code to define dimensions, measures, joins, and derived tables. Working with LookML requires technical knowledge, as it involves writing in a custom modeling language.

Metabase

In Metabase, there's no separate modeling language like LookML. It connects directly to your database and picks up the tables and fields automatically. You build queries using the **Query builder** or the **SQL editor**, and define custom calculations as needed within each question.
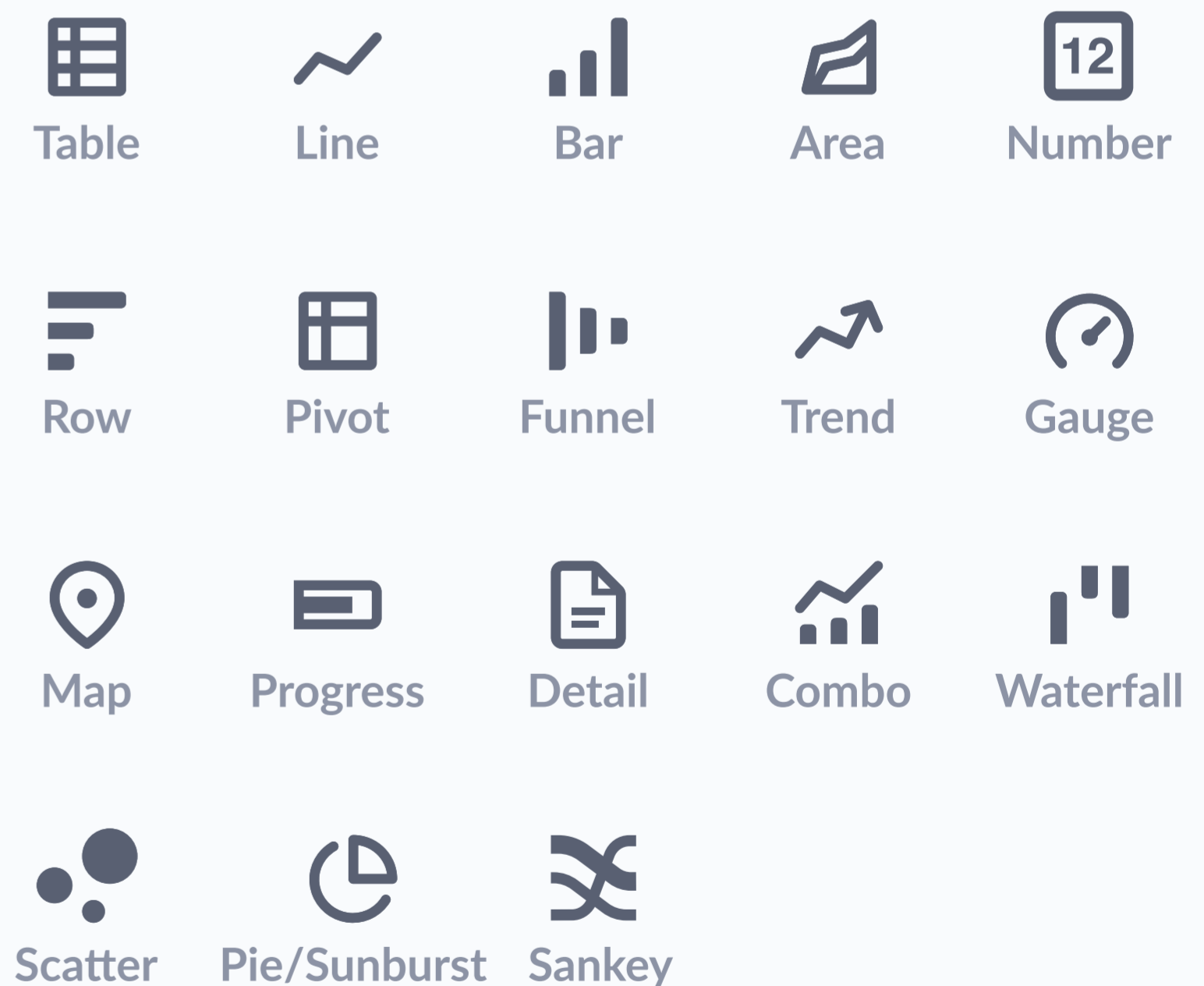

How to create visualizations?

Looker

1. Start a new **Explore** and build your query.
2. Run the query and open the Visualization tab.
3. Choose a visualization type and adjust settings if needed.
4. Save your query as a **Look** and add it to a Dashboard or folder.

Metabase

1. Start a new question, click **+ New** and select **Question**.
2. Select a table from your database, or start from an existing question or model.
3. Use the query builder to add **filters**, **summarize** your data, and **group it** by a column.
4. Metabase will suggest a visualization based on your query. You can adjust it using the Visualization button.
5. Save your question to a dashboard or collection.

Data visualizations in Metabase

Table	Line	Bar	Area	Number
Row	Pivot	Funnel	Trend	Gauge
Map	Progress	Detail	Combo	Waterfall
Scatter	Pie/Sunburst	Sankey		

Ready to get started with Metabase?

For a quick start, check our Getting Started Guide. For detailed information, visit our Docs.

Welcome to the Metabase community!