

How to Design an Effective Poster Presentation

Michelle Lopez
Associate Director
Minority Biomedical Research Support Program
College of Sciences
San Diego State University
mlopez@mail.sdsu.edu

Definition of a Poster

- Advertises your research, program, or other project.
- Combines text and graphics to make a visually (hopefully pleasing) presentation.
- Involves showing your work to numerous researchers or professionals.
- Should quickly and efficiently communicate your research to viewers who walk by.
- Allows viewers to study and restudy your information and discuss it with you one on one.
- Is less formal (compared to a PowerPoint “oral” presentation)
- Presents general information and invites viewers to ask more detailed questions of the presenters.

Purposes for Poster Sessions

- Most poster sessions occur as part of professional conferences
- It is a way to disperse information to the general public. Both the purpose and the audience for the poster determine important elements of the poster itself.
- Professional Posters Inform and Argue
- **"General" Posters Inform****

'General' Posters Used to Inform

- Is typically shaped more by its audience than by its purpose.
- You should know how much background information viewers/readers are likely to know
- Determine the appropriate detail to include on the poster.
 - intended audience may vary
 - consult the session organizers

Know Your Audience

- Don't assume that those investigating your research/or project know a lot about your topic.
- Will there be scientists, engineers, other professionals looking at your poster?
- Who generally participates in your event or conference? With this background information, you can shape your poster for the specific audience.
- Avoid presenting obvious information or talking above their heads.

Writing Strategies for Poster Sessions

- Requires planning. “How will you depict specific information and provide text and graphics to capture your audience’s attention?”
- Calls for much more attention to visual impact than other forms of writing do.
- Requires careful condensing of ideas rather than writing long pages of information (i.e. research paper) .

Strategies for Writing Your Poster

- Focus as narrowly as possible on the central ideas you need to convey. (i.e. main things you learned from experience)
- Pick out what's central to your topic and concentrate on that narrow focus.
- Work from a drafted paper
- Topics may stand out or it may be easier to choose what topics or ideas are most important to highlight

General Concerns about Content

- What information sums up your work or is most important for your viewers to know?
- How can you best depict it—through graphics or text?
- Typically, the less text, the more appealing the poster is.

When to Use Text

- To explain a graphic
- To convey key points
- To announce that you have supplemental handouts.
- Make your text easy to read
 - chunking information
 - bullets,
 - lists, or short paragraphs, clear headings

Lists

- Are effective ways to present information.
- Break down large amounts of text, but they are also visually pleasing
- Use bullets or other graphic features to separate items in the list.
- Useful to convey parts or steps.
- Avoid full sentences in a list. Concise information is more likely to be read by your audience.

Short Sentences

- Avoid lengthy sentences as they take longer to read and comprehend.
- Shorten your sentences to be as clear and concise as possible.
- One way to re-work longer sentences is to underline the main points in the sentence and determine whether or not you can break this information into a list or graphic.

Group Your Information

Grouping your information:

- Avoids a text-heavy poster
- Provides only bits and pieces of text at once
- Allows your audience to quickly locate the information they need (i.e. use of clear headings for each section)

Why Use Graphics?

- Allows audience to better understand your information in a short period of time.
- Great visual representation of your ideas
- Allows viewers to quickly digest your information and begin discussing your work with you.
- Great solutions to the text-heavy poster problem.

Why Use Graphics continued -

- They are more pleasing to look at than paragraph after paragraph of text (providing that it does not require lengthy textual explanations)
- Helps keep written explanations to a minimum.

When to Use Graphics

Use graphics on your poster to:

- depict numerical values
- convey concepts such as designs, models, and prototypes
- show the relationships, trends or comparisons among your data

Revising

Three main areas of concern when you revise your poster:

- Is everything clear on your poster?
- Is your poster easy to read?
- Is the visual presentation organized, professional, clean, and easy on the eyes?

Clarity and Layout

- Draft chunks of your poster and try various arrangements.
- Do you need arrows to direct readers' eyes from one chunk to the next in a logical sequence?
- Do you need to number headings to show the flow of ideas?
- Should you combine chunks to show clearly a close relationship of the ideas?

Work back and forth between revising for clarity and arrangement for clarity before final assembly.

Clarity

- Did you communicate your main points quickly and clearly?
- Think about your target audience
- Examine each jargon term. Does it need to be redefined in more general language?

Putting It All Together

- After you know:
 - your audience
 - purpose of your poster
 - space
- Ask your program, conference how the poster should be displayed – on an easel, on a wall, or pinned to a poster board or stand?

Poster Title

- Make the title brief and descriptive.
- Provide a title and your name in larger text. This helps your audience determine whether or not they are interested in your research/topic.
- Include the abstract title, author names, and the institution where the work was completed
- Use large letters centered at the top of the poster.
- Place your work address, phone number and/or email address in the upper right-hand corner.

Text on the Professional Presentation Poster

- Avoid too much text-based explanation.
- Audience does not want to read your entire paper.
- Present two to three key points from each of your paper's sections.
- Typically, a poster always includes an abstract, the research questions/problems, methodologies, results summarized (discussion), and conclusions.

Font Sizes and Lettering

- Use at least a 36 point font for your text, and at least a 48 point font for the title.
- Use legible font style
- Avoid using italicized or fancy scripts.
- Make sure your font style is consistent over the entire poster. Don't use more than one style!

Font Sizes and Lettering

- Avoid using all capital letters except for the title.
- Use a laser printer to produce professional-looking sheets. Never handwrite anything on your poster.
- Select a legible font such as Times Roman, Times New Roman, Baskerville, or Palatino

Color and White Space

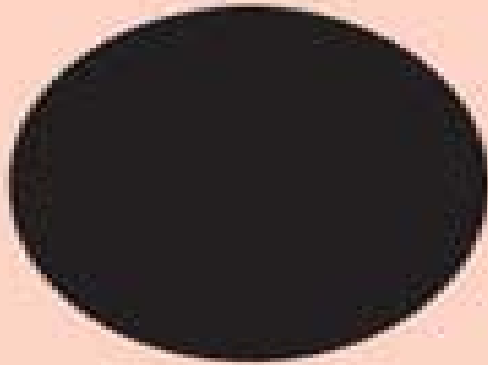
As you plan your poster...

- Leave ample white space. Your poster will appear less cluttered, and help you distribute information proportionally.
- Consider using warm colors, red, orange, and yellow (typically more inviting)

More Advice about Color and White Space

- When mounting text, graphs, figures, or pictures, care should be taken to use contrasting colors to show off the information.
- Leave a border from $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to 1 inch around any artwork or text. . . . Be sure to blend colors so they do not clash.
- A good rule of thumb
 - light items on darker
 - darker items on white or light-colored paper.

Example of Contrast



Effective



**Not as
effective**

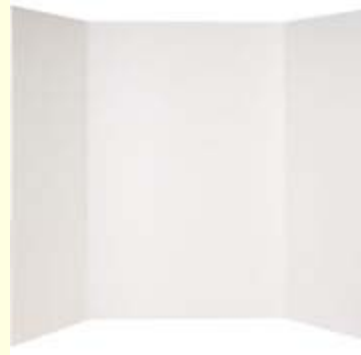
©2005 Lighthouse International. All rights reserved.

More Advice about Color and White Space

- Viewers will typically expect information to flow from left to right and from top to bottom.
- Use headings and subheadings to label your information. Keep these short and to the point since they function as an index.
- Use the same size margins on both graphics and text.
- If using glossy paper, keep in mind reflections will make your content more difficult to read.
- Always check conference guidelines for specifics

Know What Space is Available

- **Tri-fold design opens to 36" x 48"**



- Science conferences boards vary from:
4' high x 8' wide
Or
5' high x 8' wide

Landscape Your Poster

- Lay your poster sections in a logical order so that visitors can follow your presentation.
- A good method is setting up your poster in a column format so that individuals interested can read your poster, 1st vertical, then top to bottom, and then left to right.

Sample Layout 1

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|----------|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|--|-----------------|--|--|--|
| TITLE OF POSTER | | | | TITLE OF POSTER | | | | TITLE OF POSTER | | | |
| Authors, Departments | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Abstract | | | Method | | | Alternative method | | | Analysis and interpretation of results | | |
| | | | Result A | | | Result C | | | | | |
| | | | Result B | | | Photo or other illustration | | | | | |
| Statement of question or problem; why it is interesting | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | Acknowledgements | | |
| 40" | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 32" | | | | | | | | | | | |

Sample Layout 2

| DESCRIPTIVE TITLE | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Author and Author, Departmental Affiliation | | | |
| Abstract | Methodology - in brief | Results e.g. Table 2 | Analysis and interpretation of results |
| | | More Results | |
| Statement of research question | Results e.g. Table 1 | Illustration | Impact of findings |
| | Illustration | | Acknowledgements of faculty guidance, technical assistance, funding, etc. |

40"

32"

Choice of Background

- When choosing a background...
- Neutral or gray colors will be easier on the eyes than a bright color.
- Color photos look best when mounted on gray.
- Dark backgrounds should use white or lighter font

Keep Things Simple! (K.I.S.S.)

- Posters should stimulate discussion, not give a long presentation.
- Keep text to a minimum, emphasize graphics, and make sure every item in your poster is necessary.



Poster title goes here, containing strictly only the essential number of words...



Introduction

First...

Check with conference organisers on their specifications of size and orientation, before you start your poster eg. maximum poster size; landscape, portrait or square.

The page size of this poster template is A0 (84x119cm), landscape (horizontal) format. Do not change this page size, MIU can scale-to-fit a smaller or larger size, when printing. If you need a different shape start with either a portrait (vertical) or a square poster template.

Bear in mind you do not need to fill up the whole space allocated by some conference organisers (eg. 8ftx4ft in the USA). Do not make your poster bigger than necessary just to fill that given size.

Aim

How to use this poster template...

Simply highlight this text and replace it by typing in your own text, or copy and paste your text from a MS Word document or a PowerPoint slide presentation.

The sub-title text boxes can be moved up or down depending on how big or small your 'Introduction', 'Aim', 'Method', 'Results' and 'Conclusion' are.

The body text / font size should be between 24 and 32 points. Arial, Helvetica or equivalent.

Keep body text left-aligned, do **not** justify text.

The colour of the text, title and poster background can be changed to the colour of your choice.

Method

Tips for making a successful poster...

- Re-write your paper into poster format ie. Simplify everything, avoid data overkill.
- Headings of more than 6 words should be in upper and lower case, not all capitals.
- Never do whole sentences in capitals or underline to stress your point, use **bold** characters instead.
- When laying out your poster leave breathing space around your text. Don't overcrowd your poster.
- Try using photographs or coloured graphs. Avoid long numerical tables.
- Spell check and get someone else to proof-read.



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, between 18 and 24 points. Left aligned if it refers to a figure on its left. Caption starts right at the top edge of the picture (graph or photo).

Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, between 18 and 24 points. Right aligned if it refers to a figure on its right. Caption starts right at the top edge of the picture (graph or photo).



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, 18 to 24 points, to the length of the column in case a figure takes more than 2/3 of column width.

Results

Importing / inserting files...

Images such as photographs, graphs, diagrams, logos, etc, can be added to the poster.

To insert scanned images into your poster, go through the menus as follows: Insert / Picture / From File... then find the file on your computer, select it, and press OK.

The best type of image files to insert are JPEG or TIFF, JPEG is the preferred format.

Be aware of the image size you are importing. The average colour photo (13 x 18cm at 180dpi) would be about 3Mb (1Mb for B/W greyscale). Call MIU if unsure.

Do **not** use images from the web.

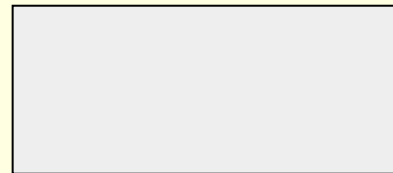
Notes about graphs...

For simple graphs use MS Excel, or do the graph directly in PowerPoint.

Graphs done in a scientific graphing programs (eg. Sigma Plot, Prism, SPSS, Statistica) should be saved as JPEG or TIFF if possible. For more information see MIU.



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, between 18 and 24 points. Left aligned if it refers to a figure on its left. Caption starts right at the top edge of the picture (graph or photo).



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, 18 to 24 points, to the length of the column in case a figure takes more than 2/3 of column width.

Printing and Laminating...

Once you have completed your poster, bring it down to MIU for printing. We will produce a A3 size draft print for you to check and proof read. The final poster will then be printed and laminated.

Note: Do not leave your poster until the last minute. Allow at least 5 working days before you need to use it. Simply highlight this text and replace.

Cost...

For poster-printing and laminating charges contact MIU.

Conclusion

For more information on:

Poster Design, Scanning and Digital Photography, and Image / file size.

Contact:

Medical Illustration Unit
Prince of Wales Hospital

Ph: 9382 2800

Email: miunsw@unsw.edu.au

Web: <http://miu.med.unsw.edu.au>

Acknowledgements

Just highlight this text and replace with your own text. Replace this with your text.



Poster title goes here, containing strictly only the essential number of words...



Author's Name/s Goes Here, Author's Name/s Goes Here, Author's Name/s Goes Here

Address/es Goes Here, Address/es Goes Here, Address/es Goes Here

Introduction

First...

Check with conference organisers on their specifications of size and orientation, before you start your poster eg. maximum poster size; landscape, portrait or square.

The page size of this poster template is A0 (84x119cm), landscape (horizontal) format. Do not change this page size, MIU can scale-to-fit a smaller or larger size, when printing. If you need a different shape start with either a portrait (vertical) or a square poster template.

Bear in mind you do not need to fill up the whole space allocated by some conference organisers (eg. 8ftx4ft in the USA). Do not make your poster bigger than necessary just to fill that given size.

Method

Tips for making a successful poster...

- Re-write your paper into poster format ie. Simplify everything, avoid data overkill.
- Headings of more than 6 words should be in upper and lower case, not all capitals.
- Never do whole sentences in capitals or underline to stress your point, use **bold** characters instead.
- When laying out your poster leave breathing space around you text. Don't overcrowd your poster.
- Try using photographs or coloured graphs. Avoid long numerical tables.
- Spell check and get someone else to proof-read.



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, between 18 and 24 points. Left aligned if it refers to a figure on its left. Caption starts right at the top edge of the picture (graph or photo).

Results

Importing / inserting files...

Images such as photographs, graphs, diagrams, logos, etc, can be added to the poster.

To insert scanned images into your poster, go through the menus as follows: Insert / Picture / From File... then find the file on your computer, select it, and press OK. The best type of image files to insert are JPEG or TIFF, JPEG is the preferred format.

Be aware of the image size you are importing. The average colour photo (13 x 18cm at 180dpi) would be about 3Mb (1Mb for B/W greyscale). Call MIU if unsure.

Do **not** use images from the web.

Notes about graphs...

For simple graphs use MS Excel, or do the graph directly in PowerPoint.

Graphs done in a scientific graphing programs (eg. Sigma Plot, Prism, SPSS, Statistica) should be saved as JPEG or TIFF if possible. For more information see MIU.

Printing and Laminating...

Once you have completed your poster, bring it down to MIU for printing. We will produce a A3 size draft print for you to check and proof read. The final poster will then be printed and laminated.

Note: Do not leave your poster until the last minute. Allow at least 5 working days before you need to use it. Simply highlight this text and replace.

Cost...

For poster-printing and laminating charges contact to MIU

Aim

How to use this poster template...

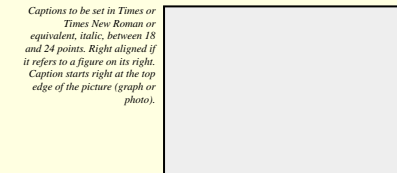
Simply highlight this text and replace it by typing in your own text, or copy and paste your text from a MS Word document or a PowerPoint slide presentation.

The sub-title text boxes can be moved up or down depending on how big or small your 'Introduction', 'Aim', 'Method', 'Results' and 'Conclusion' are.

The body text / font size should be between 24 and 32 points. Arial, Helvetica or equivalent.

Keep body text left-aligned, do **not** justify text.

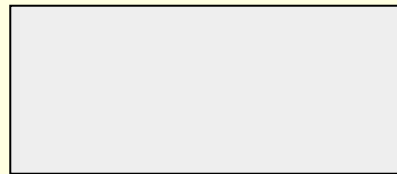
The colour of the text, title and poster background can be changed to the colour of your choice.



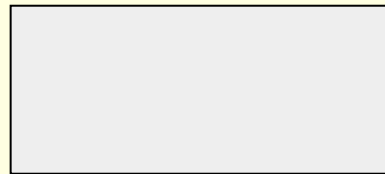
Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, between 18 and 24 points. Right aligned if it refers to a figure on its right. Caption starts right at the top edge of the picture (graph or photo).



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, between 18 and 24 points. Left aligned if it refers to a figure on its left. Caption starts right at the top edge of the picture (graph or photo).



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, 18 to 24 points, to the length of the column in case a figure takes more than 2/3 of column width.



Captions to be set in Times or Times New Roman or equivalent, italic, 18 to 24 points, to the length of the column in case a figure takes more than 2/3 of column width.

Conclusion

For more information on:

Poster Design, Scanning and Digital Photography, and Image / file size.

Contact:

Medical Illustration Unit
Prince of Wales Hospital

Ph: 9382 2800

Email: miunsw@unsw.edu.au

Web: <http://miu.med.unsw.edu.au>

Acknowledgements

Just highlight this text and replace with your own text. Replace this with your text.

Position Yourself Well During Your Poster Presentation

- Try not to stand directly in front of your poster, allow other scientists or visitors to view the entire poster.
- Stand to the side.

Carrying Your Poster

- Hand carry your poster to the meeting, using tubular packaging or a portfolio case.
- Do not mail your poster to the conference headquarters or to the meeting site.

Supporting Documents

- Come prepared with any relevant handouts
- Brochures, flyers
- Is this a networking opportunity for you?
- Consider printing business cards to hand out

Other materials

- Bring pushpins, thumbtacks or velcro to mount your poster (Usually not provided to you at the conference).
- If you are presenting on a poster board – do you have to buy the board?
- How will the poster be mounted for display?
- Easels? Wall?
- What should you purchase? Ask or read website or program instructions.

An Ideal Poster Should...

- Provide a brief overview of your work
- Initiate discussion
- Attract attention
- Give you something useful to point to as you discuss your work
- Stand alone when you're not there to provide an explanation
- Let people know of your particular expertise
- Provide a place to set your handouts

Now..Presenting Your Poster

- Dress appropriately
- Dress as you would for a job interview.
- Arrive at least 10-15 minutes prior to the start of your poster session to set-up your poster.
- Make sure to introduce yourself to the session chairperson, etc.
- Remain standing when presenting your poster during your session.

Now..Presenting Your Poster

- Be seen as more approachable - stand rather than sit
- When someone approaches you with a question about your poster, make a point of introducing yourself.
- Look at the person's conference badge to ascertain his/her name and affiliation.
- Important! Try to establish contacts with professionals in your research area.

Build Your Network

- Purpose for poster sessions is meeting, interacting with others and information sharing
- Ask questions of other attendees
- Visit other posters if you have a chance
- Circulate among the other posters in your session to meet other presenters.
- Share your contact information if there is a possibility of future discussion or collaboration.

Good Luck!

- Questions?

Feel free to contact Michelle at:

- mlopez@mail.sdsu.edu