This Week's Wisdom:

Labelling

Labels are a useful addition to any map. The key to good labelling is to apply a visual hierarchy. Which labels are most important? What information do you need to see first? Clear, concise maps with a few well placed labels are always more effective than cluttered over-labelled maps. MapInfo has a number of labelling tools to help you:
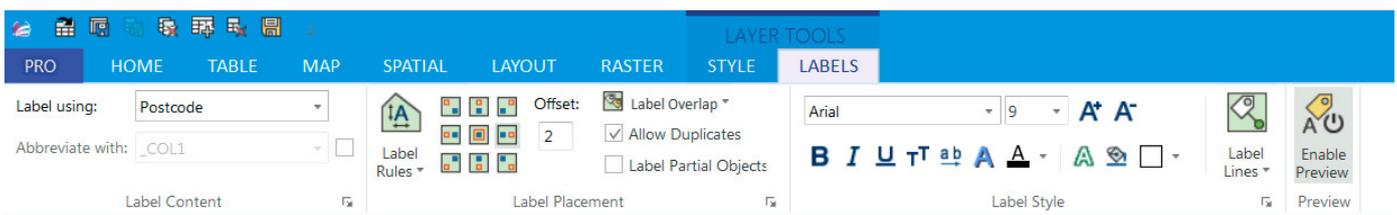

Automatic Labelling
Automatic Labelling is the most straightforward way to quickly add labels to your map. You can toggle this feature on and off by clicking on the icon from the Explorer tab. Once selected, every line/point/polygon on that layer will be labelled using the default settings.
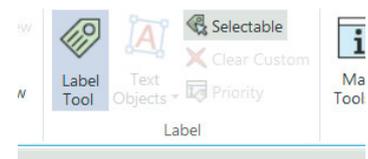
The Label Toolbar
Once labels are turned on, the Labels Tab will be added to the Ribbon. From here, you can make changes to your automatic labels. Change the column used by changing the dropdown 'Label using' and play around with Label Placement to get something more aesthetically pleasing.
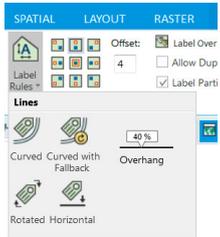

Custom Labels
You can achieve more accuracy over your labelling by using the Custom Label Tool from the Map Ribbon. Instead of applying a label to every point/polygon as the Automatic Labelling button does, this button just labels the points that you click on. This can be particularly useful when labelling polygons as you can place the label at any point within the shape. It also gives you the freedom to omit labels from congested areas, creating a more user-friendly map.

Label Styling
The Custom Label Tool allows you to individually style each label. Automatic Labelling applies one style across the whole layer. To access styling for the whole layer, right click on the layer in the Explorer tab and click Layer Properties. To style a label individually, just double click on the label itself. Or alternatively, use the Label Ribbon at the top of the window.

Labelling Lines
MapInfo lets you do some wizzy things when you label Lines and Polylines. Labels can be set to 'Curved' to follow the direction of your line. You can use the Position buttons to set whether the text appears above or below the line whilst the offset button will push the text closer or further away. This is a great tool for labelling rivers and boundary lines.

Labelling with expressions
If you scroll to the bottom of the dropdown for the Label Field you will see Label with Expression. This lets you you generate your label using MapInfo's SQL Query dialog box. From here you can generate simple labels such as Cartesian Area or Distance or more complex labels combining a number of fields or criteria.